

The Gospel of Matthew

It has been my practice that on Sunday evenings I try to bring a lesson from the Old Testament while on Sunday mornings I look to New Testament writings for a start. What I am going to be doing on Sunday evenings on occasion, at least for a while, is to take a different approach to our lessons and try and make them more analytical in nature as we look at the different books of the New Testament, their origins, their authors, the dates of their writing, their context, etc., in an effort to give us a better understanding of the scriptures. Something that must always be remembered as we study the Bible is that it is made up of 66 different books, written over a period of about 1500 years. The New Testament is made up of 27 different books written over a span of about 60 years by some 8, possibly 9, different writers. This is one of the strongest external evidences that exists for the veracity of the Bible, for it being just exactly what it says it is...

1

The Word of God

Now, some might ask why I call this an external evidence. To understand that, let's take a moment and look at these ideas of internal and or external evidence. An example of internal evidence is found in the discussion of...

Ps 8:5-8

2

5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty! 6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, 7 All sheep and oxen, And also the beasts of the field, 8 The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, Whatever passes through the paths of the seas.

Some 3 thousand years before the so-called Father of the Seas, Matthew Maury, wrote of the currents of the seas in the mid 1800's, David, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote of the

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"Paths of the Seas"

Maury is credited with the discovery of the ocean currents in the modern world. Now the Vikings, the Chinese, and or the Phoenicians, or many others would probably argue with that statement since they were plying the oceans hundreds of years before Maury was even born. The point is that even before any of the early sea-faring nations built their first ship, God, through David, describes the fact that there are currents, paths, of the seas. That is an example of internal evidence that is then corroborated by external research and evidence.

External evidence is different because it is not necessarily contained within the scriptures, but is a fact or set of facts that could not possibly be true if not for the divine influence of God. External evidence is that which is not contained within the Bible, but rather comes from without and points to its truthfulness.

That said, consider the odds that that many writers over that many years could come up with something that is so closely aligned in harmony and focus. Those odds are astronomical. It truly could not have happened on its own, especially given the fact that many of the writers did not have access to what others had written, even if writing on the same subjects, and yet they all say the same thing with no contradictions. That is also an important piece of evidence when you consider the vast number of people, who, over the last 2000 some years, have tried their best to find such a contradiction just so they could justify their unbelief. And make no mistake that is the only reason anyone tries to find fault with the Word of God, they want to justify and excuse their decision to ignore it and not believe it, because, if they ever admitted to believing any part of it, that confession of faith would demand from them some sort of action addressing that faith. So, when you factor in the ramifications of what 66 different books written by so many different writers over that many years really means, the only logical and common sense conclusion that can be arrived at is that there was in reality a single source controlling the writing of each of those 66 books. That source has to

have been around for at least 1500 years and that just covers the writing of the books, not to mention the time frame of the history that is contained in those books. What or who has been around for the history of the Earth, who could have guided each of those writers so that their writings were harmonious and cohesive throughout all 66 of those books? There is only one answer that fits the criteria and is both logical and makes common sense, and that is God.

2 *Tim 3:16-17*

4

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

God can be the only explanation for something that could not have happened without Him. This brings us to our discussion of the hour. The first book that we are going to look at is...

5

The Gospel According to Matthew

As with any study of the scriptures there are some questions that should be considered.

6

A) Who is writing?
What do we know about the writer, if anything?

7

B) Who are they writing to?
What do we know about the target audience? Things like location, traditions, political atmosphere at the time of the writing, religious atmosphere.

8

C) What is the context?
What is the writer discussing?

9

D) What do other passages say about the same subject?
What does God say about the topic?

We will try to answer these questions, to the best of our ability, for each of the books we look at.

So as we look at the book of Matthew, the first question is;

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A) Who is writing?

Interestingly, Matthew does not name himself as the author, as does Paul in many of his epistles, nor is he mentioned in the book as the author. The following is an excerpt from the New Ungers Bible Dictionary...

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Even though Matthew, also known as Levi, is not mentioned as the author, no less than 17 independent witnesses from the first 4 centuries attest to the fact that he wrote the book. He was a Jew whose father's name was Alphaeus. As he was a tax collector under the Romans at Capernaum and thus a hated publican, it is unthinkable that his name would have been attached to the first gospel had he not been the actual writer of it.

Now with that said, Nelson's Bible Dictionary argues against the fact that the Apostle Matthew wrote the Gospel bearing his name. His argument is that the book was written in Greek and not Aramaic or Hebrew and quotes extensively from the Gospel of Mark. I tend to accept the 17 witnesses testimony that Matthew is the author. As a publican, a tax-collector, Matthew was not thought very highly of by his fellow Jews. Publicans not only collected taxes for the Roman government, but they also supplied their own living through the funds that they collected. You rarely found a poor publican. They were assumed to be dishonest and cheaters. They took more from the people than they should just to get the money. That makes Unger's thought of the book being attributed to Matthew have even more relevance.

Next is...

12

B) Who are they writing to?

Matthew's Gospel is full of clues that it was written to Jewish readers. First, the author makes no attempt to translate or explain Jewish words and practices. He assumes that his target audience already understands them. Also, the gospel quotes more frequently from the Old Testament than does any other gospel. And maybe the most important indication is that Jesus is portrayed as a descendant of Abraham, Jacob, and David, three of the greatest personalities of the Old Testament, and He surpasses them all, as well as Moses. Matthew traces Jesus' genealogy back to Abraham, the father of the faith, through Joseph, who the Jews would recognize as the legal line of lineage. This lineage establishes Jesus as not only a Jew of the purest order, but of the line of David, thus putting Him into a position where He could and would fulfill the prophecy that David's throne would be established forever.

Matthew is trying to convince the Jews that Jesus was indeed sent by God and was the messiah. So then...

13 C) What is the context?

When you look at this book, it is obvious that Matthew is stressing Jesus as King and as the fulfillment of OT prophecy. While it does contain apocalyptic, end of time, and ecclesiastical or theological, ramifications as well, the primary focus is to teach Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the Son of God and to illustrate and reveal what He did for all of mankind. The arrangement of material bears the imprint of an orderly mind and what seems to be a penchant for tidy organization and grouping, which would be traits in keeping with the tradition that the author was indeed Matthew, the tax collector and bookkeeper.

Speaking to that purpose, note what Jesus claims for Himself...

Matt 28:16-18

14

16 But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. **17** When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. **18** And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

This is part of the message that Matthew is trying to get across to the Jews. Jesus is the Son of God. Twice in His Gospel, Matthew records God as affirming that very fact...

Matt 3:16-17

15

16 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, **17** and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

And also in...

Matt 17:5

16

5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!"

Jesus had the authority to command His disciples, as well as us, to...

Matt 28:19-20

17

19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

18

"Go into all the world and teach everyone His commandments"

This passage is the scene of Jesus, after his resurrection, meeting with His disciples on a hill in Galilee. Jesus declares his absolute authority to them. I can see in this an obvious reminder to

them of the many times in His ministry that they had seen Jesus showing His authority and power, and now, with their eye-witness knowledge of His resurrection, it must have been evident to them that He was exactly who He claimed to be. So then His commission to them to...

"Go into all the world and teach"

Is further enhanced by the authority that is His. He commanded His disciples to, according to the NIV...

19

"Make disciples of all nations"

Now, a disciple is one...

20

- 1) Who willingly becomes a learner of the Master's teaching and seeks to follow His example by implementing His teaching

A quick aside, Karen and I were talking just yesterday about a perversion of the passage...

Matt 7:7-8

21

7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

This passage which, in the context, is speaking about looking for God and a relationship with Him, is being changed and preached that it means you can find exactly what you are looking for, and that that is what God is promising. If you want fame, look for it with a singular focus and you will find it. If you want riches, seek it with all you might and you will achieve it, Nothing is further from the truth. That is not God's promise, in any way, shape, or form. God doesn't care if we are famous or rich He desires that we be faithful and obedient.

A true disciple is one who is seeking God, and is one...

22

- 2) Who passes on to others what they have learned.

So then, hearing Jesus' command, the disciples went forth make disciples of others. Here, now, is the question...

23

- D) What do other passages say about the same subject?

He whole of the Old Testament points forward to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus the Christ. We see in Isa. 7:14 that the Lord would give a sign concerning the messiah that he would be born of a virgin. In 2 Sam. 7:12-13, the Lord makes a promise to David that one of his lineage would be raised up to establish a kingdom and rule on his throne forever. In Gen. 3 the Lord makes a promise to Satan that the seed of woman would bruise his head. These prophecies are all fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Therein is the message that the disciples carried as they went out to make other disciples. They were commanded to carry forward Christ's mission. In the process of making these disciples, they would baptize those that had chosen to become new disciples into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The disciples were to pass on to others everything that Jesus had taught them. That's the promise that Jesus gives His disciples in...

John 14:26

24

26 "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

Most scholars divide the book of Matthew into seven sections: a beginning and an end, with five sections of teachings between them. Because of this, Matthew has been recognized for its emphasis on the teachings of Jesus.

Chapters 1-4 open the Gospel with the genealogy of Jesus and builds to the proclamation of God in 3:17: "This is my beloved Son." The genealogies confirm Jesus' authority, and remind the reader of His relation to all nations by mentioning those that are not of Jewish lineage such as

Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and the wife of a Hittite. In these chapters Matthew relates how the wise men came seeking the King of the Jews, the angel of God that affirmed Jesus' divine nature to Joseph, the child receiving a messianic name, and Joseph taking his family to Egypt to escape the threats of Herod. We saw how that when Jesus came to John to be baptized, the voice from heaven proclaimed Him as God's Son. Jesus then goes Galilee to begin His public ministry.

Chapters 5-7 are commonly called the Sermon on the Mount. The text calls it the Teaching from the Mount (5:2). Jesus gives His essential doctrine in this teaching.

Matt 5:19

25

19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

He shows them in these passages how that they had perverted God's Law into what they wanted it to be and not what God had intended. "You have heard it said, but I say to you."

The next section, **chapters 8-10**, opens with a series of ten miracles demonstrating Jesus' authority and power over disease, natural catastrophes, demons, and even death. What He had demonstrated verbally in the teachings on the Mount, Jesus actively demonstrated in these displays of His power. His disciples wondered "that even the winds and sea obey him!" (8:27). After demonstrating His power and authority, Jesus then gives authority to His disciples to go out and heal and teach as He had done, preparing them, if you will, for their final Commission in 28:18-20. Matthew continues to teach later generations of believers about Jesus' power and concern for all mankind.

Chapters 11:1-13:52 show how various people reacted to Jesus' authority, including even those that were Gentile. So when Jesus commissioned His disciples to go into all the world and teach, they were aware that he had already begun the movement by His example in His earthly ministry.

Chapter 13:53-18:35 opens with the story of Jesus' teaching in the synagogue in Nazareth. The people had the same response to Jesus' teaching as the crowds did at the end of the Sermon on the mount. They were astonished (compare 13:54; 7:28). It is in this section that we see His hometown people rejecting Him (13:57). His disciples accepted Him (14:33), and so did the Gentile woman (15:22). Again, Jesus taught authoritatively and related to Gentiles.

Chapters 19-25 make the transition from Galilee to Jerusalem. Jesus dramatically presented His kingly authority by His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and by cleansing the Temple. Then, the chief priests and elders challenge Him saying, "By what authority doest thou these things?" (21:23). Jesus answered with more parables and other teachings. He then warns the people about the examples of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

The last section, **chapters 26-28**, the close, if you will, has no teaching situations, per se, but it tells of the conspiracy ending in Jesus' sacrifice. In the trial, Jesus was asked if He was the Messiah. He responds by affirming His authority when He says: "***Thou hast said.***" The centurion proclaimed: "Truly this was the Son of God" (27:54). As in the story of His birth, so in the end of his writing, Matthew stresses Jesus' divinity, His kingly authority, His power, and His Sonship.

When Christ declares His authority to His disciples in 28:18, they understand because they have seen His authority displayed as they lived with Him. When we read 28:18, we should understand what the disciples understood, that Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and on Earth. When Jesus commanded His disciples to make other disciples by teaching all that He taught them, they knew what to teach, that is what Matthew teaches us today, all that Jesus taught.

The only real question is whether or not we are seeking. Are you?