

INTRODUCTION TO THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

I. Unique Features of Matthew¹

When Matthew is compared to Mark and Luke, a number a unique features emerge.

A. Unique material

When we compare Matthew to Mark, Matt is almost twice as long. Matthew has taken almost all of Mark into his Gospel and redacted it to suit his purposes. In addition to Mark, Matt has also used Q/q and M-material, which is thought to be unique material collected by the Matthean community.²

B. Matthew's use of Mark³

1. Organization

Five miracle stories are moved to Matt 8-9 where other miracles occur.

<u>Mark</u>	<u>Matthew</u>
Peter's mother-in-law healed (Mk. 1:29-34)	Leper cleansed (8:1-4)
Leper cleansed (Mk 1:40-45)	Centurion's servant healed (8:5-13)
Paralytic healed and forgiven (2:1-12)	Peter's mother-in-law healed (8:14-17)
Stilling of the storm (Mk 4:36-41)	Stilling of the storm (8:23-27)
Demons cast out (Mk 5:1-20)	Demons cast out (8:28-9:1)
Hemorrhages stopped & dead raised (Mk 5:21-43)	Paralytic healed and forgiven (9:2-8)
Centurion's servant healed (Mk 7:1-10)	Hemorrhages topped & dead raised (9:18-26)
No parallel	Sight to blind & speech to mute (9:27-34)

2. Abbreviation

Matthew tends to abbreviate Mark and prunes away details:

- a. Demoniac's chains and behavior (Mt 8:28; Mk 5:2-5)
- b. Unroofing the tiles for paralytic (Mt 9:2; Mk 2:2-5)
- c. Crowd and disciples in story of woman's healing (Mt 9:20-22; Mk 5:24-34)
- d. Naked young man in the garden (Mt 26:47-56; Mk 14:43-52)

3. Stylistic improvements

- a. Greek more polished
- b. Historical presents changed (130 out of 151)
- c. Mark's repetitions (*and* and *immediately*) reduced

¹ Much of the following is from Mark Allan Powell, *Introduction to the Gospels* (1998) 63-65.

² For a chart of the unique Matthean material, see Mark Allan Powell, *Introduction to the Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998) 6.

³Mark Allan Powell, *Introduction to the Gospels* (1998) 63-65.

- d. Pronouns lacking clear antecedents are clarified

4. Corrections

Apparent inaccuracies are corrected

- a. “King Herod (Mk 6:14) becomes “Herod the tetrarch” (Mt 14:1)
- b. Abiathar as high priest is omitted by Matthew (Mt 12:4; Mk 2:26). Ahimelech was the high priest, not Abiathar (see 1 Sam 21:1-6).

5. Application to Matthew’s community

a. To fit a Jewish community

- i. Omits Mark’s explanation of Jewish customs (Mk 7:3-4; 7:19)
- ii. Kingdom of heaven replaces kingdom of God

b. To fit an urban community

Some have argued that Matthew is writing to a more urban community, whereas Mark wrote to more rural society. For example, Matthew changes “village” (*kōmē*) to “city” (*polis*) or omits reference to villages. Mark uses *kōmē* six times; Matthew four.

- i. Mk 6:6 “villages” // Mt 9:35 “cities and villages”
- ii. Mk 6:36 “country and villages” // Mt 14:15 “villages”
- iii. Mk 6:56 “villages or cities or farms” // Mt 14:34-36 omits words
- iv. Mk 8:23 “village” // Mt omits account
- v. Mk 8:26 “villages” // Mt omits account
- vi. Mk 8:27 “village” // Mt omits word
- vii. Mk 11:2 “village” // Mt “village”

This is worth considering, but the evidence isn’t strong.

c. To fit a prosperous community

- i. Matt adds “gold” and “silver” to Jesus’ commands not to take “copper” (Matt 10:9; Mk 6:8).

6. Idealization of characters

a. Jesus

- i. Matt omits questions that imply Jesus lacked knowledge (Mk 5:9, 30; 6:38; 8:23; 9:12, 16, 21, etc)
- ii. Matt omits statement that imply Jesus lacked ability (Mk 6:5; Mt 13:58)
- iii. Matt omits references to Jesus’ emotions: pity (Mk 1:41), anger (Mk 3:5), grief (Mk 3:5), wonder (Mk 6:6), indignation (Mk 10:14), love (Mk 10:21)
- iv. Matt omits portraying Jesus as a magician (Mk 7:31-37; 8:22-26)

b. Disciples

- i. Three times Matt changes the description of the disciples from “not understanding” to “understanding” (compare Matt 13:16-18 with Mk 4:13; Matt 16:5-12 with Mk 8:14-21; Matt 17:9-13 with Mk 9:9-13).
- ii. Matt ascribed ambition to James and John’s mother, rather than disciples (Matt 20:20; Mk 10:35).

- iii. Matt adds disciples worshiping Jesus and calling him Lord and Son of God (Mat 14:33; Mk 6:52)

c. Jesus' family

- i. Matt omits references to Jesus' family trying to restrain him (Mk 3:21)

7. Disparagement of Jews/Jewish leaders

The portrait of the Jews/Jewish leaders gets worse:

- a. The scribe, who is praised by Jesus in Mk 12:28-34, becomes an opponent who tests Jesus in Mt 22:34-40.
- b. Jairus (Mk 5:22) and Joseph of Arimathea (Mk 15:43) are no longer identified as Jewish leaders by Matthew.
- c. Mark portrays Pilate reluctantly handing Jesus over to be crucified (Mk 15:10), whereas Matthew (i) adds a scene where Pilate's wife has a dream and intercedes for Jesus because he is a "righteous man" (Mt 27:18-19) and (ii) adds a scene where Pilate washes his hands of the matter and the Jews says, "Let his blood be on us and our children" (Mt 27:25).

II. Outlines of Matthew

A. Five Discourses

Scholars have long noted that Matthew organizes his material into five big blocks of material, called the five great discourses of Jesus. Bacon suggested the pattern represents a Christian Torah or "Five Books of Jesus" analogous to the "Five Books of Moses."

Chapters 5-7	The Sermon on the Mount
Chapter 10	The Missionary Discourse
Chapter 13	The Parables of the Kingdom
Chapter 18	The Community Discourse
Chapters 24-25	The Eschatological Discourse

Each of these discourses ends with the same reframe: "And it came about when Jesus finished these words ..." (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1)

B. Bacon's Outline

Benjamin Bacon (1930) proposed an outline of Matthew based on the pattern of these five discourses.⁴ The outline also reveals five narrative sections before each discourse.

- Preamble: Infancy narrative (chapters 1-2)
- Book 1: Discipleship (3-7)
 - A. Narrative (3-4)
 - B. Sermon on the Mount (5-7)

⁴ Benjamin W. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (London: Constable, 1930).

- Book 2: Apostleship (8-10)
 - A. Narrative (8-9)
 - B. Missionary Discourse (10)
- Book 3: Hiding the Revelation (11-13)
 - A. Narrative (11-12)
 - B. Parable Discourse (13)
- Book 4: Church Administration (14-18)
 - A. Narrative (14-17)
 - B. Community Discourse (18)
- Book 5: Judgment (19-25)
 - A. Narrative (19-23)
 - B. Eschatological Discourse (24-25)
- Epilogue: Passion and Resurrection (26-28)

C. Gardner's Outline

Richard Gardner, *Believer's Church Bible Commentary Series* (1991), provides another outline that reveals the story-line:⁵

- Jesus' Origins and Calling (1:1-4:16)
- Jesus' Messianic Mission (4:17-10:42)
- Israel Responds to Jesus (11:1-16:20)
- Jesus' Final Journey (16:21-20:34)
- Jesus in Jerusalem (21:1-25:46)
- Jesus' Death and Resurrection (26:1-28:20)

D. Kingsbury's Outline⁶

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| Part One | Presentation of Jesus (1:1-4:16) |
| Part Two | Ministry of Jesus to Israel (4:17-11:1) & Israel's repudiation of Jesus (11:2-16:20) |
| Part Three | Journey of Jesus to Jerusalem and His suffering, Death, and Resurrection (16:21-28:20) |

IV. Characteristics of Matthew's Gospel

⁵ Richard B. Gardner, *Matthew: Believers Church Bible Commentary* (Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald 1991).

⁶ Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); and idem, *Matthew as Story* (Second Edition, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

A. Organizational patterns

Matthew's gospel displays a penchant for organizational patterns, including numerical ones. For example, the number 14 is important to Matthew. Matthew has 14 fulfillment citations—"it happened to fulfill what was written in the prophets":

1. Fourteen fulfillment citations

Matthew is structured around fourteen "fulfillment citations":

1. Matt 1:22-23: **Jesus' conception** (Isa 7:14; Gk has "virgin"; Heb has "young woman")
2. Matt 2:5-6: **Jesus' birth** (Mic. 5:2; 2 Sam 5:2)
3. Matt 2:15: **God's son comes from Egypt** (Hos 11:1)
4. Matt 2:17-18: **Massacre of infants** (Jer 31:15)
5. Matt 2:23: **Jesus was Nazorean** (No quote; may allude to "Branch" (*nētzar*) of David (Isa 11:1))
6. Matt 3:3: **Voice in the wilderness** (Isa 40:3)
7. Matt 4:14-16: **Jesus was a Galilean** (Isa 9:1-2)
8. Matt 8:17: **"He took our infirmities and born our diseases"** (Isa 53:4)
9. Matt 12:17-21: **Jesus' ministry** (Isa 42:1-4)
10. Matt 13:14: **Not understanding Jesus' teaching** (Isa 6:9-10)
11. Matt 13:35: **Speaking in parables** (Psa 78:2)
12. Matt 21:4-5: **Coming on a donkey** (Isa 62:11; Zech 9:9)
13. Matt 26:56: **Jesus' arrest and betrayal** (No quote)
14. Matt 27:9-10: **Blood money** (Jer 32:6-15)

Does this list leave out other fulfillment citations?

1. 5:17 regarding Jesus fulfilling scripture,
2. 10:34-35 where the division of families fulfills Micah 7:6;
3. 11:2-6 where Jesus' signs fulfill Isa. 35:5 and 61:1,
4. 11:10 JohnBapt fulfills Malachi 3:1
5. 15:7-9 where Israel's disobedience fulfills Isa. 29:13
6. 21:13 regarding the den of robbers in the temple (Isa. 56:7; Jer. 7:11)
7. 21:16 praise from children predicted in Psa. 118:22
8. 26:31 regarding the Shepherd struck down and sheep scattered (Zech 13:7)

The fulfillment of scripture is an important theme in Matthew. Jesus teaches that he has come to fulfill the law and the prophets (Mt 5:17-18). And, as a whole, Matthew's Gospel shows that Jesus' life—his birth, ministry, and death—fulfill OT scriptures.

Matthew wants to make clear that what happened to Jesus was predicted. It was all in God's plan.

2. Fourteen generations (thrice) (Matt 1:1-17)

Another example is Matthew's genealogy, which is divided three parts:

- 1) Fourteen generations from Abraham to David,
- 2) Fourteen generations from David to the Babylonian exile, and
- 3) Fourteen generations from the Exile to the Messiah.

Why is fourteen so important? One possible answer comes from the practice of *gematria*. Each Hebrew letter in the alphabet has a numerical value and David's name (דָּוִד), when added up, is equal to fourteen. (ד = 4, ו = 6, ד = 4).

B. Doubling motif

Matthew likes to double things in two ways:

1. Matthew doubles characters. For example:

- a. One man with a legion of demons (Mk 5:1-14), becomes two men (Mt 8:28-33)
- b. One man healed of blindness (Mk 10:46-52), become two men (Mt 20:29-34)
- c. One donkey (Mk 11:7), becomes two donkeys (Mt 21:6-7)

2. Matthew doubles sayings and episodes. For example:

- a. Jesus' instruction about divorce is repeated twice (Mt 5:31-32; 19:9)
- b. Religious leaders seeking signs repeated twice (Mt 12:38-42; 16:1-4)
- c. Accusation that Jesus is influenced by Beelzebul repeated twice (Mt 9:32-34; 12:22-24)

C. Emphasis on Peter

More stories about Peter in Matthew than Mark or Luke:

1. Peter finding a coin in a fish's mouth to pay taxes (Mt 17:24-27)
2. Peter asking Jesus about how many times to forgive (Mt 18:21-22)
3. Peter trying to walk on water concludes story of Jesus walking on water (Mt 14:28-31)
4. Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ is now blessed by Jesus with "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church" (Mt 16:17-30), rather than being warned and then rebuked by Jesus (Mk 8:30, 32-33).

D. Jesus talks explicitly about "the church"

Matthew displays Jesus talking about the church (ἡ ἐκκλησία) continuing after he is gone. For Matthew, the church did not come into being after Easter (as Luke-Acts), but during Jesus' life. In this way, the earliest followers of Jesus formed an institution, but just a movement.

1. Mt 16:17-20: Jesus tells Peter, "on this rock I will build my church"
2. Mt 18:15-18: Jesus speaks about the church as though it already exists during his ministry and outlines a process for reconciliation among its members

E. Pro-Jewish orientation

Many passages in Matthew display *a strong pro-Jewish orientation*. Although the book ends with the great commission to "make disciples of all nations (Gentiles)" (Mt 28:19), Matthew makes it clear that Jesus focused on the Jews and has a high regard for the position of Jewish leaders:

1. Mt 10:5 Jesus tells his disciples to "go nowhere among the Gentiles (nations)"
2. Mt 15:24 he says he "was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"

3. Mt 17:24-27 Jesus pays temple tax so as not to offend Jewish authorities
4. Mt 23:2-3 Jesus acknowledges that “the scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat,” which means his disciples should do whatever they teach

All of these verses are unique to Matthew. They are either M-material or redactional changes by the Matthew.

F. Anti-Jewish orientation

At the same time, Matthew displays *an anti-Jewish orientation*.

- Mt 8:12 Jesus praises the faith of a Gentile and says that people from many nations will enter the kingdom of heaven while “the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into outer darkness”
- Mt 12:34; 23:33 Jesus calls the religious leaders a “brood of vipers”
- Mt 15:13 (cf. 13:24-30, 36-43) Jesus indicates the religious leaders represent the devil, not God
- Mt 21:43 Jesus tells the Jewish authorities that the kingdom of God will be taken from them and given to a people (perhaps the Gentiles) that produces the fruits of the kingdom
- Mt 27:25 Matthew depicts the Jewish people, as a whole, calling for Jesus’ death and saying, “His blood be upon us and on our children!”

G. Emphasis on the law

1. The law emphasized

On the one hand, Matthew emphasizes that the law is established by Jesus.

Jesus declares he has come not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. Until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law” (Mt 5:17-18). There is no parallel in Mark.

Apparently, Matthew also believes that dietary and Sabbath laws are still in effect too. Notice that Matthew omits Mark’s comment about Jesus declaring all foods clean (Mk 7:19) and reports Jesus saying that his followers should pray that when tribulation comes, they will not have to flee on a Sabbath (Mt 24:20; cf. Mk 13:18).

	Matthew	Mark
Law Established	Matt 5:17-18 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.	No parallel
Dietary Laws	Matt 15:17 Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles.	Mk 7:18-20 ... Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, since it enters, not the heart but the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) And he said, "It is what comes out of a person that defiles.

Sabbath Laws	Matt 24:19-21 Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a sabbath . 24:21 For at that time there will be great suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.	Mark 13:17-19 Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that it may not be in winter. For in those days there will be suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, no, and never will be.
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2. Is the law set aside?

On the other hand, some texts seem to show Jesus setting aside the Law of Moses and other traditional material. Consider the six antithetical sayings in Matt 5. Six times Jesus says,

"You have heard it said, but I say to you" (Matt 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43)

Many have thought Jesus sets aside the Law of Moses for his own teaching. Also note that in the Great Commission (Mt 28:20), Jesus says "Go and teach all that I have commanded you," not go and teach what Moses commanded.

On the other hand, some argue that Jesus intensifies the Law and doesn't set it aside. In the least, Jesus presents himself as the final authority on how the Law should be interpreted.

Jesus is the final authority on the Law, not the Pharisees, Sadducees, or any of the great Rabbis of the time, like Hillel, Shammai, Yohannan ben Zakkai, or Gamaliel.

H. Apocalyptic vision of the world

Matthew also presents an apocalyptic vision of the world beyond what the other Gospels present. By apocalyptic, I mean that Matthew's world is divided into two spheres, the divine and the demonic. Matthew has a very dualistic perspective.

The dualism is depicted in the Parable of the Weeds among the Wheat, which is unique to Matthew:

Matt 13:24-30 13:24 He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; 13:25 but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. 13:26 So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. 13:27 And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' 13:28 He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' 13:29 But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. 13:30 Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

Matthew suggests that some human beings were put in the world by "the Enemy"; in contrast, Mark and Luke believe that Satan has spiritual agents (demons) analogous to God's angels.

In Matt 15:14, Jesus talks about “plants that my heavenly Father has not planted.” They are to be left alone (Matt 15:14) and left to be uprooted in time and “sentenced to Gehenna” (Mt 23:33).

In this way, trivial disputes between Jesus and certain Jewish leaders become representative of the ultimate conflict between good and evil, God and Satan.

I. Presence of God

The “presence of God” is the over-riding theological motif of the Gospel. From the virginal conception onward, Matthew wants the reader to know that in Jesus, “God is with us” (Matt 1:23).

Matt 1:23 "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."

God is present in traditional affirmations, such as God’s dwelling in the Temple (Matt 23:21).

Matt 23:21 and whoever swears by the sanctuary, swears by it and by the one who dwells in it;

God is present in new ways, such as God’s dwelling with Jesus and the disciples (Mt 10:40).

Matt 10:40 "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me."

Matt 18:20 "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

Matt 28:20b " ... And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

God’s presence is assured, even in unrecognized ways:

Matt 25:31-46 25:31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. 25:32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, 25:33 and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. 25:34 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 25:35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 25:36 I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' 25:37 Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? 25:38 And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? 25:39 And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' 25:40 And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' 25:41 Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; 25:42 for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 25:43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' 25:44 Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' 25:45 Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one

of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' 25:46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

V. Historical Context

A. Who was the Author?

Tradition ascribes the Gospel to Matthew a tax collector, who became one of Jesus' disciples (Mt 9:9; 10:3). Papias (ca. 150 AD) claimed that the disciples Matthew "collected the sayings [or records] in the Hebrew language and each one interpreted [or translated] in them as he was able."⁷

Since Mark doesn't name Matthew, but names Levi as a tax collector (Mk 2:14; 3:16-19), people have thought them to be the same individual.

One problem with the traditional view is that we only have Matthew's Gospel in Greek, not Hebrew. A second problem is that if Matthew was the author, and an eyewitness disciple of Jesus, why did he copy from Mark, who was not a disciple?

Since the Gospel nowhere identifies its author, most scholars agree that we don't know who wrote Matthew but, in all likelihood, it was written by a second generation Christian.

For convenience, we will still talk about the author as Matthew. Now, what can we discern about the author?

- He was probably Jewish
- His biblical quotations were not all from LXX, but he probably translated some from Hebrew
- There is evidence that he had professional education as a Jewish scholar or leader
- His style and argumentation is similar to the rabbis (Pharisees), so he may have been a converted rabbi
- He is concerned with the same issue rabbis were concerned with: The correct interpretation of the Scriptures and in particular, the Law.
- The best way to describe the author is not "Matthew the tax collector" (Matt 9:9), "a scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 13:52).

B. Who was Matthew's community?

There are "at least three models for understanding the relationship of Christianity and Judaism," which function as models for understanding Matthew's community or social context.⁸ "The Question is what is Matthew's relation to the Jewish milieu?"⁹

1. Christianity replaces Judaism (Supersessionism)

In this view, Judaism is the religion of the OT. By the time of Christ, Judaism had failed and was replaced by the Christian faith as the one true religion.

⁷ As recounted by Eusebius, *History*, bk. 3, par. 39.

⁸ Charles H. Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount, Character formation and Decision Making in Matthew 5-7* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007) 4

⁹ Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount* (2007) 4.

In this view, Matthew Gospel is “outside the walls” of Judaism. Jesus and the disciples started a new religion that replaced Judaism. Matthew’s Gospel represents Christian, rather than Jewish, identity. The problem is that the evidence from Matthew does not support this view.

2. Christianity broke with Judaism

In this view, “early Judaism”¹⁰ was a developing and pluralistic religion that at time of Jesus when it split into a number of different groups. This creative age produced a new stage of Judaism (Rabbinic or Normative Judaism) and a different religion (Christianity).

In this view, Matthew’s Gospel shows that Christianity broke with Judaism either shortly before Matthew wrote or during the time Matthew wrote.

This is the view of W.D. Davies:

- Matthew assumes a definite break has happened
- Matthew now regards “the Jews” (28:15) as a group he does not belong
- Matthew is a response to the Council of Jamnia that has expelled Christians as *minim* (cf. *Birkat Ha-Minim* the 12th Benediction of the *Shemoneh Esreh*)
- Matthew was committed to reaching the nations/Gentiles (8:11; 28:19-20)
- Matthew refers to “their scribes” (7:29) and “their synagogue” (4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54); but who is “they”?

3. Christianity is a form of Judaism

In this view, Early Judaism is a *genus*, denoting a range of monotheistic systems or *species* of Judaism. Scholars who hold this view do not talk about Judaism in the singular, but use the plural Judaisms.

There were Samaritans, Essenes, Zealot Nationalists, Pharisees/Rabbis, apocalyptic Jews, Messianic (Christians) Jews, and Mystic/Merkabah Jews.¹¹ Christianity is a form of Early Judaism.

In this view, Matthew was written “within the walls” of Judaism (Anthony Saldarini)

- Matthew is a sect within Judaism; Matthew represents “Christian Judaism” (“Christian Jews,” not “Jewish Christians), which was known as “the way”¹²
- Matthew presents Jesus’ way as the authentic representation of Judaism
- Matthew is not a convert from Judaism to Christianity, but has moved from one from Pharisaic (Rabbinic) Judaism to Messianic (Christian) Judaism.
- For Matthew, Jesus recommends keeping the Law (5:17-21), including the Sabbath and dietary laws (17:24-27; 23:2-3)
- However, Matthew’s Jesus predicts persecution in the synagogues (10:17; 23:34)

¹⁰ Corresponds to Gabriele Boccaccini’s “middle Judaism,” from the third century BCE to the second century CE, as described by Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount* (2007) 3-4.

¹¹ Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount* (2007) 4-5.

¹² Mark L. Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007) 215.

- Matthew reflects tension between different forms of Judaism at the end of the first century CE in Palestine
- The Gospel never refers to exclusion from the synagogue as John or Luke (Jn 9:22; 12:42; 16:2; Lk 6:22)

Questions:

- Does Matthew mean to distinguish between Jewish synagogues from Christian churches?
- Does he mean to distinguish the synagogue of the Pharisees (Rabbis) from the synagogues of the Christians?

C. Where was it written?

- Jewish Palestine is often proposed as the origin of Matthew
- It must have been a place where there were both Jews and Gentiles, so Alexandria, Caesarea Martima, and Antioch are often named.

D. When?

- Two factors: The Gospel is first quoted by Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch (Syria) in 115 CE and seems to have been a source for the Didache (100 CE), so Matthew was written before that time
- A date of 80-90 CE would correspond to Jamnia
- An early date in the 60s is suggested by Irenaeus: “Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome and laying the foundations of the church” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.1.1). This is suspect, since Matthew was probably not originally written in Hebrew
- Strauss is none committal¹³

E. Why did Matthew write?

1. Matthew was addressing *trouble from without*. They had met or expect to meet with persecution by Jews (5:11; 10:17, 23; 21:35; 23:34) and Gentiles (10:18, 22; 24:9).
2. Matthew was addressing *trouble from within*. There were problems of heresy (7:25; 24:11), apostasy (13:21-22; 24:12), and betrayal (24:10).
3. Matthew was addressing *Jewish opposition*. We get a big clue when Matthew makes the friendly scribe in Mark 12:28-34 into an enemy who wants to test Jesus in Matthew 22:34-40. They struggled with Jewish issues pertaining to the validity and application of the Law, the fulfillment of Scripture as it pertained to Jesus.
4. Matthew wanted *to correct Mark* in at least three ways:
 - a. Mark did not present Christ as currently present among his followers.

¹³ Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus* (2007) 251-2.

- b. Mark did not offer enough advice regarding God's will for contemporary situations
- c. Mark did not offer enough teaching about the church or community of believers