



A Course

In

**MATTHEW,
STUDIES IN**

Prepared by the
Committee on Religious Education
of the
American Bible College

Pineland, Florida 33945

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PROLOGUE

As you study the Scriptures you will find that it is of the greatest importance to approach the Bible in a reverent attitude of mind, looking upon it as the inspired Word of God, and not just an ordinary piece of literature. If the Bible is studied in the same manner as one studies Shakespeare, Milton or some historical work, it may be found interesting and profitable. But by this approach, the Bible student, persistent though he may be, will never find its rich treasures. The Apostle Paul says: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (I Cor. 2:14) For the profitable study of the Word of God, the right spiritual attitude is indispensable.

The Scriptures should be studied as eagerly as a hungry person seeks for food. The formal reading of a portion of the Bible may have some worth as a religious exercise, but in order that the complete benefit may be obtained from its truths, they must be appropriated to personal needs. A milkman may deliver thousands of quarts of milk each day and yet go home thirsty. The Bible student may read large portions of the Bible with little benefit, unless he makes it his own by personal appropriation and feeds upon it.

In your studies of the Bible will you appropriate the riches thereof to your own personal use, or will you read as you would read a book of fiction, a mystery, etc? In order to make full use of the pearls of wisdom contained in the Bible readings, it is suggested you re-read them. Go into its wonderful fields of truth; go down into its valleys; climb its mountain peaks of vision; follow its streams of inspiration; enter its halls of learning. Many Bible truths do not appear on the surface; they must be dug up and be brought into the light by toil and effort.

There A.B.C. presents various methods of Bible study, such as the topical method, the study of books, study by chapters, study of important passages, exposition, the biographical method, and storytelling. In the Studies In Matthew the approach is to explain a passage by the storytelling method which is utilized in teaching and preaching.

Thus, in this course the study by chapters is combined with the storytelling method. Because of the abbreviated nature of the course, only the highlighted verses and topics will be addressed. This course is designed to introduce the student to the overall theme and major events in their historical setting. This method is utilized in order that the student may see the Bible as a complete unit telling His-story history. Although the American Bible College believes the King James Version is the preserved Word of God, this method of study allows the writer to occasionally condense a passage in his own paraphrase. This should not be construed to imply that A. B. C. is correcting God's Word.

Written originally for the Jews, the Gospel of Matthew presents Christ as the Son of David and the Son of Abraham. Because He is portrayed as King, His genealogy is traced to King David; and the place of His birth, Bethlehem, the home of David, is emphasized. Seven times in this Gospel Christ is spoken of as "the son of David" (1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9; 22:42). Only in Matthew does Christ speak of "the throne of his glory" (19:28; 25:31). Moreover, only here in the Gospels is Jerusalem referred to as "the holy city" (4:5) and "the city of the great King" (5:35). Being the Gospel of the King, Matthew is also the Gospel of the kingdom; in it the word "kingdom" appears more than fifty times and the expression "the kingdom of heaven," which is found nowhere else in the N. T., appears about thirty times.¹

During this course the student is required to read through the entire Book of Matthew ten times.

¹ THE NEW SCOFIELD REFERENCE BIBLE, 1967, p. 991.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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With permission, the compiler of this course study uses the book, as a basis, by the same name authored by Roland Quinche Leavell, published by the former Convention Press, Nashville, Tennessee.

We wish to thank the SBC for their gracious permission to use this textbook material. This course study will consist mainly of this text book with the inclusion of additional notes otherwise noted. The scripture texts are altered to conform with the King James Version. except where the author uses his own rendering.

It is our desire that this study will be as enlightening and spiritually rewarding as it has been to previous students.

Dr. Marvin W. Royse

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CHAPTER I

I. THE AUTHOR

II. THE DATE

III. THE CONTENT AND PURPOSE

IV. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1

Introduction

THE CENTRAL THEME of the Gospel of Matthew is the most magnificent subject in heaven or upon earth, the kingdom of heaven. That was the "magnificent obsession" of Christ. The Gospel is the noblest book in any literature either sacred or secular. It is scholarly written, topically arranged, logically developed, and triumphantly concluded. Although it was written after Mark's Gospel, Matthew's story soon took first place in all groupings of the four Gospels and was fixed there in the canon of the New Testament.

I. THE AUTHOR

Although there is no statement in the first Gospel to tell who wrote it, there are good reasons for believing that the book was written by Matthew—sometimes called Levi—the son of Alphaeus, the tax collector, who became one of the twelve apostles (Matt. 9:9). Early Christian writers and Christian tradition attribute the Gospel to this Matthew.

Matthew was an ideal man to record the teachings of Jesus for his own and succeeding generations to read. He was a man of letters and linguistic abilities, since as a tax collector undoubtedly he knew both the Aramaic and the Greek languages. Tax collectors were men of figures and note-taking and details; many were proficient in the use of shorthand. Such skills are indicated in Matthew's writing.

It is generally accepted that Mark wrote what Peter had told him about Jesus' works, but Mark tells little about Jesus' discourses. What would have been more natural than for Matthew to read Mark's account of the activities of Jesus as Peter told them, and to feel that the great teachings as well as the deeds of Jesus should be known? Therefore, Matthew wrote a Greek manuscript relating many of Mark's accounts of the doings of Jesus, and he added his own accounts of the sayings of Jesus.

Papias of Hierapolis (died about A.D. 155) is quoted as having said that Matthew noted the

sayings in the Aramaic language, and that others translated them. However, if Matthew did make notes in Aramaic, he himself was well qualified to translate them into Greek.

No other individual of the first century has ever been named as the author of the first Gospel. The book bears every evidence of authenticity and inspiration. It is evident that the writer had comprehended the great central message of Jesus, the kingdom of heaven, as only one who had sat under the compelling words of the Master could have done and that he felt compelled to give this message to the reading world.

II. THE DATE

The date of the Gospel of Matthew is usually judged to have been [before the time of the persecutions by Nero (A.D. 64-68) and the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus (A.D. 70) as Matthew refers to the "Holy City" (4:5; 27:53) as still in existence before its destruction by Titus. Also, his twenty references to the Temple imply its then present existence. Probably it was written around A.D. 50.]

III. CONTENT AND PURPOSE

Matthew's Gospel is the world's noblest treatise or thesis on the subject of Jesus as the King of the kingdom of heaven. "King" is found twenty-two times in Matthew, more than any other gospel. It contains six great discourses and many parables about the kingdom that Mark does not give.

Matthew saw what a tragedy it would be for men not to have the truth about the birth of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount, the commission of the twelve, the parables explaining the kingdom, the denunciation of the hypocrisy of those Pharisees who opposed Jesus, the prophetic teachings about the destruction of Jerusalem, and the prophecies about Christ's second coming and the last judgment. It would have been a tragedy indeed for the Christian world not to have learned of the Great Commission as given in Matthew 28:18-20 [also found in part in Mk. 16:15-18; Lk. 24:46-48; John 20:21 and Acts 1:9-11.

Every word of Matthew is directly or indirectly related to an exposition of the truth about the King and the kingdom. The material is arranged topically, not chronologically.

Matthew pictures Jesus as one who was born a king, who lived like a king, who spoke like a

king, who died like a king, who rose from the dead and promised to come again as the King of kings. As a king with regal authority, He stood upon the pinnacle of His resurrection glory and commanded His kingdom-minded followers to make disciples of all nations. His command is the divine imperative to every disciple of the King, until "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15).

IV. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

To appreciate the situation in Judaism portrayed in the Gospels, one must recognize the changes which had taken place during the long interval of history which followed the restoration of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Regarding this period, Dr. P. E. Burroughs wrote:

Between the two Testaments is an interval of about 400 years. From secular sources we know that the Jews exchanged rulers frequently during this period.

1. They remained under the Persian rule until the rise of Alexander the Great, 331 B.C.

2. They were ruled by the Greek kings from 331 to 167 B.C. In this period the Greek language became widely used among the Jews, resulting in the Septuagint translation of the [Old Testament] Scriptures, a translation from the original Hebrew into Greek.

3. In 167 B.C., angered and outraged by the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes, the Jews threw off the foreign yoke, and for a hundred years they were independent.

4. In 63 B.C., Pompey conquered Jerusalem, and the Jewish people came under the Roman rule. In 37 B.C., Herod the Great became king, and continued until after the birth of Christ.

5. During this period the Jews underwent many changes and suffered much. Their language, their laws, their customs were changed so that in the days of our Lord we come upon conditions widely different from those which prevailed when Malachi wrote his prophecy.¹

Zealously and tenaciously the Jewish people held to their sacred Scriptures. We must not lose sight of the loyal devotion to their religion which caused the Jews to preserve for us the Old

¹ *Outlines of Bible History* (Nashville: Convention Press), p. 66. Out of print

Testament as we know it. We can never fully estimate our debt to the rabbis—even to the very scribes and Pharisees whom we condemn so glibly. The denunciations of Jesus upon these leaders were not because they were ungodly, but because, having such a rich religious heritage, they failed to measure up to what God expected of them.

END OF SAMPLE