

INTRODUCTION TO THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

I. Unique Features of Matthew

A. Unique material

B. Matthew's use of Mark¹

1. Organization

<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

- a. Demonic'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
- d. Pronouns lacking clear antecedents are clarified

4. Corrections

- 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

¹Mark Allan Powell, *Introduction to the Gospels* (1998) 63-65.

- 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

- 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"

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 statements 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 worshipping Jesus and calling him Lord and Son of God (Matt 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

- 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

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).²

- Preamble: Infancy narrative (chapters 1-2)
- Book 1: Discipleship (3-7)
 - A. Narrative (3-4)
 - B. Sermon on the Mount (5-7)
- 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 (1991):³

- Jesus’ Origins and Calling (1:1-4:16)
- Jesus’ Messianic Mission (4:17-10:42)

² Benjamin W. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (London: Constable, 1930).

³ Richard B. Gardner, *Matthew: Believers Church Bible Commentary* (Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald 1991).

- 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)

IV. Characteristics of Matthew's Gospel

A. Organizational patterns

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" (*nētzter*) 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)

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

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.

B. Doubling motif

1. Matthew doubles characters.

- 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.

- 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

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”

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

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

F. 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

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.

	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?

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

H. Apocalyptic vision of the world

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.'"

I. Presence of God

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

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

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."

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?

- He was probably Jewish
- Not an eyewitness or he would not have copied from Mark
- 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?

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.

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"⁴ 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.

⁴ 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.

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.⁵ 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”⁶
- 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)
- 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)

C. Where was it written?

D. When?

E. Why did Matthew write?

1. Matthew was addressing *trouble from without*.
2. Matthew was addressing *trouble from within*.
3. Matthew was addressing *Jewish opposition*.
4. Matthew wanted *to correct Mark* in at least three ways:

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

⁶ Mark L. Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007) 215.