

# **Dr. David Turner, Matthew**

## **Session 1A – Introduction to Matthew I: Origins, Canonicity, Structure**

### **NotebookLM Study Guides**

1) Abstract, 2) Briefing Document, 3) Study Guide, FAQs

#### **1) Abstract**

This academic lecture introduces the **Gospel of Matthew**, exploring its **origins, canonicity, and literary structure**. The speaker discusses the challenges of determining the gospel's authorship and date, acknowledging both traditional views attributing it to the Apostle Matthew and modern scholarly perspectives. The lecture also addresses the question of **Matthew's original language** and the **history of its textual transmission** through numerous manuscripts and patristic citations. Finally, it focuses on different approaches to understanding **Matthew's structure**, advocating for a **narrative critical method** that emphasizes the arrangement of narrative and discourse sections, particularly marked by repeated phrases.

#### **2) Briefing Document:**

**Here is a detailed briefing document reviewing the main themes and most important ideas or facts from the provided source, "Turner\_Matthew\_Lect01A\_English.pdf":**

##### **BRIEFING DOCUMENT: INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW**

**Source:** Excerpts from "Turner\_Matthew\_Lect01A\_English.pdf" (Dr. David Turner, Lecture 1A – Introduction to Matthew I: Origins, Canonicity, Structure)

**Overview:** This lecture provides an introduction to the Gospel of Matthew, focusing on its origins, authorship, date, recipients, canonicity, textual history, genre, and literary structure. While acknowledging the complexities and scholarly debates surrounding these topics, the lecture presents a preferred view for the course, particularly regarding the literary structure and the audience of Matthew.

## Key Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:

### 1. Authorship:

- The Gospel of Matthew is anonymous, similar to the other Gospels.
- Attribution to the Apostle Matthew is based on "educated guesses" derived from grammatical and literary analysis, thematic study, and especially "Patristic Traditions" (traditions from early church fathers).
- **Crucial Fact:** "These Traditions unanimously affirmed that the gospel of Matthew was the first gospel... written by the Apostle Matthew".
- Notable early church figures who affirmed Matthean authorship include Papias (early 2nd Century), Clement of Alexandria (early 3rd Century), and Origen (mid-3rd Century), as cited by Eusebius. Irenaeus (late 2nd Century) and Jerome (4th Century) also support this.
- While patristic tradition is strong, "most scholars are led by the Jewish orientation of Matthew to conclude that its author was a Jewish Christian". A minority view suggests a Gentile author writing polemics against Judaism, which the lecturer considers "a mistaken view".

### 1. Date of Writing:

- Likely allusions to Matthew exist in early church documents like those of Ignatius (late 1st/early 2nd Century) and the Didache (early 2nd Century).
- These early references, combined with Papias' testimony, suggest Matthew was "well known by the early 2nd Century," indicating it "must have written the gospel of the first century at the very latest."
- **Dominant Scholarly Consensus:** Based on the Markan priority hypothesis, Matthew is typically dated to the "80s or 90s of the Common Era." This often aligns with the view that Matthew 24-25 contains "a prophecy after the event about the destruction of Jerusalem" (AD 70).
- **Alternative/Patristic View:** If one accepts the patristic testimony to apostolic authorship and views Matthew 24-25 as "an authentic tradition from Jesus and not as a prophecy after the event," an "earlier date" (pre-70 AD) is possible.
- **Key Point:** Scholars are generally "not dogmatic about the date of the book."

### 1. Recipients and Occasion:

- Matthew's strong Jewish characteristics (fulfillment formulas, Hebrew Bible quotations, presentation of Jesus fulfilling the Law and Prophets) necessitate considering the recipients' relationship to Judaism.
- Scholarly debate exists: Some believe Matthew's community had "many Gentiles and is already separated from the synagogue," while others hold the opposite view that it is "largely Jewish and is still connected with the synagogue." A "middle ground" suggests a community "in the process of leaving the synagogue."
- **View Adopted in the Course:** "the view that Matthew's Community is still engaged with the synagogue has been adopted." This position is supported by scholars like Overman, Salverany, and Sym, and extensively documented in the commentary by W. D. Davies and Dale Allison.
- **Location:** The location of the community is uncertain, with Antioch being a frequent suggestion, though others include Tyre, Sidon, Galilee, or Pella. "grasping the message of this book does not depend on knowing the location of its original recipients."
- **Occasion and Purpose:** Inferred from the text and the presumed audience:
  - The community needed to understand how Jesus' life "fulfilled the Hebrew Bible."
  - They needed to understand how Jesus' teaching "interpreted the Torah of Moses" (5:17ff).
  - They needed to know "why the entrenched non-Christian Jewish leaders were no longer to be followed" (Chapter 23).
  - The community "needed to expand its horizons to the word Gentile mission." Matthew portrays Gentiles positively (mention in genealogy, faith stressed), preparing the reader for "the climactic commission that the community takes Jesus' message to all the nations 28:19."

#### 1. **Canonicity and Textual History:**

- **Papias' Testimony and the Question of a Hebrew Original:** Patristic sources suggest Matthew was originally written in Hebrew. Papias, cited by Eusebius, stated that "Matthew collected. The oracles about Jesus in the Hebrew language. And each one interpreted them as best he could".
- This poses a challenge as the present Greek Matthew "does not read like a translation of a Hebrew original."

- Interpretations vary: some suggest Matthew wrote both Hebrew and Greek versions; others that Papias referred to Jesus' sayings ("Q") or discourses.
- A prominent alternative view, like Gundry's, suggests "in my Hebrew dialect" means "a submitted a style of writing or a rhetorical style" (Jewish compositional style), and "each one interprets" means interpreting this Jewish style, not translating the language.
- **Greek Manuscripts:** The textual history of Matthew is well-represented with "a great number" of manuscripts, including over 20 Uncials (like Sinaiticus/Aleph, Vaticanus/B, C, D, W, Sigma) and numerous Papyrus manuscripts (like P64, P67, P77), which are often earlier but more fragmentary. Hundreds of minuscule manuscripts also exist.
- **Canonicity:** Matthew was the "most popular Gospel of the early church" and its canonicity was "no doubt... among the Orthodox" in both Eastern and Western regions.
- **Challenge to Canonicity:** The heretic Marcion (mid-2nd Century) rejected Matthew, viewing it as tied to the Old Testament God he opposed due to his dualistic theology. Marcion's limited canon (edited Luke and Pauline Epistles) "was a major factor in the process that led to the formalization of the canon."
- **Affirmation of Canonicity:** Early documents like the Anti-Marcionite prologue and the Muratorian fragment speak of the "undisputed four-fold Gospel." Irenaeus, Cyprian, and Clement of Alexandria also confirm Matthew's canonicity.

#### 1. **Genre of the Gospels:**

- Gospels are described as "books, which have both history and theology".
- Acknowledge a tension: Conservative evangelicals, in response to liberal scholarship viewing Gospels as imaginative creations reflecting later church needs, emphasize historicity. However, this can sometimes "eclipse" the theological aspect.
- Some misguided views suggest Gospels are *only* history, with theology found elsewhere (e.g., Pauline Epistles).
- **Crucial Insight:** This "history versus theology dichotomy, is false; the gospels narrate what really happened but do so, for theological reasons."
- Authors transmitted "Jesus Traditions" (believed to be "genuine historical events") with "a view to meeting the spiritual needs of their audiences."

- **Key Concept:** Gospels contain "theologically interpreted history." This is clear in John's stated purpose (John 20:30-31) to promote belief and life, not just provide comprehensive historical data.
- Gospel narratives "disciple those respective communities by bringing selected episodes from the life of Jesus to bear on their respective needs."

#### 1. **Source Criticism and the Synoptic Problem:**

- **Synoptic Problem:** The question of why the first three Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) are so similar yet also different.
- **Theories of Origin: Literary Independence:** Gospels individually edited "readily available oral tradition." This struggles to explain "identical wording of extended passages."
- **Literary Interdependence:** Gospels borrowed from each other.
- **Patristic/Traditional View:** Canonical order reflects dependence (Augustine, Church Fathers, and later Griesbach Hypothesis - Mark used Matthew and Luke).
- **Modern Scholarly Consensus:** "Mark priority with Matthew. And Luke composing, their gospel's independence of one, Mark and another hypothetical Source, known as Q" (Two Source Theory). This is expanded to the "Four Source theory" (Mark, Q, M for Matthew's unique material, L for Luke's unique material).
- **Course Position:** The course stresses a "narrative approach to Matthew, not a documentary hypothesis approach."

#### 1. **Narrative Criticism:**

- An alternative literary method viewing "each gospel as a whole."
- Draws conclusions about meaning and theology by comparing "the parts of each gospel to the whole, rather than to these so-called hypothetical sources."
- Requires reading the text without assuming external knowledge (as per Powell).
- "This approach seems fitting, that the gospels are viewed as theologically interpreted history written for the edification of Christian communities."
- More appropriate than Source Criticism for "study of the gospels in a church context, given the genre of the gospels as theologically interpreted history and the canonical function of the Gospel as Holy Scripture."

- **Potential Weakness:** May ignore the "historical reference" of the documents. For evangelical study, "the historical events interpreted by the literary sources must be held together."
- **Course Method:** The commentary "will be a narrative critical study. All those Source critical matters will occasionally be noted."

## 1. **Literary Structure of Matthew:**

- "Grasping the structure of Matthew, is crucial in the narrative critical approach".
- **Common Approaches (Acknowledged but deemed less satisfactory for Matthew):**
  - Markan/Chronological/Geographical:** Focuses on Galilee ministry, journey to Jerusalem, Passion, Resurrection, Commission. This is seen as a "historical biographical approach" but "does not at all engage Matthews' distinctive pattern of alternating narrative and discourse blocks."
- **"From Then On Jesus Began" (4:17, 16:21):** Approach by Kingsbury and Bauer marking transitions in Jesus' biography/ministry. While important events, these are seen as "more of a biographical marker than a literary device" and don't fully capture Matthew's unique structure. "It doesn't really help us get into the matter, of how Matthew alternates narrative and discourse."
- **Preferred Approach (Adopted by the Course):** Keys in on Matthew's "unique juxtaposition of narrative, discourse material, signal by the phrase, "after Jesus had finished," at the end of the major narratives."
- This structure shows "that Matthew was trying to tell us, not simply what Jesus did, but primarily what he said."
- This "unique feature of Matthew... distinguishes it from Mark." Matthew condenses Mark's narrative details but expands Jesus' teaching.
- This structure is based on five major discourses, each ending with a concluding phrase like "after Jesus had finished all these words" (Matthew 26:1 explicitly referencing the final discourse).
- **Key Discourse Sections (as noted in the outline):**
  - Discourse on Mission (Chapter 10)
  - Discourse on Parables (Chapter 13)
  - Discourse on Relationships in the Kingdom (Chapter 18)
  - Eschatological Discourse (Chapters 24-25)

- This structural pattern indicates "how we need to understand the way the gospel of Matthew fits together."

### **Conclusion:**

Lecture 1A lays the groundwork for studying Matthew by addressing foundational questions about its origins, historical context, and nature as a literary work. While acknowledging scholarly debates, the lecture adopts specific positions regarding Matthew's audience (primarily Jewish Christian, still connected to the synagogue), the genre (theologically interpreted history), and, most importantly for the course's methodology, the literary structure based on the alternating narrative and discourse blocks marked by the phrase "after Jesus had finished." This structural emphasis highlights Matthew's focus on Jesus' teaching as a key element distinguishing it from other Gospels, particularly Mark.

## **Study Guide:** Study Guide: Introduction to the Gospel of Matthew

### Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What are some methods scholars use to make educated guesses about the origins of the Gospel of Matthew?
2. What is the Patristic Tradition regarding the authorship and order of the Gospels, and how does it compare to modern scholarly thinking?
3. How did early Church Fathers like Papias, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen view the authorship of the Gospel of Matthew?
4. What is the significance of the references to Matthew in the writings of Ignatius and the Didache for dating the Gospel?
5. Explain the two main scholarly views regarding the relationship of Matthew's original audience to Judaism.
6. What hypothesis is suggested regarding the original language of Matthew based on Patristic sources, particularly Papias' testimony?
7. How did the heretic Marcion's view of the Old and New Testaments impact his acceptance of the Gospel of Matthew?

8. What is the "synoptic problem," and what are the two main groups of theories that attempt to explain it?
9. How does Narrative Criticism approach the study of the Gospels differently from Source Criticism?
10. What structural feature of Matthew's Gospel is emphasized in the preferred approach discussed in the lecture?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. Scholars use methods such as analyzing the book's grammar, syntax, and literary style, studying its distinctive themes, reading between the lines, and noting Patristic Traditions from early church fathers.
2. The Patristic Tradition unanimously affirmed that the Gospel of Matthew was the first gospel and was written by the Apostle Matthew, which often runs counter to modern scholarly consensus regarding the order of the Gospels (Markan priority).
3. Papias, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen all affirmed that the Apostle Matthew was the author of the First Gospel, as cited in sources like Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History.
4. Early allusions to Matthew in Ignatius and the Didache, along with Papias' testimony, suggest that Matthew was well known by the early 2nd century CE, indicating the Gospel must have been written at the very latest in the first century.
5. Some scholars believe Matthew's community contained many Gentiles and was separated from the synagogue, while others hold that it was largely Jewish and still connected with the synagogue, or was in the process of leaving it.
6. Patristic sources, especially Papias cited by Eusebius, suggest that Matthew originally collected "oracles about Jesus" in the Hebrew language, which were later interpreted or translated into Greek.
7. Marcion held a Gnostic dualism between the Old and New Testaments, viewing them as revelations of different gods. Matthew's emphasis on Jesus fulfilling the Old Testament was therefore unacceptable to Marcion, leading him to exclude it from his canon.
8. The synoptic problem refers to the fundamental similarities and differences among the first three Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). Theories explaining it are divided into those emphasizing literary independence and those positing literary interdependence.



9. Narrative Criticism views each Gospel as a unified whole and draws conclusions about meaning by comparing its parts to the whole, rather than analyzing it based on hypothetical sources or layers of tradition.
10. The preferred approach emphasizes Matthew's unique juxtaposition of narrative and discourse material, often signaled by the phrase "after Jesus had finished," highlighting Matthew's focus on Jesus' teachings.

### Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss the tension between Patristic tradition and modern scholarly consensus regarding the authorship and date of the Gospel of Matthew, citing specific arguments from the source material.
2. Analyze the evidence presented in the lecture regarding the original audience of the Gospel of Matthew. What are the different scholarly positions, and what details from the Gospel are used to support these views?
3. Explain the significance of the discussion on "canonicity and history" for understanding the early reception and acceptance of the Gospel of Matthew within the Church. How did challenges like Marcion's influence the process?
4. Compare and contrast Source Criticism and Narrative Criticism as approaches to studying the Gospels, drawing upon the lecture's explanation of their methods and perceived strengths and weaknesses.
5. Evaluate the different approaches to outlining the structure of Matthew's Gospel discussed in the lecture. Which approach does the lecturer favor, and why is it considered more suitable for a narrative critical study?

### Glossary of Key Terms

- **Patristic Traditions:** Traditions from the early church fathers (e.g., Papias, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Irenaeus, Eusebius).
- **Anonymous:** Having no known or acknowledged name; in the context of the Gospels, their authors are not explicitly stated within the texts themselves.
- **Common Era (CE):** A dating system alternative to AD (Anno Domini), used to refer to the time period beginning with Jesus' birth, during which Jews and Christians lived.
- **Canonicity:** The status of a book being accepted as part of the authoritative collection of Holy Scripture (the canon).

- **Textual History:** The study of the transmission and variants of ancient texts, based on available manuscripts.
- **Uncial Manuscripts:** Ancient manuscripts written in capital letters without separation between words.
- **Papyrus Manuscripts:** Manuscripts written on papyrus, an ancient writing material made from the papyrus plant.
- **Minuscule Manuscripts:** Ancient manuscripts written in a cursive script with smaller letters.
- **Marcion:** A heretic in the 2nd century CE who rejected the Old Testament and many New Testament books, including Matthew, advocating for a Gnostic dualism and accepting only an edited version of Luke and Pauline Epistles.
- **Orthodox:** Adhering to the established or traditional doctrines of the Christian church.
- **Anti-Marcionite Prologue:** Early Christian writings that defended the traditional four-fold Gospel canon against Marcion's views.
- **Muratorian Fragment:** An early fragment of a list of New Testament books accepted as canonical, dating from the late 2nd century CE.
- **Genre:** A category of artistic, musical, or literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content. The Gospels are considered to have a genre that combines history and theology.
- **Apologetic Concerns:** Concerns related to defending and justifying Christian beliefs.
- **Liberal Scholarship:** A school of biblical interpretation that often views the Gospels as imaginative documents reflecting the needs of the early church rather than strictly reliable historical accounts of Jesus.
- **Evangelicals:** A branch of Protestant Christianity emphasizing the authority of the Bible, the centrality of Jesus' atonement, personal conversion, and the importance of evangelism.
- **Dispensational Views:** A theological framework that divides history into distinct periods or "dispensations," sometimes leading to the view that different parts of the Bible (like the Gospels vs. Epistles) primarily convey history or theology, respectively.

- **History vs. Theology Dichotomy:** The false separation or opposition between the historical events narrated in the Gospels and their theological meaning or purpose.
- **Theologically Interpreted History:** The view that the Gospels narrate actual historical events but do so with a specific theological purpose and perspective, selecting and shaping the material to meet the needs of their audience.
- **Synoptic Problem:** The question of the literary relationship between the first three Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), given their significant similarities and differences in content, wording, and order.
- **Synoptics:** The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which share a common perspective and structure, allowing them to be viewed together ("syn-optic").
- **Oral Transmission:** The process of passing down traditions and stories verbally rather than through written texts.
- **Literary Independence:** The theory that the Gospel authors wrote independently of each other, possibly relying on oral traditions.
- **Literary Interdependence:** The theory that the Gospel authors used one or more of the other Gospels as sources when writing their own.
- **Markan Priority:** The scholarly consensus that the Gospel of Mark was written first and that Matthew and Luke used Mark as a source.
- **Hypothetical Source Q:** A proposed source, presumed to be a collection of sayings of Jesus (from the German *Quelle* meaning "source"), used independently by Matthew and Luke.
- **Two-Source Theory:** The dominant theory of the Synoptic Problem, proposing that Matthew and Luke used both Mark and the hypothetical source Q.
- **Four-Source Theory:** An extension of the Two-Source Theory, adding two more hypothetical sources: M (material unique to Matthew) and L (material unique to Luke).
- **Narrative Approach (Narrative Criticism):** A literary method that studies the Gospels as unified narrative wholes, focusing on the author's literary techniques, characterization, plot, and themes to understand the meaning and theology of the text within its canonical form.
- **Source Criticism:** A method of biblical criticism that attempts to identify the written and oral sources that the authors of the biblical texts used.

- **Atomizing Tendencies:** The tendency of some critical methods (like Source Criticism) to break down a text into smaller, isolated units or sources, potentially losing sight of the whole.
- **Matthean Priority:** The view, held by some scholars (and traditionally by the early church), that Matthew was the first Gospel written and was used as a source by Mark and/or Luke.
- **Griesbach Hypothesis:** A theory of the Synoptic Problem that proposes that Matthew was written first, Luke used Matthew, and Mark used both Matthew and Luke.
- **Discourse Blocks:** Extended sections in the Gospel of Matthew that primarily contain Jesus' teachings or sermons, often signaled by specific phrases.
- **Pentateuch:** The first five books of the Hebrew Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), traditionally attributed to Moses. Some theories (like Bacon's) proposed Matthew structured his Gospel with five books to parallel the Pentateuch.
- **Pericope:** A short, self-contained passage of scripture.
- **Olivet Discourse (Eschatological Discourse):** Jesus' final major teaching block in Matthew (chapters 24-25), dealing with end times events.

Top of Form

Is the author of the Gospel of Matthew definitively known?

While the Gospel of Matthew itself is anonymous, historical traditions from the early church fathers, beginning in the first quarter of the second century CE, consistently attribute authorship to the Apostle Matthew. Notable early church figures like Papias, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Irenaeus all affirm this. Although modern scholarship often relies on linguistic analysis and other methods to infer authorship, the strong and early patristic testimony strongly points to Matthew the Apostle as the author, or at least the one to whom the gospel was ascribed by the early second century.

What is the generally accepted date for the writing of the Gospel of Matthew?

Scholars are not entirely dogmatic about the precise date, but the current consensus, largely based on the widely accepted "Markan priority" theory of Gospel relationships, places Matthew's origin in the 80s or 90s CE. This dating often assumes that Matthew includes a "prophecy after the event" in chapters 24-25 concerning the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. However, some scholars argue for an earlier date, possibly before 70

CE, particularly if they do not accept the Markan priority view and instead view Matthew's account in chapters 24-25 as an authentic tradition from Jesus.

Who were the intended recipients of the Gospel of Matthew?

Determining the exact recipients is also a subject of scholarly debate. Matthew's strong Jewish orientation, evident in his use of fulfillment formulas, quotations from the Hebrew Bible, and presentation of Jesus as fulfilling the law and prophets, suggests a significant connection to Judaism. Some scholars believe the community was largely Jewish and still connected to the synagogue, while others argue for a community with many Gentiles that had already separated from the synagogue. A middle ground suggests an embattled minority in the process of leaving the synagogue. This course adopts the view that Matthew's community was still engaged with the synagogue.

What was the likely purpose of writing the Gospel of Matthew?

The purpose of Matthew's Gospel is not explicitly stated, but inferences can be made based on its content, particularly when assuming a Christian-Jewish audience still engaged with the synagogue. The community likely needed to understand how Jesus the Messiah fulfilled the Hebrew Bible and how his teachings interpreted the Torah. They also needed to understand why the entrenched non-Christian Jewish leaders were no longer to be followed and to expand their focus towards the Gentile mission, which Matthew consistently portrays in a positive light.

What is the significance of the patristic tradition that Matthew was originally written in Hebrew?

The patristic tradition, notably cited by Eusebius from Papias, suggests that Matthew collected sayings ("oracles") of Jesus in the "Hebrew language." This has led to debate. Some interpret this to mean a Hebrew original later translated into Greek, though our current Greek Matthew does not read like a translation. Others propose that "Hebrew dialect" refers to a Semitic or Jewish style of writing or rhetorical style, and that "interpreted" refers to individuals explaining this Jewish style. Regardless of the precise meaning, this tradition highlights the early church's understanding of Matthew's close connection to Jewish tradition and composition.

How is the textual history of the Gospel of Matthew characterized?

The textual history of Matthew is rich, with a great number of available manuscripts. This includes over 20 Uncial manuscripts containing complete or nearly complete texts (such as Sinaiticus and Vaticanus), and many other manuscripts containing portions, including earlier Papyrus manuscripts. Additionally, Matthew is abundantly cited in patristic sources,

frequently used in church lectionaries, and translated into various early versions. This extensive manuscript evidence provides a strong basis for studying the text of Matthew.

How was the canonicity of the Gospel of Matthew viewed in the early church?

Matthew was the most popular Gospel in the early church and its canonicity was undisputed among the Orthodox Christians in both the eastern and western regions. The only significant challenge came from the heretic Marcion in the mid-second century, who rejected Matthew (and most of the Old and New Testaments) due to his Gnostic dualism and Matthew's emphasis on Jesus fulfilling the Old Testament. Marcion's challenge is seen as a significant factor in the process that led to the formalization of the New Testament canon, which prominently included Matthew.

What is the proposed literary structure of the Gospel of Matthew in this course?

This course emphasizes a narrative critical approach to Matthew and proposes a structure based on the phrase "after Jesus had finished," which appears at the end of major discourse blocks. This structure highlights Matthew's unique pattern of alternating narrative and discourse material, unlike the chronological/geographical approach often applied to Mark. While some scholars link this to the five books of Moses, this course focuses on how this structure emphasizes what Jesus said, often condensing Markan narrative details to expand on Jesus's teaching. This pattern is seen in the five major discourses found in chapters 5-7, 10, 13, 18, and 24-25.