

The New Testament: Matthew

Matthew, the first of the gospels in the New Testament, was written around the year 80 and most likely used Mark as a source. Matthew, also called Levi, was a tax collector who walked away from his position to follow Jesus. *“As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax office; and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and follows him.* (Matthew 9:9) His Gospel was mainly written for Jewish Christians. The community to which Matthew was writing seems to have been predominantly Jewish. Antioch was at one time closely linked to a Jewish community but later found itself in conflict . It was a city with large Jewish population and a conservative Christian community. The most important thing he wanted to emphasize was to show how Jesus fulfilled their expectations of the Messiah. He begins his Gospel with the genealogy designed to show how Jesus is the successor of David, the Christ, the Anointed One that the prophets have promised. Of all of the Gospel writers, Matthew is the one that lets Jesus speak for himself: he simply reports what Jesus said. One of the main areas in which he has changed and expanded is in his treatment of Christology (the study of who Jesus is). It is important to remember that Matthew and his community were ethnically Jewish and still considered themselves to be Jews by religion. They believed that Jesus was the fulfillment of Judaism. Yet they did not believe that Jesus had founded a new religion to supplant Judaism. The Messiah movement (Christianity) was simply a reform movement within Judaism. In fact, Matthew reminds us how indebted we are to Jews for our faith. We need to recognize how much we share and how much Jews and Christians can learn from each other. Our faith in Jesus does not make us enemies of the Jews, but rather their brothers and sisters. *–Sherrie Clutts DRE*