The Gospel of Matthew

- Resources:
  http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/
  The amazing work of Fr. Felix Just, SJ
What are the "Gospels?"

• Four "Gospels": "Good News" about Jesus Christ; authorship attributed to the four "Evangelists"; narrative portraits of Jesus written for various early Christian communities; similar to ancient biographies in form (but rather different from modern biographies!):

• The Synoptic Gospels:
  • Matthew (28 / 1071 / 18345)
  • Mark (16 / 678 / 11304)
  • Luke (24 / 1151 / 19482)

• The Fourth Gospel:
  • John (21 / 879 / 15635)
Matthew and the Synoptic Gospels

The four Gospels are listed in what was traditionally regarded as their chronological order (i.e., Matthew was thought to be the oldest Gospel); most scholars today, however, believe that Mark was the first written Gospel (or at least the oldest of the four canonical Gospels in their full versions, as we know them today).

HOW THE GOSPELS CAME TO BE

- The Historical Jesus - words are spoken and deeds are performed by Jesus himself during his lifetime on earth.
- Oral Tradition - traditions and beliefs about Jesus are developed and passed on by early Christian communities.
- Written Sources - some of the miracles and/or sayings of Jesus are compiled and recorded in early written documents.
- Written Texts - individual letters, full Gospels, etc., are written with particular messages for particular situations.
The Synoptic “Problem”

Two-source Hypothesis

Mark

Q

Matthew  Luke
The Four Source Hypothesis
The "Synoptic Gospels"- The Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke are so similar to each other that, in a sense, they view Jesus "with the same eye" (syn-optic), in contrast to the very different picture of Jesus presented in the Fourth Gospel (John). Yet there are also many significant differences among the three Synoptic Gospels.
Biblical scholars today generally use the Hebrew alphabet and characters as the same alphabet to write in Aramaic.
The Nag Hammadi Library, a collection of thirteen ancient codices containing over fifty texts, was discovered in upper Egypt in 1945. This immensely important discovery includes a large number of primary "Gnostic Gospels" -- texts once thought to have been entirely destroyed during the early Christian struggle to define "orthodoxy" -- scriptures such as the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip, and the Gospel of Truth.

The discovery and translation of the Nag Hammadi library, completed in the 1970's, has provided impetus to a major re-evaluation of early Christian history and the nature of Gnosticism.
What about the “other gospels”?

THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS
These are the secret sayings which the living Jesus spoke and which Didymos Judas Thomas wrote down.
1) And He said, "Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not experience death."

2) Jesus said, "Let him who seeks continue seeking until he finds. When he finds, he will become troubled. When he becomes troubled, he will be astonished, and he will rule over the All."

http://www.utoronto.ca/religion/synopsis/meta-synt.htm
The Gospel of Thomas, one of the Gnostic texts found preserved in the Nag Hammadi Library, gives these words of the living Jesus:

Jesus said, `I am not your master. Because you have drunk, you have become drunk from the bubbling stream which I have measured out.... 12

He who will drink from my mouth will become as I am: I myself shall become he, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to him.' 13
Canonicity- what is that?

Four Criteria for Canonicity
(why certain books were eventually accepted into the NT Canon, while others were rejected):

• **Apostolic Origin** - attributed to and/or based on the preaching/teaching of the first-generation apostles (or their closest companions).

• **Universal Acceptance** - acknowledged by all major Christian communities in the Mediterranean world (*by the end of the fourth century*).

• **Liturgical Use** - read publicly along with the OT when early Christians gathered for the Lord's Supper (their weekly worship services).

• **Consistent Message** - containing theological ideas compatible with other accepted Christian writings (incl. the divinity and humanity Jesus).
Four-Fold Role of the Evangelists as Authors
(what they contributed, even if "God is the Author" of all scripture):

• **Selectors** - from among the many things Jesus said and did, they chose which stories they wanted to include and which to omit.

• **Arrangers** - they organized the materials in a particular sequence, *not necessarily chronologically* but often in thematic blocks.

• **Shapers** - *they adapted and edited* the individual stories from their sources so as to emphasize the themes they wanted to stress.

• **Proclaimers** - they were not objective historians, but preached the "good news" about Jesus in ways *appropriate to their audiences*.
The Gospel of Matthew
Jesus the Promised Messiah

Author:   tax collector & apostle (Mark 3:18; Matt 9:9; 10:3; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13) multi-lingual (Aramaic & Greek) early Jewish Christian; trained "scribe" of 13:52?

Themes:  five major discourses; well-organized sections of collected pericopes, "Book of Genealogy" (1:1), Sermon on the Mount: Fulfillment of Torah/Law (ch. 5–7)

Date:   late 70's or 80's (w/ older sources, incl. one written by Matthew?)

Audience:   better educated Jews who believe in Jesus, but argue over the Law, probably in or near Antioch in Syria

* Pericope - an extract from a text, esp. a passage from the Bible

Resource: Fr. Felix Just, SJ http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Four_Gospel_Chart.htm
First Discourse: "Sermon on the Mount": 5-7 (7:28-29)
Narrative: 8-9

Second Discourse: "Missionary Instructions": 10 (11:1)
Narrative: 11-12

Third Discourse: "Collection of Parables": 13 (13:53)
Narrative: 14-17

Fourth Discourse: "Community Instructions": 18 (18:35)
Narrative: 19-22

Christology of Matthew- Who is Jesus?

Christology:
The study of the person and nature of Jesus Christ, especially the mystery of the union in Christ of the divine and human natures.

By words:
• Son of David (reference to Kings)
• Son of Abraham (reference to patriarchs)
• King of the Jews (a “political” reference?)
• New Lawgiver & Great Teacher (like Moses)
• Emmanuel ("God with us" reference to prophets)
Christology by actions

• teaching his disciples
• decrying religious hypocrisy

What makes you a Disciple?

• be righteous (Abraham)
• forgive always (Divine attribute)
• live ethically (Golden Rule)
• fulfill God's commands (Sinai Covenant)
• especially in charitable deeds (mitzvah)
Our Conclusion

Matthew’s gospel portrays Jesus as the promised Messiah of Israel, Son of David and Abraham and the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies. (Isaiah- Immanuel).

Matthew is writing to a second generation Jewish-Christians, probably in Antioch (Syria), who are trying to solidify their identity as Christians.