



## MATTHEW

Who wrote the book?

While Matthew did not sign his own name to “his” gospel, the early church uniformly attested to the apostle’s authorship of the book. As early as AD 140, a Christian named Papias wrote that Matthew had compiled the sayings of the Lord in Hebrew (presumably before Matthew translated them into Greek for a larger audience).

Matthew’s name appears in all the biblical lists of the twelve apostles, though Mark and Luke refer to him as Levi. His history as a tax collector distinguished him from the other apostles, and immediately after his call to follow Jesus—an event he recorded in Matthew 9:9—Matthew hosted a feast for Jesus in his home with an invitation list made up of Matthew’s sinful friends. Apparently Matthew did not think it odd that Jesus and he would associate with the sinful and downtrodden of society.

Where are we?

Matthew is the most Jewish-centric of the four gospels. The apostle regularly invoked the writings of the Old Testament prophets in an effort to illustrate Jesus’s identity as Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

However, the gospel of Matthew has been notoriously difficult to date. Several factors speak to a date ranging from AD 60–65. First of all, the book makes no mention of the destruction of the temple, an event which occurred in AD 70. Such a cataclysmic event likely would have received some comment, particularly in a book so clearly influenced by Judaism. The largely Jewish character of the book also suggests it was written at a time when much of the evangelism by Christians was directed more exclusively at Jews, something that became less and less common as the decades passed. Finally, many scholars believe Mark to have been the first gospel composed, making it most probable that Matthew was written soon after.

Why is Matthew so important?

The apostle Matthew, a Jew himself, offered a decidedly Jewish perspective on the ministry of Jesus. He included more than fifty direct citations—and even more indirect allusions—from the Old Testament. This exceeds any of the other gospels and indicates that Matthew had the Jewish population in mind when he sat down to write. Matthew’s extensive connections between Jesus and the Old Testament provide ample prophetic evidence for Jesus’s ministry but also give contemporary readers a glimpse into how first-century readers approached the Old Testament with a Christ-centered mind-set.

