

## MATTHEW INTRODUCTION PART 5



The introduction to any book of the Bible is just as important for us to understand as what we find within its pages. As a matter of fact, it is only when we have taken the time to introduce ourselves to the book, that we have the tools necessary to correctly exegete and exposit its content. Such introductory knowledge is obtained by asking the questions of Who? When? Where? What? Why? and How?

### 1. (Who?) is the author of the book?

The external evidence is unanimous that the author is the same as the 8<sup>th</sup> listed apostle, Matthew the tax collector (Mat 10 2-3).

### 2. (When?) was the book written?

Sometime before 70 A.D.

### 3. (Where?) is the relevancy of this book to our Christian lives today?

It is not uncommon to hear people making this kind of a complaint as it relates to the whole Bible (e.g. How could something so ancient, speak to my life today? Where is its relevancy?). However, like all the books of the Bible, Matthew's relevance is easily discernible when one considers the wealth of topics/issues that are addressed through its established instruction.

### 4. (What?) is the historical context of the book?

In other words. what was the geographical. political. economic. sociological and religious setting of the first century world that Jesus lived and ministered in? Interestingly enough, each of those categories present a picture very similar to our present world (i.e. 21<sup>st</sup> century U.S.A.). This was most especially true when considering the level of heresy and apostasy that existed w/in Judaism. Like Evangelical Christianity today, the majority of the Jewish community – including her religious leaders, had convinced themselves that their birth into the family of God and the possession of atoning sacrifice for sin was all that was needed to continue in a saving relationship w/God. Theologically, things differed very little from the antinomian/easy-believism gospel preached today (i.e. salvation requires only faith. Faithfulness is nice but not necessary).

### 5. (Why?) did Matthew NOT write his gospel?

Traditionally, inquiry into the author's purpose is stated in the positive versus the negative as it is here. However, this particular dialectic approach to Matthew's gospel has enormous value – especially when attempting to “root out” modern misconceptions about Jesus, His ministry or the Christian Faith in general. As such, what follows serves as both an explicit apologetic (against the heresies of our day) as well as an implicit guide to Matthew's purpose and intent in writing.

#### 5.1. To proclaim that the dispensation of law is over. [DISCUSSED]

#### 5.2. To reveal that God was now good with having a whore for a wife or at least one on the side. [DISCUSSED]

#### 5.3. To portray God the Father as a child abuser.

Christianity is filled with her critics. This includes those who view the New Testament (and most especially its gospel biopics) as teaching nothing less than divine child abuse. The argument for such a claim goes as follows: If God the Father is the One determining justice, then He is also the One determining who can (and will) receive mercy. And Who more worthy than His beloved and innocent Son? Could God the Father not have simply chose to pardon His enemies (i.e. us) and spared His Son from such violent measures? Or at the very least, could He have not (b/c of mercy) lessened the degree of punishment inflicted upon His Son? The obvious answer in their mind is “Yes”. Therefore, (according to such critics), the belief that God the Father *could* have chosen to extend mercy (but declined) betrays Matthew's “good news” intention (in writing his gospel), by inadvertently revealing a darker and more sinister purpose: to portray God the Father as the cosmic child abuser. And though this conclusion (i.e. God the Father is guilty of child abuse) is vehemently denied by Evangelical Christianity, its understanding of mercy confirms it. Namely, that mercy *can* negate justice.

How we know this was NOT the purpose behind Matthew's gospel:

**5.3.1. Per Matthew, Jesus never views mercy as a negation of justice. Rather it upholds the law.**

As such, Jesus understands mercy to be defined as: good extended w/o obligation due to contract or the obstruction of justice (Mat 12:1-7 = mercy/good is to be extended to those who are guiltless [7] – which is what Jesus proves He and His disciples are in re: to the Sabbath [3-6, 8] ; Mat 18:21-35<sup>1</sup>).

**5.3.2. Matthew as well as other gospel writers view Jesus' ministry (and the subsequent New Covenant/Testament to follow) as completely consistent (i.e. in agreement) w/ the rest of the biblical witness (which would therefore include its teaching on mercy and justice).**

Consider (Mat 5:17-18, Luk 16:16-17; Luk 10:25-26).

**5.3.3. The rest of the Scriptures support Jesus' understanding of justice (as never negating but rather upholding justice).**

Consider (e.g. Gen 19:14-16 w/2Pe 2:7; Exo 25:21-22 = cherubim are the deliverers/guardians of God's justice [Gen 3:24; Heb 2:2; Gal 3:19; Act 7:53; Rev 7-8; this is also why pastors are called "angels" in Rev 2-3], cherubim are therefore located in God's heavenly courtroom/place of judgment [Rev 4-5, 7-8] mercy is extended only after justice is served in the place of judgment)

(Exo 33:19 w/34:6-7; Deu 4:23-31; Neh 9:13-31; Job 8:3-6; Psa 31:21-23; Dan 9:1-19; Rom 3:25-30; 1Co 11:17-26; Tit 3:5; Heb 2:17, 10:28-29; Jam 2:13; 1Pe 1:3, 2:10; 2Jo 1:3-4; Jud 21-23).

**Closing Considerations:**

**1) Adolf Hitler** = He was convicted of high treason in 1924 for his attempt to overthrow the govt (the Beer Hall Putsch). It was also found that he was not a German citizen. German law stated he should be deported. The judge decided to let him remain in Germany since he considered himself a "true German". While in prison he wrote "Mein Kampf" (or "My Struggle") where he outlines his political views and philosophy on the human races – including his belief that the Jews are a culture-destroying people. This along w/his ability to remain in Germany, was key in his rise to becoming the Chancellor of Germany. Had he been deported per justice, this terrible trajectory (which included the mass killing of Jewish people), would have been avoided. IOW: mercy negates justice and leads to holocaust.

**2) God's justice and our obligation to the secular govt/courts/justice (Rom 13:1-4)** = God approves their justice in re: to legitimate crime/sin even if it is deficient/excessive when compared to God's prescription (e.g. theft in Nigeria or Saudi Arabia = loss of hand). We are to uphold it thru satisfaction and submission.

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<sup>1</sup> In these verses we discover also the definition for forgiveness: seeking the best just-case scenario for the guilty party (consider 1Th 5:15).