

WOOLHAMPTON PARISH

‘THE GOD WHO SPEAKS’ – YEAR OF THE BIBLE

BRIEF GUIDE TO BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

The Gospel according to Matthew builds on Mark, the first Gospel. Matthew adds some of the material he shares with Luke, probably derived from the source Q, which no longer exists. He also adds some of his own material, and of course he presents the Gospel in his own way, with his own emphases. This may be regarded as five books (corresponding to the five books of Moses) with an introduction and conclusion added.

The most obvious feature is that Matthew includes a great deal of Jesus’ teaching, not given in Mark, building it into five great discourses in a balanced pattern:

- *The Sermon on the Mount; entry into the kingdom ch 5-7*
- *The community on its mission ch 10*
- *Images of the kingdom ch 13*
- *The community together ch 18*
- *Rewards and punishments; the kingdom completed ch 24-25*

Matthew has been the favourite Gospel for many Christians throughout history.

We do not know who the author was, but the Gospel was attached early to his name. Apart from the lists of the Twelve disciples, he is mentioned only in this Gospel; the story of the Call of Levi in Mark recounts in Matthew the call of Matthew (9:9).

Two characteristics of Matthew’s teaching stand out:

1. he puts things in order, gathering together a series of ten miracles, and arranging Jesus’ teaching on particular subjects into five great matching sermons.
2. his use of imagery is superb; he uses plenty of images, often animal images, especially in contrasting pairs.

Most of all, however, **Matthew is the Gospel of Judaism**; he writes for Christians sprung from Judaism, assuming that his audience know about Jewish customs and Jewish Law. He uses Jewish forms of teaching, and stresses that Christianity is the fulfillment of Judaism and all its hopes. **Jesus is the second David and a new Moses**, completing everything that was written in the scriptures about God’s chosen servant.

The Christian community, Jesus’ own community, has come into the place of the community of God in the Old Testament:

- the Twelve chosen disciples are like the founders of the 12 tribes of Israel. Persecution of the followers of Jesus by Jews is to him the more bitter for that.
- Reflecting some years later than Mark, he also sees and shows more clearly the majesty of the Risen Christ even in the earthly Jesus, whom Peter names “Son of God”. He is also aware of the constant presence of Emmanuel, “God with us” in the community Jesus founded on the apostles.

Now read for example Matthew chapter 28.

(from *The Bible – A Reader’s Guide*, by Henry Wansborough)