



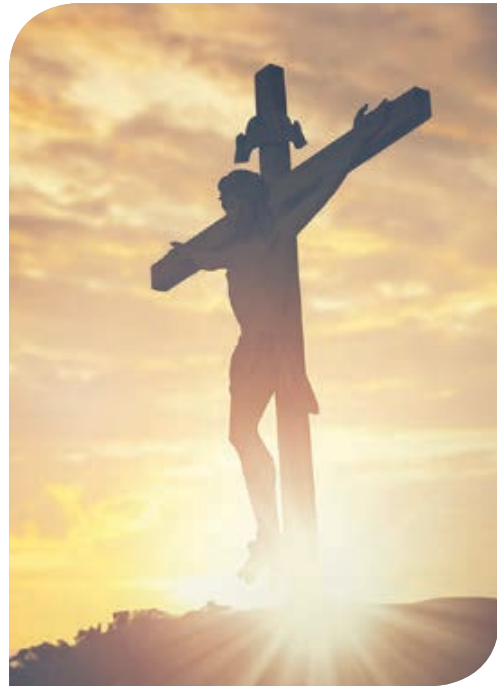
ROSE GUIDE TO THE **GOSPELS**

Side-by-Side Charts and Overviews



Why, two millennia after his crucifixion, is the world still so fascinated with Jesus?

Do a search for his name on the internet and you'll be given anywhere from 330–880 million links to browse! Just for fun, consider that lower number. Who could ever read so many web pages? At one per minute—and skimming nonstop for sixteen hours a day—you're looking at a project that would take more than 950 years. (Of course, no one *should* try to read most of those links; contrary to popular belief, not everything we find on the internet is true!)



A better plan would be to set aside a few hours to carefully read the New Testament gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Together, these four biographies of Jesus (as they've been called) give us an accurate, breathtaking portrait of the most extraordinary life ever lived.

WHAT IS A GOSPEL?

The Greek word *euangelion*, translated as *gospel*, means “good news.” In ancient times, royal heralds would be dispatched to travel from village to village, announcing the *gospel* of a king's military triumph or impending visit, or the birth of a royal heir. In the Bible, the term *gospel* refers to the heavenly good news announcement that God has, in Jesus, fulfilled his messianic promises to Israel and supplied a Savior for the world. *Gospel* also refers to any of the first four books of the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These four gospels each proclaim—in different ways, as we shall see—who Jesus is and what he has done to make salvation possible.

The four gospels can be described as short *biographies* of Jesus, but they differ from most contemporary biographies. A modern biography usually presents a detailed, chronological, and comprehensive summary of

someone's life. It tries to shed light on all aspects of its subject—his/her personality, character, accomplishments, etc.—from the cradle to the grave. The Gospels don't exactly do this. In fact, it's estimated that, between the four gospels, only about fifty days of Jesus' three-year ministry are highlighted! It's also been suggested that reading all the recorded words of Jesus found in the Gospels would only take the average person about three hours. Clearly, the gospel writers—and behind them, the Holy Spirit—were highly selective in the material they chose to include.

We can also think of the Gospels as verbal *portraits* of Jesus. Each gospel writer views Jesus from a different perspective. We could also say they are *messages* about Jesus, each one built around carefully selected events and themes from Jesus' life and designed to show the significance of his life to a different audience.

Though the Gospels weren't the first New Testament books written, they appear first because they link the story of Israel in the Old Testament with the birth of the church in the New Testament. The followers of Jesus were convinced that he was (and is) the Messiah, the anointed one foretold in the Old Testament. They saw Jesus, the carpenter from Nazareth, as the fulfillment of the Jewish law and the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). They believed that his death on the cross for sin made the Jewish sacrificial system obsolete. They saw Jesus as the personification of all God's glorious promises. Given these breathtaking beliefs, it's no wonder the Gospels make up almost half (46 percent) of the New Testament. In the eyes of the earliest Christians, the entire Old Testament anticipates the life of Jesus, and the entire New Testament celebrates and builds on that life.



THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Author

In answering the question of biblical authorship, scholars typically look for two kinds of authentication.

- ✧ Internal evidence: clues found within a writing
- ✧ External evidence: corroborating statements by others



St. Matthew the Evangelist
by Josef Kastner

In the case of Matthew (also known as Levi; see Luke 5:27–32), the external evidence for his authorship is strong. Prominent leaders of the early church—men like Clement of Rome (AD 35–99), Polycarp (AD 69–155), and Justin Martyr (AD 100–165)—agreed that the first gospel was written by Matthew the apostle of Jesus.

The internal evidence also points to Matthew. As a former tax collector (Mark 2:14–17), Matthew would have been literate and an experienced record keeper uniquely qualified to write a gospel record of Jesus. Matthew might even have taken notes during the years he traveled with Jesus. And why would the first gospel contain several terms for coins not found elsewhere in the New Testament unless it were written by someone used to handling money (Matt. 17:24, 27; 18:24)?

Matthew, a Jew, had been a tax collector for Rome before meeting Jesus and becoming one of his loyal followers. For the record, tax collectors were despised by their fellow Jews, often mentioned in the same breath as “sinners” (irreligious Jews; see Matt. 9:10–11; Luke 15:1) and “prostitutes” (Matt. 21:31–32). Tax collectors, or publicans, were widely regarded as dishonest and untrustworthy. If you were trying to propagate a new religion, you’d never ask a person like Matthew to write one of your founding documents. He would not be high on the list of possible spokesmen for your cause, especially if your cause involved hard-to-

believe claims. Unless, of course, he was a credible eyewitness of the events he wrote about and was a spokesman who had demonstrated a remarkably transformed life.

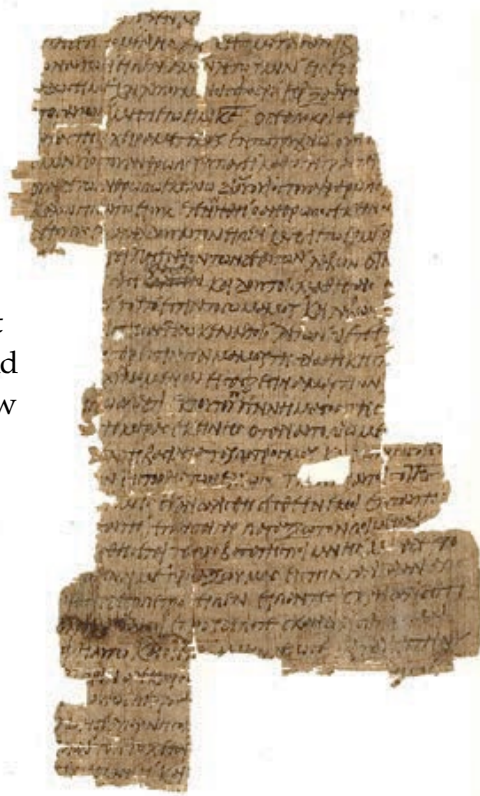
Date

Scholars disagree on when exactly the four gospels were written. Estimates have ranged from the AD 40s to the end of the first century (and some even try to date some of the writings later than that). Most agree, however, that Matthew must have written before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70, since he made no reference to this cataclysmic event in his gospel. For a long time, Matthew was widely regarded as the first gospel written—perhaps as early as AD 50. More recently, a growing number of scholars suggest a date in the AD 60s.

Audience

As a Jew who had come to believe that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, Matthew wrote to his fellow Jews. He began his gospel with a genealogy showing how Jesus is “the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1). He quoted extensively from the Old Testament Scriptures—at least fifty direct citations and more than seventy other allusions. Matthew wrote primarily about subjects of greatest interest to Jews: the law, righteousness, ceremonial purity, the temple, the Sabbath, and the coming kingdom of heaven. As he wrote, he didn’t often bother to explain Jewish customs. Again and again, Matthew stated that the actions of Jesus were fulfillments of ancient prophecies. The gospel of Matthew makes far more references to the Old Testament than the other gospels.

Clearly the “most Jewish” gospel was written to convince and remind a Jewish audience that Jesus, as a descendant of David, fulfilled the



Papyrus 37, a fragment of Matthew 26 dating to the third century

prophecies about the coming Messiah and was the rightful heir of David's throne. No doubt, Matthew also meant to encourage Jewish followers of Jesus to remain faithful even in the face of persecution (10:17–42), and convince others all over the earth that Jesus alone is worthy of their trust and obedience (28:18–20).

Despite its heavy Jewish overtones, Matthew's gospel also clearly shows that Jesus is not simply the King and Messiah of the Jews, but the Savior of the whole world. In

key passages, gentiles—for example, the wise men (2:1–12), a Canaanite woman (15:22–28), and the nations (28:18–20)—are shown to be the recipients of God's blessings (see also 4:15; 12:18–21).



The Sermon on the Mount by Carl Bloch

Outline

- ✧ The King's Appearance (1:1–10:42)
- ✧ The King's Rejection (11:1–25:46)
- ✧ The King's Crucifixion (26:1–27:66)
- ✧ The King's Resurrection and Commission (28:1–20)

Unique Features

- ✧ Matthew includes much more of Jesus' teaching than the other gospels do. The Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5–7) is found only in abbreviated form in Luke's gospel—and not at all in Mark or John.
- ✧ More than fifty times, Matthew uses the word *kingdom*. Clearly, he was conveying the idea that God's kingdom was at hand because Jesus, Israel's true King, was present. Only Matthew uses the phrase *kingdom of heaven*; the other gospels use the phrase *kingdom of God*.

- ✧ About 40 percent of the material in Matthew is unique to Matthew, meaning about 60 percent of the content is also found in other gospels.
- ✧ Matthew devotes about one third of his gospel to Jesus' final week.
- ✧ According to Bible Gateway, a popular searchable online Bible, the gospel of Matthew is the second most read book of the Bible—behind only the Psalms.
- ✧ Miracles and signs that are unique to the book of Matthew:
 - » Two blind men given sight (9:27–31)
 - » Catch of a fish with a coin in its mouth (17:24–27)

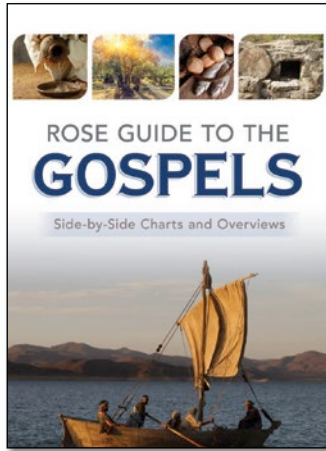
Key Verses

It's always difficult trying to single out a verse or passage that captures the gist of an entire book of the Bible, but perhaps the final verses of Matthew do this better than any others:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

MATT. 28:18–20

Here we see the authority of the resurrected King. He commissions his subjects to go into all the world and show others what it means to follow him.

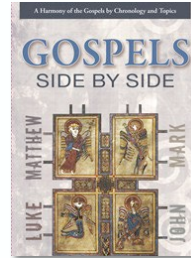


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See how everything in the Gospels reveals Jesus as the divine Messiah, Savior, Servant, Healer, and Risen Lord! Rose Publishing introduces *Rose Guide to the Gospels*, your quick-reference guide through the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. With over 100 pictures, charts, and timelines, this user-friendly introduction to the four Gospels helps you explore over 150 key people, places, and stories in the life of Jesus. Add depth to any Bible study with in-depth summaries of how the Gospels were written, the key people and events in each of the four books, why you can trust them, how Jesus fulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament, and much more!

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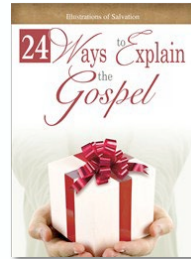


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Pamphlet 978-1-59636-277-2 \$4.99

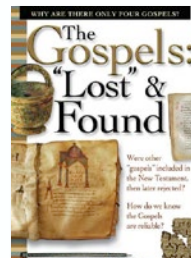


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