

INTRODUCTION TO 40TH BIBLEBOOK

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW (A.D. 62)

A. The writer of the Gospel of Matthew	1
B. The date and place of writing the Gospel of Matthew	1
C. The characteristics of the Gospel of Matthew	2
D. The purpose of the Gospel of Matthew	4
E. The division of Matthew, Mark and Luke compared to John	4
F. The theme and division of the Gospel of Matthew	5
G. Matthew teaches that Jesus is the Great Prophet	7
H. Matthew teaches the revelation of God's history of salvation	8
I. Matthew teaches the reality and growth of the Kingdom of God	9
J. Matthew also has an apologetic purpose	10

A. THE WRITER OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

The very first Gospel is called Matthew, the name of one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ.

1. The writer of notes in the Aramaic language.

The church father Papias, who lived from A.D. 70-155 said, "Matthew arranged the 'logia' in a Hebrew dialect, and each translated them as he was able". The word 'logia' refers to the words and deeds of Jesus Christ. This means that Matthew wrote "the things said and done by the Lord Jesus Christ" in *the Aramaic language*, the language which Jesus and Matthew spoke. Later the other evangelists (Gospel writers) translated and used these words and deeds in the Aramaic language to write their Gospels in the Greek language. Probably during the ministry of Jesus from A.D. 26-30, Matthew, having been an able tax-collector¹ who could read and write, already made notes of the words and works of Jesus in his own language, Aramaic, which was almost the same as Hebrew. Later, he used his own notes as well as the Gospel of Mark and his own experience and research to write the Gospel of Matthew in the Greek language. Greek was the cultural language spoken all over the Roman Empire and very many Jews lived all over the Roman Empire.

2. The writer of the Gospel of Matthew in the Greek language.

The internal evidence and the external witness of the Christian tradition without exception say that Matthew, the disciple of Jesus, was the writer of the first Gospel. During the first century, this fact was well known, but in A.D. 125 the title 'according to Matthew' was added to the Gospel so that later generations would not forget who wrote it.

Mark 2:14 says that Matthew was also called "Levi, son of Alphaeus". He is thus a Jew. Matthew is mentioned by name in his own Gospel. Matthew 9:9-10 describes how Matthew became a disciple of Jesus. It says, "As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. 'Follow me,' he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples."

Later, in Matthew 10:3, Matthew is chosen as one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. When Matthew received the call to follow Jesus, he was a tax collector in the city of Capernaum in Galilee. Therefore he was probably in the service of Herod Antipas and collected taxes for the Roman rulers of Galilee. The Jews hated the tax collectors, regarded them as traitors and collaborators with the enemy and put them on one line with the worst of 'sinners' in their society. The Roman province of Galilee was known as 'the Galilee of the Gentiles', because many Greek speaking Gentiles lived among the Jews in Galilee. This fact means that Matthew must have known the Greek language as well as his own mother tongue, Aramaic. Matthew's quotations from the Old Testament show that he was acquainted with more than one language. His quotations are sometimes from the Hebrew Old Testament, sometimes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament and sometimes a kind of paraphrase in which elements of both the Hebrew and the Greek languages are used. Moreover, a tax collector's duty was to make written reports of the moneys he collected. Matthew was therefore the logical person to take notes on the words and works of Jesus during the time it happened. Although we do not read much about Matthew in the Four Gospels, this was probably his most important task, *to keep a running record of the words and the works of Jesus while he was still on earth*. Later, he himself and the other Gospel writers used these notes to write their Gospels in Greek.

Matthew was an intelligent and deep religious Jew. He certainly knew the Old Testament Scriptures very well. Thus when the Holy Spirit later inspired and guided him, he was the kind of man who would be able to interpret the Old Testament prophecies in the light of their fulfilment by Jesus Christ.

The earliest church fathers in history abundantly quote from the Gospel of Matthew. And the church fathers without exception maintain that Matthew wrote 'the Gospel according to Matthew'.

B. THE DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

Because Matthew made use of the Hebrew Old Testament Scriptures, which were written on scrolls and kept in the synagogues, he must have written his Gospel before the time the Christians broke their relationship with the synagogues.

¹ Matthew 9:9-13

Because Matthew makes many references to events and situations in and around Jerusalem, some of which he reports exclusively, Palestine must be the general region where he wrote his Gospel. Therefore, Matthew must have written his Gospel before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and probably from Jerusalem.

The church father Irenaeus (A.D. 130-202) says, “Matthew published his Gospel while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome and establishing the church”. He uses the word “establishing” not as “founding” the church of Rome, but, as described in Philippians 1:12-18, of “strengthening” the church through his preaching from prison in Rome. As Paul was in Rome till about A.D. 62 and Peter was probably in Rome A.D. 63, we must conclude that the Gospel of Matthew was written about A.D. 62 from Jerusalem.

C. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

1. The Gospel of Matthew is orderly and beautiful.

A characteristic of the Gospel of Matthew is that whenever Matthew finds a theme, he dwells on it. Thus, the Gospel of Matthew contains six beautiful and important sermons in between his description of the historic events in the life of Jesus. Matthew’s emphasis in his Gospel is *the teachings of Jesus*, while the emphasis in the Gospel of Mark is *the actions of Jesus*.

2. The Gospel of Matthew is prophetic.

The Gospel of Matthew looks backwards and describes how Jesus fulfilled the Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament.

More than forty times he says, “What was said through the prophet ... was fulfilled” (2:17). For example, in Matthew 1:23 Jesus fulfilled the prophecy about ‘Immanuel’. In Matthew 2:6 he fulfilled the prophecy that he would be born in Bethlehem as the ruler and shepherd of Israel. And in Matthew 3:3 he fulfilled the prophecy that he was the LORD (Hebrew: JaHWeH, Greek: kurios)² that took on the human nature and came to earth and that John the Baptist was his forerunner, the one who prepared the way before him. Not only does Jesus fulfil these Old Testament prophecies, but according to the Bible he himself is the Prophet who prophesied through the Old Testament prophets! In 1 Peter 1:10-11 we read, “Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which *the Spirit of Christ in them* was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.” Also Revelation 19:10 says, “*The testimony of Jesus (by Jesus and about Jesus)* is the spirit of prophecy!”. Thus, Jesus is *the Prophet* in the Old Testament and through his Spirit he prophesied through the Old Testament prophets!

The Gospel of Matthew also depicts Jesus as ‘the Prophet’ in the New Testament!

In Matthew 12:41 he says that he is greater than the prophet Jonah, and that Jonah’s prophecy is a type of Jesus being dead during three days. In Matthew 13:13-15, Jesus prophesies the same prophecy as the prophet Isaiah, that there will be people who hear the Gospel, but because they have hardened their hearts, they will not be able to understand or receive it. And in Matthew 17:5 God himself says that Jesus Christ is the Prophet about whom Moses prophesied in Exodus 18:15-19. He says, “Listen to him!”

The Gospel of Matthew not only looks backwards, but also looks forward and describes how Jesus as Prophet prophesies his own suffering, death and resurrection. Jesus prophesies his future suffering in the Gospel of Matthew at least five times³. For example, in Matthew 16:21 is written, “From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and *on the third day* be raised to life.”

In Matthew 23:37-25:46 Jesus as Prophet prophesies vividly in detail the future events concerning the fall of Jerusalem, the suffering of the Church and his majestic second coming to judge the believers and unbelievers of the world according to the way they lived. He prophesies that the wicked unbelievers will go to eternal punishment, but the righteous believers will go to eternal life (25:46).

Thus, although each of the Four Gospels picture Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah, sent by the Father and anointed by the Holy Spirit to be our great Prophet, sympathetic High Priest and eternal King, it is especially his prophetic office that is emphasised in the Gospel of Matthew.

3. The Gospel of Matthew is especially directed to Jews.

Matthew shows that he is a Jew in several ways. When Matthew wrote his Gospel in the Greek language, his Jewish background remains evident all the time.

Matthew’s quotations from the Old Testament.

They are either his direct translations from the Hebrew Old Testament or his quotations from the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

² Isaiah 40:3

³ Matthew 12:40; 16:21; 17:9; 17:22-23; 20:18-19; 26:2 (crucified)

Matthew has a strong sense of divine theology.

He is very convinced about God's plan and its realisation in history. More than Mark, Luke and John, Matthew emphasises the fulfilment of prophecy.

Matthew was acquainted with Jewish numerology.

For the Jews the numbers were spiritual symbols. Matthew likes to use the number 'seven'.

- In Matthew 1:17, he represents Jesus Christ as the climax of the three times fourteen generations, that is, as the beginner of *the seventh seven*.
- In Matthew 13 Jesus told seven parables of the kingdom.
- In Matthew 23 he spoke seven woes against the Pharisees.

Matthew uses the term 'the kingdom of the heavens'.

He does this more often than the term 'the kingdom of God' (12:28; 21:31), although they essentially mean the same thing.

- In Greek, Matthew literally uses the plural the kingdom of 'the heavens' just as in Genesis 1:1 God created 'the heavens'. Matthew is thinking of God, not only as the Creator of the heavens, that is, the universe, but also as the Ruler of the heavens, that is, the universe. Matthew is also thinking of the kingdom as being established from heaven, that is, from God, as in the book of Daniel.
- In Daniel 2:44 the prophet says, "In the time of those kings, *the God of heaven will set up a kingdom* that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure for ever!" In Daniel 7:15-16 the prophet says, "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like *a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven*. ... He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." *The kingdom of heaven embraces the whole created universe*, including everything that is presently ruled over by other kingdoms on earth!

Matthew emphasises the importance of the law.

In Matthew 5:17 Jesus says that he did not come to *abolish* the law, but to *fulfil* it.

- In Matthew chapters 5-7, Jesus teaches the true meaning of the moral law (the Ten Commandments) as opposed to its being watered down by the Jewish teachers of the law.
- In Matthew 22:36-40, Jesus teaches that all the books of the Law and the Prophets, that is, the whole Old Testament, is summarised by the great law of loving God and your neighbour.
- In Matthew 23:23, Jesus teaches that the important matters in the law are justice, mercy and faithfulness.

Matthew stresses the importance that the gospel should first be preached to the Jews.

- In Matthew 10:5-7, Jesus initially commands his disciples not to go to the Gentiles, but rather to the lost sheep of Israel and preach to them that the kingdom of heaven is near, that is, that the kingship/reign of the Messiah has arrived (also 15:24).
- Matthew is the only Gospel which calls Jerusalem 'the holy city' (4:5).
- Matthew does not need to explain the Jewish customs, because its original Jewish readers knew their own customs (15:2).

4. The Gospel of Matthew is concerned with missionary work in the whole world.

Although the Gospel of Matthew is primarily directed to the Jews, it is definitely directed to every person in the world! From the very beginning, Matthew clearly shows how the Messiah of the Old Testament prophecy stands in relationship to the whole world and not just to Israel.

- In Matthew chapters 1-2 he records that the direct ancestors of Jesus included *foreigners* such as Tamar, Rahab and Ruth and that wise men from the East came to worship Jesus at his birth.
- In Matthew 8:5-13 he heals the servant of a Roman centurion and in Matthew 15:21-28 the daughter of a Canaanite woman. He especially praises the faith of these two foreigners!
- In Matthew 8:11-12 and 21:43 he prophesies that the kingdom of God will be taken away from the Jews as a nation and will be given to all kinds of people who will produce the fruit of the kingdom.
- In Matthew 22:9-10 he teaches that the gospel concerning the kingdom of God should be preached to anyone whom his servants can find!
- In Matthew 28:18-20, after Jesus Christ finished his work of atonement on the cross, he commissioned his disciples with a world-wide task. He commanded them, "Go and make disciples of all nations!"

You may ask the question, how is it possible that the same evangelist (Gospel writer) directs his message at the same time to the Jews and to the Gentiles? The answer is written in Acts 13:46. Paul and Barnabas boldly answered the Jews, "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord commanded us, 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'" And in Romans 1:16 Paul says, "The gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." After Christ's completed work on the cross, there is still *only one chosen race, consisting of all the believers in Christ, no matter to which race or nationality they belong by nature*. The distinctions that marked the Old Testament period have been taken away.

This is clearly taught in the following Bible passages: Romans 10:12; Galatians 3:7-9,26-29; Ephesians 2:14-16,19; Colossians 3:11; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 5:9; 7:9 and 22:17.

D. THE PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

The purpose of the Gospel of Matthew was *to win Jewish converts⁴ for Christ and strengthen them*. Matthew refutes the nationalistic expectation of the Jews in the days of Jesus, namely that the Messiah would conquer all their earthly enemies and establish an earthly kingdom in the world of which the Jews would be the rulers. Instead, he emphasises that the Messiah, Jesus Christ, has been given all authority in heaven and on earth and that he is not establishing a political kingdom on earth, but he is establishing the kingdom of God now in the hearts and lives of Christians and after his second coming over everything on earth.

Matthew also shows how Jesus Christ fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament and thus is the long expected Messiah. *According to God's providential guidance, the Old Testament prophetic books are immediately followed in the New Testament by the Gospel of Matthew, which shows how these prophecies have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.*

- In harmony with the rule stated in Romans 1:16, “first for the Jew, (then for the Gentile)”, and the command stated in Acts 1:8, “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea ... (and to the ends of the earth)”, the Gospel of Matthew is especially the Gospel directed to the Jews.
- In contrast, the Gospel of Mark is especially written for the Romans
- The Gospel of Luke is especially written for the Greeks.
- Although all these three Gospels present Jesus Christ as the only Saviour of sinners, the Gospel of John stresses the fact that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of people from every nation in the world. Thus it is very true what Paul writes in Romans 1:16, “The gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes; first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”

E. THE DIVISION OF MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE COMPARED TO JOHN.

The first three Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke (the Synoptic Gospels) can be divided into *three divisions* as follows:

1. The introduction to Jesus Christ.

- a. Matthew 1:1 to 4:11, Mark 1:1-13; Luke 1:1 to 4:13.
The preparation and public introduction (inauguration) of Jesus Christ.
- b. John 1:1-14. The preparation of Jesus begins in eternity.
John 1:15 to 2:12. The public introduction of Jesus.

2. The ministry of Jesus Christ.

- a. The three synoptic Gospels have two sections:
Matthew 4:12 to 15:20, in Mark 1:14 to 7:23 and in Luke 4:14 to 9:17.
The public ministry of Jesus to the crowds. This is known as:
The Great Galilean Ministry of Jesus.
Matthew 15:21 to 20:34, in Mark 7:24 to 10:52 and in Luke 9:18 to 19:27.
The private ministry of Jesus to his disciples. This consists of:
The Retirement Ministry of Jesus
The Later Judean Ministry of Jesus
The Perean Ministry of Jesus”
- b. In the Gospel of John, **the public ministry** of Jesus is recorded in five sections:
John 2:13 to 4:42. *The Early Judean Ministry.*
John 4:43 to 6:71. *The Galilean Ministry.*
John 7:1 to 10:39. *The Later Judean Ministry.*
John 10:40 to 12:11. *The Perean Ministry.*
John 12:12-50. *The Passion Week in Jerusalem.*

3. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- a. Matthew 21:1 to 28:20, Mark 11:1 to 16:20; Luke 19:28 to 24:53.
The Passion week and the resurrection.
- b. John chapter 13-21. **The private ministry** of Jesus.
The apostle John devoted almost 10 chapters to the Passion Week and resurrection of Jesus.

⁴ and Muslims who have been most influenced by Jews. Note the resemblance between the Jewish Law and Islamic Law. 1. Jews believe in one God (Deuteronomy 6:4) and the prophet Muhammad as first Arab followed that faith. 2. Jews pray 3 times a day (Daniel 6:10) and Muhammad changed the salat to 5 times a day. 3. Jews fast during several months (Zechariah 8:19) or 2 twice a week (Luke 18:12) and Muslims fast a whole month during Ramadan. 4. Jews give one tenth to God's work (Leviticus 26:30-33) and Muslims give one fortieth as zakat. 5. Jews go on three compulsory pilgrimages to Jerusalem every year (Deuteronomy 16:16) and Muslims go on hadj to Mecca once in their life if possible.

F. THE THEME AND DIVISION OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

Theme. "Jesus is the Great prophet."

In more detail, the Gospel of Matthew may be divided into *eight parts*. For the sake of clarity, this includes the two parts which are only found in the Gospel of John as follows:

1. The preparation of Jesus (5 B.C.).

Matthew 1 and 2. It consists of three sections:

- Matthew 1:1-17. *The genealogy of Jesus.*
In Luke 3 there is another genealogy. Matthew gives the descent of Joseph. Thus Jesus is the heir to the throne of David. Luke gives the descent of Mary. Thus Jesus is according to his human nature a descendant of David.
- Matthew 1:18-25. *The supernatural conception of Jesus.*
Matthew 1:20 says, "What is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."
- Matthew chapter 2. *The birth of Jesus.*
He is born in Bethlehem in about 5 B.C. and adored by wise men from a foreign country. He flees to Egypt from king Herod's persecution and afterwards makes his home in Nazareth in Galilee.

2. The inauguration of Jesus (December 26 - April 27).

Matthew 3:1 to 4:11.

These events took place between December A.D. 26 and April A.D. 27. Thus about 4 months long.

It consists of two sections:

- Matthew chapter 3. *The baptism of Jesus.*
John the Baptist is the herald of Jesus Christ. His ministry is to prepare the way for Jesus by preaching and baptising.
- Matthew chapter 4. *The victory of Jesus over Satan in his temptations.*

3. The Early Judean Ministry of Jesus (only in John)(April - December 27).

This is not described in Matthew but only in John 2:13 to 4:47. These events took place from April to December A.D. 27. Thus about 8 months long.

4. The Great Galilean Ministry of Jesus (December 27 - April 29).

Matthew 4:12 to 15:20.

These events took place between December A.D. 27 and April A.D. 29. Thus about 16 months long.

It consists of seven sections:

- Matthew 4:11 to 7:29. *Jesus proclaims the gospel of the kingdom.*
He calls his first disciples, teaches, preaches and heals people.
1st discourse, called the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus summarises his teaching.
- Matthew chapters 8 and 9. *Jesus performs miracles of the kingdom.*
He controls the realm of sicknesses and disabilities, the powers of nature, the realm of evil spirits and the realm of the dead.
- Matthew chapter 10. *Jesus calls, instructs and sends the ambassadors of the kingdom.*
He chooses twelve disciples and appoints them to be apostles.
2nd discourse. Jesus instructs his disciples.
- Matthew chapter 11 and 12. *Jesus praises John the Baptist and condemns his enemies.*
He extols John the Baptist as the herald of the kingdom and he condemns the unrepentant cities and the Pharisees.
- Matthew chapter 13. *Jesus tells parables of the kingdom.*
3rd discourse. Parables of the Kingdom.
In the parable of the sower he teaches how (the message of) the kingdom of God is received. In the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the yeast he teaches how the kingdom grows both outwardly and inwardly. In the parable of the hidden treasure and the parable of the pearl he teaches how precious the kingdom is. In the parable of the weeds and the parable of the net he teaches how the kingdom in its present form is mixed and how at the Last Judgement, Jesus Christ will remove out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil (13:41).
- Matthew chapter 14. *Jesus withdraws to solitary places and continues his ministry.*
After his rejection as a prophet in his hometown and Herod's killing of John the Baptist, Jesus goes to a solitary place. Crowds follow him and he performs more miracles of the kingdom.
- Matthew 15:1-20. *Jesus confirms the authority of the Bible above human traditions.*
He exposes the Pharisees as blind religious leaders, whom the people should not follow.

5. The Retirement Ministry of Jesus (April - October 29).

Matthew 15:21 to 18:35.

These events took place from April to October A.D. 29. Thus about 6 months long.

It consists of three sections:

- Matthew 15:21 to 16:12. Jesus trains the character of his disciples.
The disciples wanted Jesus to send the Canaanite woman away. Jesus deals with their lack of love by healing her daughter.
The disciples thought it was impossible to feed a crowd of hungry followers of Jesus. Jesus deals with their cold calculation by feeding four thousand men, besides women and children.
The disciples did not understand Jesus' warning against the yeast of the sign-seeking religious leaders of the Jews. Jesus deals with their blindness by explaining that he was warning them against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.
- Matthew 16:13 to 17:27. Jesus teaches his disciples the lesson of the cross.
Jesus teaches his disciples that it is necessary that he dies on the cross. He explains to them that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life (16:21). He also teaches that it is necessary for his disciples to take up their cross and follow him. He says, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (16:24). And during the transfiguration, Jesus teaches his disciples the glory to which the cross leads. The appearance of Moses and Elijah proves that Jesus is the fulfilment of the Old Testament Law and Prophets.
- Matthew chapter 18. Jesus teaches his disciples the attitudes of the kingdom.
4th discourse. The blessings of the kingdom.
They are limited to those people who have a childlike attitude and a forgiving spirit. The kingdom of God can only be entered by humility, trust and submission in relation to God and by a continuous forgiving and merciful spirit in relation to people.

6. The Later Judean Ministry of Jesus (only in John) (October - December 29).

This is not described in Matthew but only in John 7:1 to 10:39.

These events took place from October to December A.D. 29. Thus about 2 months long.

7. The Perean Ministry of Jesus (December 29 - April 30) together with some journeys back into Judea.

Matthew 19:1 to 20:34.

These events took place between December A.D. 29 and April A.D. 30. Thus about 4 months long.

It consists of three sections:

- Matthew 19:1-14. Jesus teaches about marriage, divorce, being single.
And about the importance of leading children to Jesus.
- Matthew 19:16 to 20:16. Jesus teaches about entering the kingdom only by God's grace.
The rich young ruler thought that a person could be saved by doing certain works, but Jesus taught that salvation by works is just as impossible as it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle! However, salvation from beginning to end is possible only with God (19:26).
In *the parable of the workers in the vineyard*, Jesus teaches that God deals sovereignly with people as he pleases. This does not mean that God is capricious, but rather that God deals sovereignly with people according to his eternal plan and in complete harmony with his divine characteristics of holiness and love!
- Matthew 20:17-34. Jesus repeatedly predicts his coming death and its meaning.
He says, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." He teaches that he was not just murdered, but that he came to lay down his life. He teaches that his death was a ransom, the righteous one died in the place of the unrighteous. And he fulfils the prophecy of Isaiah 53:12 that "he bears the sin of many". The death of Jesus Christ was a voluntary, vicarious and limited atonement.

8. The death and resurrection of Jesus (April - May 30).

Matthew chapters 21 to 28.

These events took place in April and May A.D. 30. Thus seven weeks long.

It consists of seven sections:

- Matthew 21:1 to 22:14. Jesus faces increasing opposition by false religious leaders.
On the Sunday of the Passion Week, his triumphal entry into Jerusalem is misunderstood by the crowds. On the Monday of the Passion Week, he cleanses the temple and curses the fig tree. On the Tuesday of the Passion Week, he explains that his cursing of the barren fig tree prefigures that the kingdom of God is taken away from the chief priests and Pharisees and is given to other people who will produce its fruit (21:43). His authority to cleanse the temple is questioned by the religious leaders. He tells three parables about those who would enter the kingdom of God and these intensify the opposition of the religious leaders.
- Matthew 22:15-46. Jesus confutes the questions of the false religious leaders.
He conquers their plan to trap him in his words with respect to taxes and politics. He exposes the real reason why they teach false teachings as not knowing the Bible or the real nature of God (22:29). He silences their hair splitting arguments about the law by pointing out that the whole Law and Prophets hang on the two commandments of loving God and your neighbour as yourself. By using the Bible, he forces them to think about the real nature of the Messiah, the Christ.
- Matthew chapter 23. Jesus condemns the hypocrisy of the false religious leaders.

5th discourse. Jesus pronounces seven woes the religious leaders.

He utters a prophetic lamentation over the unrepentant city of Jerusalem.

- Matthew chapters 24 and 25. *Jesus prophesies the future destruction of Jerusalem, the great tribulation and his second coming.*
6th discourse. The second coming.

He teaches that Jerusalem's doom is a *type or illustration* of the events during the Last days just before his second coming. He describes his second coming on the clouds with power and great glory and with many angels who will gather the elect from every country in the world (24:30-31). He describes the last judgement where all the people in the

world will be judged on basis of their relationship to Jesus Christ.

The cursed people are those who neglected to do what Jesus commanded and did not believe in Jesus. They will be assigned to eternal punishment in the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and all his evil spirits (25:41,46).

The blessed people by God the Father since the beginning of the creation and believe in Jesus are righteous in God's eyes. They will receive eternal life in the kingdom of God as manifested in the new heaven and new earth (25:34,46). Jesus tells *the parable of the ten virgins* and *the parable of the talents* in order to admonish his disciples to be vigilant.

- Matthew chapter 26. *Jesus is betrayed, arrested, tried by the Jewish religious authorities and disowned.*
On *Wednesday* of the Passion Week, his enemies plot his death and one of his disciples, Judas, agrees to betray him for a bribe of money. On *Thursday* of the Passion Week, Jesus celebrates the Passover with his disciples and institutes the Lord's Supper. On *Friday* of the Passion Week just after Thursday midnight, Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane. Then he is betrayed by Judas and arrested by the temple guards. During the night, he is tried in turn by Annas, the most powerful person in the Sanhedrin, and by Caiaphas, the high priest during that year. Peter disowns Jesus three times. Just after day-break⁵, Jesus is tried and condemned by the whole Sanhedrin to be put to death.
- Matthew chapter 27. *Jesus is tried by the Roman civil authorities, mocked, crucified and buried.*
Because the Jewish Sanhedrin did not possess the power to execute a death sentence, they bring Jesus to the Roman authorities. Early on Friday of the Passion Week, Jesus is tried in turn by the Roman procurator, Pilate, by king Herod and again by Pilate, who handed him over to be crucified. Jesus is crucified at 09.00 hours⁶ He died about 15.00 hours⁷. Joseph of Arimathea with the help of Nicodemus buried Jesus in a new tomb in his garden before 1800 hours⁸. On *Saturday* of the Passion Week, the chief priests, who were Sadducees, and the Pharisees arranged for a guard to be placed outside the tomb.
- Matthew chapter 28. *Jesus is resurrected and appears to his disciples.*
On *Sunday*, the first day of the new week, very early in the morning⁹, Jesus was resurrected! By his resurrection, Jesus triumphed over the false religious leaders, but they bribed the guard to spread a false rumour that his body was stolen by his disciples. This rumour failed, because Jesus appeared for forty days to many people. During one of these appearances to his disciples on a mountain in Galilee, Jesus gave them the great commission, to go and make disciples of all the nations in the world.

G. MATTHEW TEACHES THAT JESUS IS THE GREAT PROPHET.

1. Jesus was the Prophet in the Old Testament and fulfilled the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament.

1 Peter 1:10-11 says that 'the Spirit of Christ' in the prophets of the Old Testament was pointing to and predicting about the sufferings and glories of the Coming Messiah, Jesus Christ! Thus, *Jesus Christ himself was the eternal Prophet who prophesied through the Old Testament prophets!* Matthew looks backwards and his purpose is to show that Jesus Christ, who lived as a human on earth, is the Messiah and that the major events of his life took place in fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. More than forty times Matthew says, "What was said through the prophet ... was fulfilled" (2:17).

For example, many details of the prophecies concerning his suffering, death and burial were fulfilled. Zechariah 11 prophesied that he would be sold for thirty pieces of silver. Psalm 41 prophesied that he would be betrayed by one of his friends. Zechariah 13 prophesied that his disciples would be scattered. And at his crucifixion, Psalm 22 prophesied that the people would offer Jesus gall and vinegar to drink; they would divide up his clothes by casting lots; and the passers-by would shake their heads and insult him, challenging him to rescue himself and even challenging God to rescue him from the cross. Amos 8 prophesied that there would be three hours of darkness from noon onwards. Psalm 22 prophesied that Jesus would shout "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Isaiah 53 prophesied that Jesus would be buried in a rich man's grave. And Jonah 2 prophesied that he would be dead during three days.

2. Jesus was the Prophet in the New Testament and fulfilled the prophecies he made during his life on earth.

⁵ Mark 15:1

⁶ Mark 15:25

⁷ Matthew 27:45-50

⁸ Mark 15:42-47; John 19:31-37

⁹ John 20:1; Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2

In Exodus 18:15-19, Moses prophesied, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you.

Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people”¹⁰. In Matthew 17:5 God himself said that Jesus Christ is this Prophet and that all people must listen to him! Thus, Jesus Christ himself is still the eternal Prophet who speaks the words of God and who prophesies in the New Testament!

Matthew also looks forward and describes how Jesus as Prophet prophesies his own suffering, death and resurrection. At least five times Jesus prophesied his future suffering, for example, in Matthew 20:18-19 he says, “We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. In Matthew 26:2 he even prophesied *when he would be crucified*. He says, “As you know, the Passover is two days away - and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.” *On the third day* he will be raised to life!” Everybody can read in Matthew 26-28 how all this was literally fulfilled!

3. Jesus was the Prophet in the New Testament who prophesied what would happen in the future in the world.

In Matthew chapters 24 and 25, Jesus as Prophet prophesies clearly that before the end of the history of this present world, the gospel will be preached to every nation in the world and that Christians will be persecuted by non-Christians. He prophesied that there will be many wars and disasters in the world, a Great Tribulation in the end unequalled in the history of the world and that many false Christs and false prophets will appear trying to mislead the Christians. He prophesied that he himself will finally come on the clouds with power and great glory, and everybody in the east and in the west will see his coming! Then the resurrection from the dead and the Last Judgement of all people will take place. He will send out his angels to gather the elect from every country in the world and he will judge all people in the world on the basis of their relationship to Jesus Christ and their works.

H. MATTHEW TEACHES THE REVELATION OF GOD’S HISTORY OF SALVATION.

Matthew shows that Christianity is *not an interval of Judaism*. *It supersedes the Old Testament Israel in the sense that Israel is continued on a higher plane and enlarged to include the believers from all other nations*. The Kingdom of Christ is far more comprehensive than Israel. Jesus came to make atonement for the sins of very many people of all the nations in the world. The gospel will be preached to all the nations in the world.

1. Jesus came to fulfil God’s promises to the natural nation of Israel and to warn Israel.

Matthew begins by pointing out clearly that Jesus Christ *first* came to the Jews in order to fulfil the promises that God made to his Old Testament people. Jesus did not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them (5:17-20). Jesus was first of all sent to the lost sheep of Israel (15:24) and he sends his disciples with the clear instruction not to go among the Gentiles or to enter any town of the Samaritans, but rather to go to the lost sheep of Israel (10:5-6). The gospel is *the good news* that the long-expected Messiah has indeed come!

But at the same time, the gospel of the Kingdom was a warning to the Jewish nation, that if they continued to harden their hearts in unbelief, God would exclude them from his kingdom, while he would take very many Gentiles into his kingdom as his people (8:11-12; 21:42-44).

For example, in Matthew chapters 5-7, the traditional interpretations of the Law, which were highly regarded in Israel, were rejected by Christ.

In Matthew chapters 8-9, in spite of the miracles Jesus performed in Israel, the religious leaders of Israel continued in their unbelief and opposition. When Jesus forgave sins, they accused Jesus of blaspheming (9:2-3). When he ate with tax collectors and sinners, they despised him (9:10-11; 11:19). When he raised a girl from the dead, they laughed at him (9:23-24). When he drove out demons, they said that he did it by the power of Satan (9:32-34).

In Matthew chapter 11, he denounced the unrepentant cities of Israel.

Matthew chapter 12-13 describes how the Jews through their leaders hardened their hearts and rejected their Messiah. When he showed mercy on the Sabbath to the hungry, the Pharisees mercilessly condemned the innocent (12:1-8). When he healed a person on the Sabbath, they plotted to kill him (12:11-14). When he healed a blind and mute person, they accused him of being an agent of Satan (12:22-24). Therefore, Jesus said that the prophecy in Isaiah (6:9-10) had come into fulfilment. The Israelites had stopped their ears for his teachings and now they could not hear or understand it anymore. They had shut their eyes for his miracles and now they could not see its significance anymore. Israel had hardened their hearts and now their hearts would be hardened and they could not repent anymore (13:13-15).

In Matthew chapter 15, Jesus exposes the Jewish religious leaders as putting their man-made traditions above God’s Word, of worshipping God in vain and of being blind guides who lead their people into a pit. Jesus warns, “Every plant that my heavenly father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots” (15:13).

¹⁰ Acts 3:22-23

In his parables in Matthew chapter 21, he teaches that the tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom ahead of the unrepentant chief priests and elders of Israel (21:31). And he says to them, “The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.” As a result, they started to look for a way to arrest him.

2. Jesus came to establish the kingdom of God among every nation in the world.

Matthew makes it very clear that Jesus did not only come for the Jews, but that he came for all people in the world. He came to establish the kingdom of God among all the nations of the world.

For example, in Matthew chapter 13, Jesus teaches that the field of his work is *the whole world* and that he sows “sons of the kingdom” everywhere in the world right up to the end of the age when the last judgement will take place (13:38,40).

And in Matthew chapter 28, when Jesus had fulfilled the demands of the Law and the prophecies of the Old Testament by his atoning death and resurrection, he tells his disciples that all authority in heaven and *everywhere on earth* has been given to him. And he gives his disciples the great commission, “Go and make disciples of *all nations* and ... teach them to obey everything I have commanded you” (28:18-20).

3. Jesus reveals how the kingdom of God will be perfectly completed at his second coming.

In Matthew 13:31-34, Jesus teaches that at his second coming, he will send out his angels to weed out of *his kingdom in its present form* “everything that causes sin” and “all who do evil”. At the last judgement, the wicked people will be thrown in hell, while the righteous will inherit the kingdom in its final form. *The kingdom of God in its final form* will be the new heaven and the new earth, which is described in Revelation 21-22. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful. Only those people whose names are written in Christ’s ‘book of life’ will enter the kingdom in its final form¹¹.

I. MATTHEW TEACHES THE REALITY AND GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

1. The Messiah as King in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament clearly prophesies the coming Messiah and his everlasting kingdom. For example, in Isaiah 9:7 Isaiah prophesied, “Of the increase of his government and peace *there will be no end*. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness *from that time on and for ever*.” And in Daniel 7:14 Daniel prophesies, “He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is *an everlasting dominion* that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that *will never be destroyed*. In spite of these clear prophesies, the Jews in the time of Jesus expected a *nationalistic kingdom of the Jews*, in which the Messiah would conquer all their earthly enemies and establish an earthly kingdom in the world of which the Jews would be the rulers.

2. Jesus as King in the Gospel of Matthew.

Matthew shows that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah and that he has already come to establish his kingdom! In Matthew chapter 3, the forerunner or herald of the Messiah, John the Baptist, goes before this ruler, just like a Roman officer had to go before his ruler, commanding that the roads be repaired over which his master would travel. According to the prophecy in Isaiah 40:3, this ruler is nobody less than ‘JhWweH’, ‘the LORD’ himself (3:3)! And in fulfilment of Psalm 2, Jesus as ‘the Son of God’ is established by God as the One who will inherit all the nations on earth (3:17)¹².

3. The Kingdom of God in the Gospel of Matthew.

In the Gospel of Matthew the word ‘kingdom’ is used 55 times and 13 of its 19 parables deal with the kingdom.

The Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of heaven.

‘The Kingdom of *heaven*’ emphasises that this kingdom is established from heaven and it means essentially the same as ‘the Kingdom of God’¹³. In Daniel 2:44 the prophet says, “In the time of those kings, *the God of heaven* will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure for ever!”

The Kingdom of God has a present and a future form.

The kingdom has a present form and is ‘among us’ in the world, but it is ‘not of the world’ (12:28)¹⁴. In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 Jesus teaches how in the present time the citizens of the kingdom should live in his kingdom. The kingdom is *revealed* to the disciples of Jesus, but remains *a mystery* (obscure) to those who have hardened their hearts (13:11-17). The kingdom has presently *a mixed character*: there are weeds sowed among the wheat and there are bad fish among the good fish (13:25,48). But the kingdom also has a future form. At his second coming, Jesus will send his angels to weed out of his kingdom “everything that causes sin and all who do evil” (13:41)¹⁵.

¹¹ Revelation 21:27

¹² Psalm 2:7-8

¹³ Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32

¹⁴ John 18:36

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:24-26

The entering of the Kingdom has a cost.

A person's relationship to the kingdom determines his eternal destiny (13:36-43,47-50). The rich, young ruler had to learn that it is impossible to enter the kingdom through one's riches, power, position or religion (keeping the law)(19:23). Jesus teaches that the kingdom and its righteousness must be sought first (6:33).

It must be entered through the narrow gate that leads to life, that is, it must be entered through faith and obedience to God's will (7:13,21). Only those who have a humble, trustful and submissive spirit of a child will enter the kingdom (18:3-4). The kingdom is very precious to possess, just like a treasure in a field. And it costs very much to establish. Just like buying a pearl, it costs everything a person has (13:44-46).

The growth of the Kingdom is spectacular, both outwardly and inwardly.

It grows like a small mustard seed into a tree and it pervades or influences everything like yeast in the dough (13:31-33). The gospel of the kingdom is now preached in every town and village (9:35) and it will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations (24:14). The kingdom is forcefully advancing and forceful men and women are laying hold of it (11:12).

The people of the kingdom are different than the people in the world.

They forgive their brothers again and again from their heart (18:23f). Even the teachers of the kingdom are different than the Jewish teachers of the Law. According to Matthew 13:52, a genuine teacher of God's word must first become "a trained disciple of God's kingdom". Such a teacher is able to continually use the 'old' and eternal truths of the Bible and apply them again and again to the 'new' situations in the world!

4. The institutions of the kingdom in the Gospel of Matthew.

What is the kingdom?

A short definition of the kingdom is the following: The kingdom of God is the kingship, sovereign rule and complete power of God over all people and all things. In particular, it is the kingship and rule of God through Jesus Christ that is recognized in the hearts and operative in the lives of God's people (6:10; 5:20). It is based on the work of salvation of Jesus Christ for his people and the application of that work by the Holy Spirit in his people. It results in the complete salvation of believers from beginning to end (19:24-25), in their constitution as a Church on earth (16:18-19), in their intellectual-, physical-, social- and spiritual influence on every aspect of human society (6:10; 13:33) and finally in a redeemed universe, the new heaven and new earth at the second coming of Jesus Christ (25:34).

How does one enter the kingdom?

To enter the Kingdom you must be born-again.¹⁶ You are born-again when you believe in Jesus Christ (that he died for you and was resurrected) and when you asked him to come into your heart and life.¹⁷ Open the door of your heart and invite Jesus Christ into your heart and life.¹⁸ If you do this, then the kingdom of God (that is, the King himself) is within you.¹⁹

What are the visible institutions of the kingdom?

Jesus did not only preach the message of the kingdom, he gathered people around himself and organised them into his Church. Jesus called people into his fellowship and trained them to carry on his work. He called them his *disciples* and later send them out as his *apostles*. They formed the foundation for the visible Church everywhere in the world (16:18)²⁰. Thus, the visible expression of the kingdom of God in the world in the present is the Church and the Church has both a missionary form (10:5-15) and a local form (18:17).

J. MATTHEW ALSO HAS AN APOLOGETIC PURPOSE.

In all probability there is also an apologetic purpose behind the Gospel of Matthew. It answers a lot of questions about the Lord Jesus Christ that may well have been raised against him by his enemies.

The history about his childhood answers any charge of illegitimacy against Jesus.

The history about his flight to Egypt and return to Nazareth accounts for his residence in despised Nazareth rather than in Bethlehem.

The record about bribing the guard refutes any allegation that the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus and that he had not been resurrected from the dead.

The inclusion of Gentiles and notable sinners in the genealogy of Jesus helps the Jewish Christians to realise that the Gospel is for sinners of all nations and thus makes a clear distinction between Judaism and Christianity.

¹⁶ John 3:3

¹⁷ John 1:12-13; 1 John 5:11-13

¹⁸ Revelation 3:20.

¹⁹ Luke 17:20-21.

²⁰ Ephesians 2:20