

VISION FOR THE WORD OF GOD
INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPELS
THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

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The Gospels:

What the Gospels are Not---

- Although rooted in history, the Gospels are not primarily history
- Although they contain biographical details, the Gospels are not primarily biography
- The Gospels are not letters
- The Gospels are not plays, stories or dramatic presentations

What the Gospels Are—

- The Gospels are the proclamation of who Jesus is as:
God, incarnate in human flesh
- The fulfillment of ancient prophecy according to the Hebrew Scriptures
- A Preacher of a radically new message
- A teacher of God's eternal truth
- The Living Savior of the world and redeemer of humankind from sin

The Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke

Meaning of Synoptic (similar viewpoint)

Mark has 661 verses; Matthew, 1068; Luke, 1149.

Matthew reproduces 606 verses of Mark; Luke, 320. Of the 55 verses that Matthew does not reproduce, Luke produces 31. Only 24 verses in Gospel of Mark not found in either Matthew or Luke.

Matthew uses 51% of Mark's words; Luke 53%

Matthew generally follow Mark's order of events. Occasionally Matthew or Luke differ from Mark in terms of the order of events; but they never both differ from him; always at least one of them follow Mark's order of events.

The Gospel of Matthew

Matthew, the tax collector (a story in the transformation and sanctification of talent to God's glory and for God's vision for our lives)

Themes of Matthew's Gospels

1. Jesus as fulfillment of Hebrew scriptures (directed primarily but not exclusively---Wise men; Great Commission---toward Jewish audiences.)
2. Interest in church as community of faith. Only Synoptic Gospel that uses the word church (Matthew 16: 13-23; Mark 8: 27-33; Luke 9: 18-22.) Only Matthew instructs that disputes should be settled by the church (Matthew 18: 15-17)
3. Strong apocalyptic interest and emphasis on second coming and the judgment. Only Matthew speaks about parables of talents (25: 14-30); wise and foolish virgins ((25: 1-13); the sheep and the goats (25: 31-46)

4. The Teachings of Jesus. The five great discourses (Sermon on the Mount, chapters 5-7; Commissioning of the Twelve, chapter 10; Parables of the Kingdom chapter 13; Church Life and Discipline, chapter 18; Olivet Discourse, chapters 24-25)

As a teacher, Matthew arranges material that would help facilitate memorization in an age in which people did not have books. He arranges much of his material in groups of three and seven. There are three messages to Joseph; three denials by Peter and three questions asked by Pilate. In his genealogy, the ancestors of the Lord are grouped in three sections of fourteen names.

There are seven parables of the Kingdom in chapter 13 and seven woes to the scribes and Pharisees in chapter 23.

5. Matthew's dominating idea is Jesus is King. The wise men come looking to him who was born King. The title Son of David, is used more often in Matthew than any other Gospel. The triumphs entry is a deliberate dramatic claim to be King. Before Pilate Jesus accepts the title of King (27: 11). Even on the cross, the title of King is fixed to mock him. When he taught he says five times, "but I say to you," because a king has the final word. The final claim of Jesus is "all power is given unto me."

Thus, the stage is set for the necessary conflict with Rome and its Caesars because from the outset, only Jesus could be king. A life has place for only one king. True kings can stand the test of time.