

Lee Mount Baptist Church Bible Study

Matthew

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Matthew is the first book in the New Testament because the early Christians thought that he had been the first to write anything like this. However, we are pretty certain that he was not because most of Mark is also in Matthew and Luke. So it looks more likely that Mark wrote his gospel first and that Matthew and Luke used it as the framework for their books. It is difficult to understand why Mark would have written a 'cut down' version of Matthew or Luke; it is much more likely that he was first and they followed.

Mark only covers Jesus' ministry from his baptism to his resurrection — the last part of Mark 16 is generally agreed to be later additions. Mark is also the only one to call his book a gospel though the term is now applied to all four writers.

Matthew and Luke are writing for very different audiences. Matthew is writing for Christians who were either Jewish or converts to Judaism or understood the Jewish scriptures in detail; Luke is writing for non-Jewish Christians for whom Jesus' Jewish heritage would have meant very little.

Matthew is concerned to demonstrate that Jesus really is the Messiah foretold in the Jewish scriptures; as we know from Josephus, there were plenty of people popping up claiming to be the Messiah and to be the person who would free the Jews from the Romans. Also Matthew was almost certainly writing after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in 70AD at the end of the Jewish revolt. So, in order to prove that Jesus, the Messiah, had already come and that his kingdom was rather different from the one which many Jews had anticipated, Matthew relates Jesus' life, ministry and mission very firmly to the promises of God given through the Jews down the ages. He stresses this point by calling his book the 'origins' of Jesus.

Apart from the beginning and the end, Matthew structures his book around five discourses:

1. First narrative and Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 3:1–8:1)
2. Second narrative and discourse (Matthew 8:2–11:1): mission
3. Third narrative and discourse (Matthew 11:2–13:53): Satan and the Holy Spirit
4. Fourth narrative and discourse (Matthew 13:54–19:1): preparing for the crucifixion
5. Fifth narrative and discourse (Matthew 19:2–26:1): the journey to Jerusalem