

A LOOK AT THE BOOK MATTHEW WHAT HAPPENED TO GOD'S PLAN?

Ralph Porter

The announcement of the birth of a king is always an important occasion for any country.

Among God's chosen people this announcement was an exciting motive for hope.

The people were waiting to see the redemption of Israel and the fulfillment of God's promises, so they received the announcement with great joy.

However, not everyone was ready to receive the announcement.

Matthew is a book about the people who weren't ready.

It was written to explain what happened to God's plan
– why it didn't work out like everyone thought it would.
Was it God's fault?
What happened?

AUTHOR AND DATE

Who wrote it? Argument from tradition–

The gospel itself doesn't tell *WHO* wrote it.

Early tradition testifies to the existence of a gospel, written in Hebrew (Aramaic) by Matthew.

This is witnessed to by Papias, Irenaeus, Pantaeus, and Jerome—all relatively early witnesses.

While no evidence links the present gospel to an Aramaic original, rather than deny that witness as some do, it seems likely that Matthew may later have sensed a need to spread the same message in Greek, and may have written such a gospel.

Tradition is in agreement that Matthew was the author of this gospel.

No objective proof has been offered to refute that claim.

When? Sometime between A.D. 40 and 70

No evidence demonstrates the specific *DATE* of the book, but it is likely that all three synoptic gospels were written after A.D. 40 and before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Synoptic problem– which was first?

Matthew is placed first because of primacy of message.

The parallel expressions used by the writers,
and the evolutionary presupposition that shorter and simpler documents would have
been written first,
are commonly used to prove that Mark was written first and that other writers used
his work as a starting point.

Nevertheless, most commentaries recognize that Matthew was placed first among the
gospels because of the primary nature of its message.

The primary nature of his message leads to the conclusion that Matthew was the first
gospel written.

The nature of the message demonstrates it was needed first by the early church, both for
their own sake as well as for the Jews around them.

Matthew deals with their initial questions, that were begging for answers.
Thus it appears likely that Matthew was the first of the gospels.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Reconstruction - 400 years of silence

Following the reconstruction period of the O.T., when Israel's remnant returned to the land,
a period of silence ensued.

Approximately 400 years passed during which Israel continues in cold ritualism and
unbelief.

During these years God sends other nations, particularly the Ptolemies of Egypt, the
Seleucids of the north, and the Romans, to discipline them and to call them back to
Himself.

At the conclusion of the 400 years, God graciously intervenes and sends His Son to fulfill His
promises to them.

Discontent under Rome's dominion

The period is marked by **discontent** with the present situation under the authority of Rome,
and by the expectation that Messiah was about to come to deliver them and to give them
the long-awaited victory over their oppressors.

Messianic expectancy

Messianic coming

When Messiah came, though He fulfilled what God had promised to send them, He didn't
conform to what they wanted Him to be and thus they rejected Him.

Messianic crucifixion

Frustrated expectation-Why?

Their rejection brought Israel back under the judgment of God.

Destruction of Jerusalem

The destruction of Jerusalem, accomplished in A.D. 70, and consummated by A.D. 135, brought to a close the period of hope.

PURPOSE AND THEME

Matthew attempts to resolve the problem of their frustrated expectation:

What happened to God's plan?

When Matthew wrote his message to his readers, he was attempting to resolve a problem which was bothering them.

He writes following the death of Christ, at a time when Messianic expectation has been high.

Based on the prophecy of Zechariah 9-10, as well as other O.T. prophecies, they expected a three step restoration:

- restoration to the land
- coming of Messiah
- blessing for Israel

For non-Christian Jewish people-

The Jew of the first century was left with a problem.

They had returned to the land long before.

Messianic expectation ran high, but years passed and Messiah didn't come.

Therefore, neither did the promised blessing.

What happened to God's plan?

For Christian Jewish people-

Christian Jews did a *little* better.

They had returned to the land.

Messiah did come, in the person of Jesus Christ.

But they didn't receive the promised blessings of the Messianic kingdom either!

What happened to God's plan?

Had God failed them?

Matthew wrote to answer their question.

In brief, he answers that Messiah did come, but His people rejected Him.

Therefore, He rejected them and instituted a new form of the kingdom.

They would be disciplined for their rebellion and then restored later.

Two major themes:

1. **Demonstrates that Jesus was the promised Messiah**
2. **Explains what has happened to God's plan for His people, Israel**

Three main purposes:

1. **That the Jewish reader might recognize Who Jesus is and trust Him.**
2. **That the early church might understand their place in God's program**
3. **That they might take the message Matthew had delivered to them and use it to make disciples of all nations, as Christ commanded.**

ORGANIZATION

The structure of Matthew is marked out by the repeated use of the phrase:

"And it came to pass when Jesus had finished"

The final division is a logical one which structurally the author may have viewed as one division.

The key phrase is found in 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; and, 26:1

Seven (six) logical divisions develop out of this structural outline:

Messianic authentication 1-7

Messianic ministry 8-10

Messianic rejection foreseen 11-13:52

Messianic opposition 13:53-18:35

Messianic presentation 19-25

Messianic rejection fulfilled 26-27

Messianic resurrection 28

ARGUMENT

MESSIANIC AUTHENTICATION 1-7

Matthew begins to establish his case concerning what has happened to God's plan by demonstrating that Jesus was the Messiah.

HIS CREDENTIALS 1-4

Testimony is presented from many sources, some of them very unlikely and hostile, to demonstrate that He was the Messiah.

Testimony of His genealogy 1:1-17

Testimony of His birth 1:18-25

Testimony of the magi 2:1-12

Testimony of His origins 2:13-23

Testimony of John 3:1-12

Testimony at His baptism 3:13-17

Testimony of Satan 4:1-11

Testimony of His followers 4:12-22

Testimony of His works 4:23-25

In conclusion, great crowds began to follow Him expectantly—coming from all over Israel.

HIS PROCLAMATION 5-7

As the crowds followed Jesus, they listened to His words.

A logical question was on their minds: If the King had come and the kingdom was about to begin, would they be allowed to participate?

What were the requirements for entrance to the kingdom?

Jesus stops to speak to them.

His message reveals the answer to that question from several perspectives.

Description of the accepted 5:1-16

Their godly character 1-12

The beatitudes describe the kind of people who will participate in the kingdom.

The basic description indicates that it is not those who follow all the prescribed ritual and put on a religious show who will enter the kingdom.

Entrance to the kingdom is based on internal, godly character.

Their permeating influence 13-16

Those who would enter the kingdom of God ought to have a permeating influence for God in the place where He has placed them.

Relation with the religious 5:17-7:6

Having completed the description of those who would enter into the kingdom, Jesus deals with those whom everyone assumed would be included in the kingdom: the religious leaders of the people.

Jesus and the law 5:17-20

Fulfillment, not replacement 5:17-19

Greater righteousness required 5:20

Rejection of their tradition 5:21-48

Concerning murder 21-26

Concerning adultery 27-30

Concerning divorce 31-32

Concerning oaths 33-37

Concerning retaliation 38-42

Concerning love for others 43-48

Rejection of their practice 6-7:6

Concerning almsgiving 6:1-4

Concerning prayer 6:5-15

Concerning fasting 6:16-18

Concerning wealth 6:19-24

Concerning faith 6:25-34

Concerning judging others 7:1-6

Instruction for the accepted 7:7-25

Upon completion of His evaluation of the weaknesses of their religious leaders, which demonstrated why the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was not sufficient to enter heaven, Christ turns to the conduct expected of those who *would* enter the kingdom.

These instructions given by Christ are **not presented as prerequisites by which we *earn* entrance into the kingdom.**

They are **indications of the kind of people who will be admitted** to the kingdom.

The basis of entrance is consistently seen to be God's gift, which is received by faith.

Such faith will produce these characteristics in the life of the one who truly believes..

Therefore, they are valid tests to determine who does belong to God's kingdom.

Without the transformation produced by the Spirit of God, no one would ever be able to live such a life.

Entrance through seeking 7-11

Entrance through serving others 12

Entrance through the narrow gate 13-14

Entrance through fruit bearing 15-23

Entrance through practicing Christ's words 24-27

Reaction from the crowd 7:28-29

They were amazed by His teaching—NO ONE had ever taught them with that kind of authority before.

He spoke as someone who knows what He's talking about!

This isn't just the opinion of a teacher.

He sounds like He knows the Author—like the Person Who wrote the book!

MESSIANIC MINISTRY 8-10

After completing the list of witnesses who testified to Jesus being the Messiah, and recording His initial proclamation to the people to reveal the kind of righteousness required for one to enter the kingdom, Matthew describes in summary the nature of Jesus' Messianic ministry.

Through the many aspects of His ministry described, Matthew demonstrates that **Jesus' works fulfilled the expectations of the people concerning the Messiah.**

John's response from prison (11:2-3) demonstrates the question the people should have been asking after seeing these evidences.

Some evidence is given that the people were raising such a question (9:8, 33; 12:23).

Their leaders responded that He couldn't be.

They attributed His works to Satanic power (9:34; 12:24).

This explanation was sufficient to cause doubt.

EXPECTATIONS FULFILLED 8-9

His power over illness 8:1-17

His demands on followers 8:18-22

His power over nature 8:23-27

His power over demons 8:28-34

His power to forgive sin 9:1-8

His power to change lives 9:9-13

His power over tradition 9:14-17

His power over death 9:18-26

His power over blindness 9:27-31

His power over speech impediments 9:32-34

His compassion for the crowds 9:35-37

DISCIPLES' RESPONSE 10

Jesus' compassion for the lost crowds (9:35-37) motivates Him to send out His disciples with the message of the kingdom.

Their acceptance of Him, accompanied by their obedience to His commission, is a testimony to their recognition of His authority as Messiah

Their calling 10:1-4

Their commission 10:5-10

Their significance 10:11-42

Acceptance or rejection of His messengers is equivalent to the accepting or rejecting Messiah.

MESSIANIC REJECTION FORESEEN 11-13:52

The presentation of the choice of accepting or rejecting Jesus' ambassadors leads into the following section of the book in which Israel's rejection is foretold.

TWO ALTERNATIVES 11

Their rejection is introduced by means of two examples which demonstrate the two alternatives they might choose.

John's choice 11:1-15

John made the right choice.

Although Jesus didn't totally fulfill his expectations, John was willing to accept the evidence and trust Him.

All he wanted was a verbal confirmation from Jesus that He was indeed the promised one.

John was a faithful messenger to prepare the way for Messiah.

Others' choice 11:16-24

In contrast to John's recognition of Jesus, and his preparation for Him, Israel's leaders rejected them both.

They rejected Jesus and John because neither of them would conform to the leaders' plan.

The leaders wanted them to submit to their authority, rather than submit to God's appointed ones.

That generation would share in their judgment because of the light they had received.

Invitation to accept Him 11:25-30

RECIPROCAL REJECTION 12

The conflict comes to a climax in chapter 12—a series of incidents leading to the request for a sign.

They reject all the evidence they have seen—in fact, they suggest that His power may be Satanic.

Israel's rejection of Jesus 12:1-45

Picking grain on Sabbath 12:1-8
Healing on Sabbath 12:9-21
Healing of a demon-possessed man 12:22-37
Request for a sign 12:38-45

Jesus' rejection of Israel 12:46-50

RESULTS OF REJECTION 13:1-52

Immediately following the message of rejection, Jesus begins to communicate with his followers through parables.

The parables facilitate understanding for people seeking the truth, but they hide the truth from people who don't want to understand and obey it.

These parables reveal God's new program for the coming age, in the light of Israel's rejection of Him.

Jesus' public parables 13:1-43

Parable of the sower and the soils 13:1-23
Parable of the wheat and the tares 13:24-30; 36-43
Parable of the mustard seed 13:31-32
Parable of the leaven 13:33
Explanation of the public parables 13:34-35

Jesus' private parables 13:44-52

Parable of the hid treasure 13:44
Parable of the pearl 13:45-46
Parable of the drag net 13:47-50
Parable of the householder 13:51-52

MESSIANIC OPPOSITION 13:53-18:35

After the initial confrontation which foreshadowed and warned Israel regarding the consequences of their rejection of their Messiah, Matthew demonstrates how the opposition began to grow.

DESCRIPTION OF OPPOSITION 13:53-16:13

Opposition in Nazareth 13:53-58

Opposition foreshadowed by Herod 14:1-36

Death of John 14:1-12
Affect on Christ 14:13-36

Opposition by scribes and Pharisees 15:1-39

Confrontation concerning tradition 15:1-20

Contrast of alternative responses 15:21-39
Religious leaders vs. Canaanite woman
Pharisees vs. the masses

Opposition by Pharisees and Sadducees 16:1-12

Request for a sign from heaven 16:1-4
Warning about yeast 16:5-12

IMPLICATIONS FOR DISCIPLES 16:13-18:35

After the opposition has become apparent to all, Jesus withdraws with His disciples and begins to instruct and prepare them for the future.

The opposition to Jesus would have profound implications for His followers as well.

Jesus must prepare them for what was about to come.

Private confirmation because of rejection 16:13-17:21

The events which are about to occur were not expected by any of Jesus' followers, nor did Israel expect this to happen to the Messiah.

To reassure His followers that this was indeed God's plan for His anointed, Jesus took the time to explain God's plan and confirm His identity and role.

Revelation of Jesus' person 16:13-16

Revelation of Jesus' program 16:17-26

Revelation of Jesus' kingdom 16:27-17:21

Private instruction because of rejection 17:22-18:35

Prediction concerning His death 17:22-23

Precaution concerning offending others 17:24-18:14

Instruction concerning the privileges of sonship 17:24-27

Instruction concerning greatness before God 18:1-5

Instruction concerning the danger of misleading others 18:6-14

Preparation for offense from others 18:15-35

Instruction concerning the correction of an offender 18:15-20

Instruction concerning forgiveness of an offender 18:21-35

MESSIANIC PRESENTATION AND REJECTION 19-25

After preparing them for the rejection He was about to experience, which they would endure with Him, Jesus returns to the crowd.

His direction is now fixed toward that definitive event.

FORMAL PRESENTATION 19-21:17

The road to Jerusalem 19-20

Several public incidents used as a basis for instruction for the disciples.

The triumphal entry 21:1-11

The temple ministry 21:12-17

FORMAL REJECTION 21:18-22:46

Rejection of the nation 21:18-22

Opposition of the nation 21:23-22:46

As Jesus returns to the temple, He finds that just like the fig tree, the place that should have been fruitful had become barren.

The nation which should have recognized and received Him gladly, rejected Him.

They began to set traps for Him, hoping that He would hang Himself and make it easy for them to accuse Him.

FORMAL RESPONSE 23-25

After the religious leaders of Israel conclude their attempts to trap Jesus and reveal their rejection of Him and lack of desire to know the truth, Jesus addresses the crowds.

This is His formal response as King to the nation who has rejected Him.

Proclamation of judgment 23:1-39

Prediction of judgment 24-25

Warning of imminent judgment 24:1-3

Signs of His return 24:4-31

Time of His return 24:32-51

Consequences of His return 25:1-46

Judging of Israel 25:1-30

Judging of the Gentiles 25:31-46

MESSIANIC REJECTION FULFILLED 26-27

PREPARATION FOR HIS DEATH 26:1-46

ARREST AND TRIAL 26:47-27:26

Matthew uses the events of the arrest and trial to reveal the nature of the charges against Christ.

The religious leaders could hardly claim to be innocent bystanders, attempting to enforce God's laws and obligated to action by the evidence against Him.

They were determined to stop Him and sought a legal basis to justify their action, even if it meant taking illegal action themselves in order to stop Him.

CRUCIFIXION 27:27-66 Includes supernatural evidence.

MESSIANIC RESURRECTION 28

The climax of the story, and the final proof of Jesus' claims comes from "the sign of Jonah," the resurrection.

FACT OF THE RESURRECTION 28:1-10

The leaders were unable to prevent it.

The best they could do was lie to hide the truth from the people.

The fact of the resurrection could not be hidden.

UNBELIEF CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION 28:11-15

The leaders conclude their witness to their motives by their reaction to the resurrection.

Rather than recognize their error and repent, they confirm their rejection and propagate a deliberate lie.

In this way they demonstrate their own failure as the leaders of God's people and demonstrate their guilt.

CHALLENGE FOR FUTURE MINISTRY 28:16-20

Having concluded the story of what has happened to God's program for His people Israel, those who followed Jesus must enter the new program for the present age.

Jesus leaves His disciples with a challenge for their future ministry in this age.

The disciples are to make other disciples throughout the world.

They are to proclaim His Word everywhere and teach those who receive the message all the things which He had taught them.

Wherever they go, they can be assured that He is with them.

This is the confidence which allows His followers to remain faithful, in the midst of the afflictions which were soon to follow.

APPLICATION

What lessons should we apply to our lives on the basis of this book's message?