

## A MAN CALLED MATTHEW

SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW

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### INTRODUCTION

I wonder how many people today learn the books of the Bible in Vacation Bible School by singing the catchy little song that begin: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; Acts and the Epistle to the Ro-mons... Many children and young people "way back then" learned the books of the Bible and basic facts about the Bible by participating in memory work drills in Training Union, which was a little like having Sunday School at night. Actually, while our attention in Sunday School was focused on learning the Bible, the emphasis in Training Union was training in church membership. At some point leaders in Training Union decided that we needed a name change, so for a while we had Church Training. Sometime later, I attended a meeting in which a leader explained that the name was being changed from Church Training to Discipleship Training, "because you don't train churches, you train disciples." Really? I thought a good definition for church began with, "A church is a body of baptized believers...."

Many of us remember when we had Church Training on Sunday evening before the evening worship service, just as Sunday School is scheduled for an hour or a little more before the morning worship service. Some of the young children and memorized the books of the Bible and then participated in the Associational Memory Work Drill and the Sword Drill, and then the Youth Speaking Drill. I actually memorized the books of the Bible forward and backward because in the book drill we had to be able to call out the book before and the book after the book we found. I could find most books in about three seconds, but I didn't want to be embarrassed if I could not remember that Haggai is the book before Zachariah, and Malachi follows Zachariah.

Whether quoting the Books of the Bible forward or backward, even a young child learns very quickly that Matthew is the first Book in the New Testament. In time, I would become convinced that the Holy Spirit, who inspired every word of the Bible, determined that Matthew was the first book in the New Testament. In time, I became convinced decided that it is more appropriate to refer to Matthew as the Gospel According to Matthew, rather than the Gospel of Matthew, for the simple reason that Matthew, like Mark, Luke, and John, is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, so I began thinking of them as the Gospel According to Matthew, or the Gospel According to Mark, Luke, or John.

The Gospel According to Matthew is the first book in the New Testament, not by accident or by man's choice, but God's choice. At Mississippi College and New Orleans

Baptist Theological Seminary, I discovered that all theologians and Bible teachers do not agree on a number of facts about the Bible. That is especially so when it comes to the dates assigned various books of the New Testament. For some reason, more liberal Bible scholars seem to assign a later date for the writing of the New Testament. I turned on the radio in my truck one day (I do not remember the date) just as Laura Ingraham's guest, Raymond Arroyo, exclaimed, "The Bible grew out of the Catholic Church." He sincerely believes that, but the Bible grew out of the mind of God as godly men were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write books that would become a part of the New Testament. We are going to consider the possibility - no, the probability that the New Testament was completed relatively early. I am convinced that if anyone had asked the Apostle John which books belong in the New Testament he could - and would have told them. The Catholic Church did, just before 400 A. D., vote that the 27 Books that make up the New Testament were the 27 Books handed down by the Lord. Most church leaders in the early Second Century would have known that, but around A. D. 140, a man named Marcion deliberately corrupted the New Testament, choosing to leave some books out and to delete sections from Books he selected as making up the NT.

There is no doubt in my mind that when the Apostle John penned the final words to the Revelation he could have, and in fact, did teach his followers which books belong in the New Testament. Can I prove that? I would not even try to convince anyone else, but I am convinced, just as I am convinced that the Holy Spirit inspired every word of the New Testament. So, at this point, rather than debate the subject I will wait for confirmation. If, when I stand before the Lord, He says, "Johnny, you took the Bible too seriously," I will then acknowledge it - but not before that. Should you choose to read all of this study, you will know that I believe the Holy Spirit determined that the New Testament would begin with the Gospel According to Matthew.

Even though the New Testament begins with the book of Matthew, one may still wonder whether or not there is enough known about Matthew for a Bible character study like those Old Testament character studies written by this writer and posted on SermonCity.Com by Dr. J. Mike Minnix the creator and editor of the site. For that matter, how much information do we have on New Testament characters, after we look at Peter, John, and Paul, that is? Why do you think that is? Well, I would say that it is because the New Testament focuses primarily on A Man called Jesus! But for the moment, let us look at Matthew, an apostle of Jesus Christ.

## I. THERE WAS A MAN CALLED MATTHEW.

### A. Matthew Was a Tax Collector Living in Galilee.

The Holman Bible Dictionary provides the following information (brief parts are deleted):

“MATTHEW (mat’ thew) Personal name meaning “the gift of Yahweh.” A tax collector Jesus called to be an apostle (Matt. 9:9; 10:3)..... Matthew’s office was located on the main highway that ran from Damascus, down the Jordan Valley to Capernaum, then westward to Acre to join the coastal road to Egypt or southward to Jerusalem. His duty was to collect “toll” or “transport” taxes from both local merchants and farmers carrying their goods to market as well as distant caravans passing through Galilee. He was an employee of Herod Antipas..... Matthew knew the value of goods of all description: wool, flax, linen, pottery, brass, silver, gold, barley, wheat, olives, figs, wheat. He knew the value of local and foreign monetary systems. He spoke the local Aramaic language as well as Greek. Because Matthew had leased his “toll” collecting privileges by paying the annual fee in advance, he was subjected to the criticism of collecting more than enough, growing wealthy on his “profit.” Thus he was hated by his fellow Jews.

Matthew is the same person as Levi, a tax collector (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27), and thus the son of Alphaeus. James the son of Alphaeus is also listed among the Apostles (Mark 3:18; Matt. 10:3; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). This indicates that both Matthew and his (half) brother were in close association with Jesus. Mary, the mother of James, keeps the vigil at the foot of the cross with Mary, the mother of Jesus (Matt. 27:55-56; Mark 15:40). If the James mentioned here is the same as the son of Alphaeus, then we have a larger family closely associated with the family of Jesus.

Later legendary accounts tell of Matthew’s travel to Ethiopia where he became associated with Candace, identified with the eunuch of Acts 8:27. The legends tell us of Matthew’s martyrdom in that country.

Why did Jesus call Matthew? Because Matthew had the gifts to be trained as a disciple to share with others, could keep meticulous records, and was a potential recorder/author of the Gospel. From earliest times Christians affirmed that Matthew wrote the Gospel that bears his name.” (Oscar S. Brooks, HBD, bold added by this writer]

#### B. Matthew Was Called By Jesus to Be His Disciple.

In Mark’s account of the call of Matthew, he is identified as Levi: “Then Jesus went out again beside the sea. The whole crowd was coming to Him, and He taught them. (14) Then, moving on, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office, and He said to him, “Follow Me!” So he got up and followed Him.” (Mark 2:13-14, HCSB, Bold added for identification)

In Matthew we read:

(9) "As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office, and He said to him, "Follow Me!" So he got up and followed Him.

(10) While He was reclining at the table in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came as guests to eat with Jesus and His disciples. (11) When the Pharisees saw this, they asked His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

(12) But when He heard this, He said, "Those who are well don't need a doctor, but the sick do. (13) Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matt 9:9-13, HCSB, bold for emphasis)

The Pharisees detested tax collectors, and made no effort to hide that fact, as we see by their use of "tax collectors" and "sinners" interchangeably. To them, tax collectors served the enemies of Israel, which made them sinners. Jesus responded to their question as they stated it; He was not deceived by them. Jesus could use a terrible sinner who repented much more effectively than He could use a hypocrite.

C. Matthew's Gospel Is one of the Synoptic Gospels.

The word SYNOPTIC means "seeing alike." Matthew, Mark, and Luke approach their accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ from a similar perspective. The first time I opened A. T. Robertson's, *Harmony of the Gospels*, as a freshman in my first New Testament class at Mississippi College, I was surprised at the difference between the material in the columns under Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and the information under John's name.

Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus Christ, which establishes the fact that Jesus is the Seed of the Woman (Genesis 3), the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12), the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant according to the Royal order, as well as the fulfillment of many other prophecies over a period of twenty centuries from Abraham to the birth of Jesus of Nazareth.

Mark, the second Gospel, begins with an introduction that ties a prophecy in Isaiah with the fulfillment of the prophecy in the person of John the Baptist.

(1) "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (2) As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: Look, I am sending My messenger ahead of You, who will prepare Your way. (3) A voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way for the Lord; make His paths straight!"

(4) John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. (5) The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were flocking to him, and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River as they

confessed their sins. (6) John wore a camel-hair garment with a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. (7) He was preaching: "Someone more powerful than I will come after me. I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of His sandals. (8) I have baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." (Mark 1:1-8, HCSB)

A Harmony of the Gospels will show four columns, three of which are obviously connected by the material and the order in which the material appears. Even though it is obvious that each Gospel is a separate and independent account of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, you will see, after the introduction to these three accounts why they are called the Synoptic Gospels. It is because so many of the events really do run parallel to each other. Since Mark's account is not as long as that which we find in Matthew and Luke, it is understandable that some accounts will take up less space and some may be skipped altogether. That is not wise, however, because it was divinely inspired for your benefit and for mine.

Luke, the Third Gospel, is especially well known for the announcement of the birth of Jesus Christ and the events related to the announcement. In Chapter 2 we find how an Old Testament prophecy that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of Judea was fulfilled because of a decree that went out from Caesar August that all the Roman Empire must register for taxation, and that men must return to the place of their birth in order to register. Thus, Joseph of Nazareth had taken his pregnant wife to Bethlehem to register for this tax when Mary delivered her first born Son and placed him in an animal trough in a stable, upon the advice of a friendly inn keeper. Story books that accuse him of being cruel and devoid of compassion and concern for a young woman. Luke informs us that:

(8) "In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. (9) Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. (10) But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: (11) today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David. (12) This will be the sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped snugly in cloth and lying in a manger." (Luke 2:8-12, HCSB)

John, the Fourth Gospel account of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ is - well, it's different from the others. It is often called the Evangelistic Gospel, and that it is - but there is more. The Prologue to the Gospel According to John (1:1-18) is amazing - and after you come to understand it better, it is even more amazing.

(1) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) He was with God in the beginning. (3) All things were created through Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created. (4) Life was in

Him, and that life was the light of men. (5) That light shines in the darkness, yet the darkness did not overcome it." (John 1:1-5, HCSB)

When you look carefully at these verses you may remember when someone explained the Prologue to the Gospel of John to you and how amazed you were. However, we will save that until we get to the our Bible Study on A Man Called John. It is sufficient here to say that an understanding of these eighteen verses will demolish all false religions, smash all cults, and show atheism and agnosticism up for what they are. That is neither a joke nor an exaggeration. Whether Gnosticism, Eastern Mysticism, New Age Movements, or Post-modernism, we do not have to run Scripture references, or move into a library to find an answer. While it may, and probably will help, you will find the basic answers in John 1:1-18. When you remind yourself that you are going to stand before the One Who inspired the words we find in these 18 verses, you should be motivated to make a deep commitment to the One who is he focus of these words.

## II. MATTHEW BEGINS WITH THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS, (MATT. 1:1-17).

### A. The Genealogy of Jesus Establishes Christ as the Messiah.

#### 1. From Abraham to David

- 1) The historical record of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: From Abraham to David
- 2) Abraham fathered Isaac, Isaac fathered Jacob, Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers,
- 3) Judah fathered Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Aram,
- 4) Aram fathered Aminadab, Aminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon,
- 5) Salmon fathered Boaz by Rahab, Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth, Obed fathered Jesse,
- 6) and Jesse fathered King David.

#### 2. From David to the Babylonian Exile

Then David fathered Solomon by Uriah's wife,

- 7) Solomon fathered Rehoboam, Rehoboam fathered Abijah, Abijah fathered Asa,
- 8) Asa fathered Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat fathered Joram, Joram fathered Uzziah,

- 9) Uzziah fathered Jotham, Jotham fathered Ahaz, Ahaz fathered Hezekiah,  
10) Hezekiah fathered Manasseh, Manasseh fathered Amon, Amon fathered Josiah,  
11\_ and Josiah fathered Jechoniah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

### 3. From the Exile to the Messiah

12) Then after the exile to Babylon Jechoniah fathered Salathiel, Salathiel fathered Zerubbabel,

13) Zerubbabel fathered Abiud, Abiud fathered Eliakim, Eliakim fathered Azor,

14) Azor fathered Zadok, Zadok fathered Achim, Achim fathered Eliud,

15) Eliud fathered Eleazar, Eleazar fathered Matthan, Matthan fathered Jacob,

16) and Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus who is called the Messiah.

17) So all the generations from Abraham to David were 14 generations; and from David until the exile to Babylon, 14 generations; and from the exile to Babylon until the Messiah, 14 generations.

(Matt 1:1-17, HCSB)

### B. There Are Some Questions About the Genealogy of Jesus.

QUESTION ONE: Why Matthew? Peter, Andrew, James, and John are better known to us today. Matthew was the hated tax collector. The Holy Spirit could have enabled either one of those fishermen to have recorded this genealogy, but if asked to look up this information, organize it, and print it, they would be as lost as a tax collector casting a net on the stormy waters of the Sea of Galilee.

Again, why Matthew? Matthew is the same person as Levi, a tax collector (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27). As such, Matthew had spent much of his life dealing with the most carefully recorded genealogical records one can imagine. And carefully guarded records would have been meticulously kept and copied by the tax collector, as well as genealogical records in the temple in Jerusalem. In fact, those records at the temple may well have the original source for the tax collector's records. Therefore, Matthew would have been especially trained and experienced to keep and deal with records like these. One point

we should not here is that those records would which were stored in the temple in Jerusalem would only be there until A. D. 70 when Titus and his mighty Roman army would destroy the city of Jerusalem, as well as the temple and everything associated with it. Pertinent records, such as those we read in the first chapter of Matthew would no longer exist as they had for ages. Do you think Jesus would have known that when He called Matthew to be one of His twelve Apostles? We can be sure of it.

Never has there been a more important book written than the Bible, and the New Testament records the story of the life, ministry, teachings, and preaching of the most amazing Person ever to walk on this earth. Interestingly, John tells us in the Prologue to His Gospel account of the life and ministry of Christ, that He is the One who created this earth (John 1:1ff). Our Creator is our Redeemer, as the Prologue to the Gospel of John proves.

QUESTION TWO. Is this genealogy legitimate? While we may not ask whether or not the people listed in the genealogy of Christ are real people, we may wonder about the number 14 in each of the three sections. Were there, literally, three sections of fourteen names in each division? Or, is it possible that some names were left out to be sure there were fourteen names in each division? Well, I believe there is an answer to that question. In the first place, Matthew, as a Tax Collector, would have had exact and precise records for each family in his district. If there was any question about that, he could have gone to the Temple in Jerusalem where genealogical records were meticulously kept. In fact, to be sure he had the names and numbers right he may well have done some research in those temple records. However, since the structure was important in establishing the authenticity of the claim of Jesus to have been the Son of God, the Messiah, had there been no record at all, the Holy Spirit could have, and no doubt would have provided the names to Matthew. But lest we forget, Matthew would have been right at home with those records.

QUESTION THREE: Why would anyone begin a book with such a boring introduction? Let's face it, no writer desiring to be published would begin a work like this. In the first place, these names are hard to pronounce. In the second place, they are even harder to remember. And why would anyone want to remember these names? There are some logical answers to these questions, and the place to begin is with those most unfamiliar and uninteresting names.

### C. Consider the Uniqueness of the Genealogy of Jesus.

We will now consider some facts about the Genealogy of Jesus Christ, while learning more about the importance of the genealogical records of all people living in the Holy Land at the time Jesus walked on the hillsides, paths, and roadways of the land. My good friend, Dr. Bill Cooper, who will be quoted from time to time in this study, uses the term, "eye witness period" for the time between the ministry of Jesus and the



destruction of the temple in Jerusalem to denote the period when many people could give an eye witness account of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. After the destruction of the temple by Roman General Titus (A. D. 70) there would never again be such records. Is that not amazing? The One whom they denied and persecuted, whose death they plotted, is the only One whose family history is still in tact, and out there for the world to read.

We will now take a look at this very important document, The Genealogy of Jesus Christ, with the understanding that the Holy Spirit knew exactly what He was doing when He inspired Matthew to record proof that Jesus met the requirements to be the Messiah. We will consider, not only names like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David, we shall see that the Pharisee of that day would have been shocked at the thought of the genealogy of the Messiah containing some of the names we read there today. Now, let us take a look some of the facts I have collected and written on the blank page opposite the Genealogy in my Holman Christian Standard Bible.

#### THE UNIQUENESS OF THE GENEALOGY OF CHRIST

(I) THERE ARE THREE DIVISIONS. So, what, one may ask. Well, believe it or not, this is significant, very much so. The number 3 is the divine number, denoting the Three Persons of the Trinity. Back when I was in seminary the word Trinity was not popular with some Bible professors, including one or more whose classes I took. One of my professors reputedly told a group of pastors that he wished people would stop using the word Trinity because the word is not used in the Bible. Of course, I have never found a lot of words in the Bible, words like: computer, printer, wireless communication, face book, electricity, air conditioner, central heat, or heart transplant, but such words are common today. In fact, I have never seen the words seminary professor, either. The word Trinity is not found in the Bible, but the fact of the Trinity is undeniable as far as this writer is concerned. In the New Testament we read of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (see John 14, for example, but don't miss John 1 and Acts 1).

THERE ARE 14 NAMES IN EACH DIVISION. There are three divisions of 14 names. The three divisions would have spoken volumes to the Jew of the First Century. It is of God. Why fourteen names? Let me say that in my younger days I made the statement, possibly quoting one of my professors, that fourteen names were selected for the genealogy in order to make it fit the formula: three divisions of fourteen names (in other words, some names may have been skipped in order to get fourteen names in each division). At the time Matthew was written, assuming that it was the very first volume written, this genealogy seems very important. I might add that this might not have been very popular with certain New Testament and Church History professors of the day.

Why fourteen names in each of the three divisions? In the first place, the number seven is the number of perfection, completion, or maturity. It is made up of the number for the Trinity (3) plus the universal number (4), which represents the "four corners of the earth" (or, North, South, East, and West). In a system in which numbers are used to represent facts, the number seven is the perfect number, and to intensify the meaning of any number you may add the number to itself ( $7 + 7 = 14$ ), multiply it by two ( $2 \times 7 = 14$ ), or any multiple of ten (the number for humanity [ten toes, ten fingers] ( $10 \times 10 = 100$  and  $10 \times 100 = 1000$ .) So,  $10 \times 14 = 144$ , and  $144 \times 1000 = 144,000$ .

Here, we are only interested in the number 14 and there are 14 names in each of the three divisions.

To the well informed Jew of the day, this should have been significant, and the same thing should apply to the Christian today. The number 14 = the perfect number  $\times 2$ , and that is significant, if to no one beyond this writer.

## (II) THERE ARE SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS.

(1) Jesus is the descendant of Adam (actually Eve: He is called the Seed of the woman). The point is, He became human (see Luke 2 for the fact of his humanity and 1 John concerning the significance of His humanity).

(2) Jesus is the son of Abraham according to the Covenant.

(3) He is the son of David according to the Royal Line.

## (III) HIS GENEALOGY IS BOTH INCLUSIVE AND EXCLUSIVE.

(1) It is also Exclusive - all who are not included are excluded.

(2) No Pharisee would have approved this genealogy.

(3) Gentiles are included: Rahab and Ruth.

(4) Women are included: Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba.

(5) Immoral people included: Judah, Rahab, David, Bathsheba, Solomon.

## (IV) THERE IS PROPHETIC FULFILLMENT.

(1) He is the Seed of the woman (Gen. 3).

(2) He fulfills the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12).

(3) He was of the Tribe of Judah (The Lion of the Tribe of Judah).

(4) He fulfills the David Covenant (2 Sam. 7).

(5) He qualifies according to the biological line.

(6) He qualifies according to the royal line.

(7) He qualifies according to the prophetic line.

“ A sinless life is as miraculous in the spiritual realm as a virgin birth is in the biological realm.” (note taken at a Bible conference - origin unknown)

This is not the kind of genealogy a pious Pharisee would have imagined, written, or approved. But, how long has it been since you have seen a Pharisee?

#### D. Charges of Error Can Be Answered.

I have a confession. In writing some of the studies I have posted on SermonCity.Com, I have run into some interesting questions - but not to worry! I have found a way around some of them. You see, my good friend Dr. Bill Cooper of Middlesex England has handled some of those questions masterfully. Dr. Cooper and I are Bible scholars, we are just different kinds of scholars. He finds a problem and begins researching it and stays with it until he finds an answer. I have read just about everything he has written, some of it two and three times. I am convinced that he does a good job, so I try to save a lot of time and work by checking to see how he handles certain questions. If I like what he has written, and if I agree with him, I simply let him answer my questions and then make a point of giving him full credit for his research, arguments and conclusions. I will continue to do that as long as he includes my name along with Drs. Jeffries and Johnson under Acknowledgments! Let me show you how that works:

“The Gospel of Matthew, they say, begins with a fault. And if it begins with a fault, then how can anyone trust what it says? How, indeed, can it claim to be the Word of God, which, by any definition, should be without fault? It is, they say, a clumsy and marred attempt to deceive the unwary into believing - at the very outset of the New Testament - that the Gospel is in any way true. But this fault has exposed the lie. What are they talking about? They’re talking about this. Matthew begins his Gospel with a genealogy which is drawn up into three sections. Each section, he points out to us, contains the names of fourteen ancestors (or generations), and the whole, therefore, consists of forty two names. And he’s right, except for one glaring error that the critics claim to have spotted. In the third section, there are only thirteen names, not fourteen; which means

that instead of the forty-two named ancestors which we should expect, there are only forty-one.

“The clear implication is that Matthew cannot count, or that he has been careless and slipshod in his writing. And if he is careless and slipshod in such a little matter as this, then how can we trust him, and the rest of the New Testament, when he and it go on to speak of greater things? But as it turns out, it isn't Matthew who can't count. It's the critics. And it would seem that they can't read what's in front of them either. [Cooper, Bill, *The Authenticity of the New Testament, Part I: The Gospels*, 2013, Ch. 5 - after this, Cooper, *Auth. N.T.*]

Dr. Cooper very carefully explains that the genealogy of Jesus Christ which introduces the Gospel According to Matthew, is clearly correct. The part that is attacked by some is the third section which some insist consists of thirteen generations rather than fourteen. I'm sure some may be wondering whether or not the genealogy of Jesus Christ has been edited to be sure there would be fourteen names in each group, but that idea will not be entertained here..

Let's see how he makes his point.

Let's begin by considering what the genealogy actually is that opens Matthew's Gospel. It is not something that Matthew has made up in his own muddled head. In fact, he tells us what it is in the first four words of his Gospel, and also tells us how the fourteen generations of the third section are exactly that – fourteen generations, and not thirteen.

Matthew's opening words are these: *Biblos geneoseos Iesou Christou* – The Scroll of the Genealogy of Jesus Christ. It is, in fact, a document which he has copied verbatim, and the document is the official record of Jesus' ancestors. It was a most important document, and for many reasons. Such genealogies were legal family records proving bloodlines, birthrights and entitlements of inheritance, landholdings, tenancies and so on. They proved whether one could serve in the Temple, or inherit a public office. They were, in short, important for any number of reasons, and they were kept securely. Doubtless, they could also be checked against a central repository of records in the Temple to avoid fraudulent claims. And this is what Matthew's Gospel opens with. It is the scroll (the *biblos*) containing the official record of Jesus' ancestry.

As we have seen, Matthew, as a tax collector, had access to all sorts of information about the nation of Israel, the historical records, not only of kings and priests, but also of individuals and families.

This in no way diminishes the Biblical concept of the inspiration of Scripture by the Holy Spirit, nor should it distract from the historical accuracy of the record. The nation of Israel had maintained an amazing record of historical information from Abraham

forward. Look at the historical information associated with the Exodus, the Period of the Judges, and the history of the nation from the time of David forward. Dr. Bill Cooper, in his book, *The Authenticity of the Book of Daniel*, proves that point when he reveals that cuneiform tablets affirm the Scriptural claims about Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They lived and serve at the exact time the Bible claims they did. These servants of Yahweh were not invented by fiction writers in 165 B.C. Having read numerous volumes researched and written by Dr. Cooper, let me return to his subject of the third division in the genealogy of Jesus.

“Being a tax collector, Matthew would have known exactly where to find it and how and where to check its authenticity. Thankfully, there is every evidence to suggest that he copied it accurately, and it is his accurate copying that explains the fourteen generations in the third and last section. Let me explain.

“There is one name in the list of our Lord’s forty-one named ancestors that is counted twice. It is that of Jeconiah (or Jechonias in Matthew’s Greek). Now Jeconiah, or Jehoiakin, was king of Judah when the Jews were taken into the Babylonian Captivity of 597 BC. Hence, by his life he marked both the close of one age and the opening of a new. His lifespan straddled both pages of history. Hence his name is counted once when the old age closes, and it is counted again when the new one begins. Matthew himself counts it like this (Matthew 1:11-12).<sup>1</sup> And that’s it. That very simple fact, so clear that the critics fail even now to see it, is what all the fuss is about. That is the great stick with which they have been beating Matthew’s Gospel since the days of Celsus, a satirist and cynic who lived back in the 2nd century and who was the first to misread Matthew and to think that he’d spotted an error. It beggars belief. You would think that after some 1800 years, the critics would have seen the solution for themselves, a solution which any child could have provided.”

(Bold added for emphasis by this writer)

There is more:

“It seems never to have occurred to the critics that in two hundred years no one is on record as ever having charged Matthew with error here until Celsus came along. Not even the Pharisees, who were doubtless the custodians of official records such as this, ever expressed a doubt as to Jesus’ true lineage or the authenticity of his family records. That they were familiar with the very wording of the document which Matthew reproduces for us is very evident from an exchange between themselves and Jesus recorded in John 8:41. There they cast in his teeth the fact that Joseph was not his father by saying, “we were not born of fornication!” that Joseph was Mary’s husband, but not Jesus’ father, was not just a matter of gossip and local scandal. Nor was it something that the gospel writers had conspired to make up. It was a matter of public record, which the Pharisees had clearly looked up for themselves, and that very same record is

what Matthew presents us with in the opening of his gospel. His opening document is thus entirely authentic, historically attested, and its names

properly counted.”

Dr. Cooper adds information here that will no doubt enlighten and surprise a lot of readers:

“Furthermore, if the Jewish Mishnah is anything to go by, then it seems that the scroll of Jesus’ ancestry survived up to at least the destruction of Jerusalem’s Temple archive in AD 70. At the end of the 1st century, one rabbi, Simeon ben Azai, tells us: “I have found in Jerusalem a book of genealogies, and therein is written: That so-and-so [peloni - a rabbinical euphemism for Jesus, avoiding the use of His Name] is a mamzer [bastard son] of a married woman, to confirm the words of Rabbi Jehoshua.”<sup>2</sup> (Bold added for emphasis by this writer)

The rabbi clearly consulted this record of Jesus’ family before AD 70, because no Jews were allowed near the site of Jerusalem after its destruction. The Temple archive no longer existed, so there would have been nothing for the rabbi to find. Hence, it must have been before the year AD 70 that he saw the scroll, most likely in AD 66 after the Christians of Jerusalem had fled to Pella. The scroll would have been in the Temple archive, which means that the Christians could not have taken it with them anyway. All of which is astonishing enough when we consider what the critics have been saying all these years...” [Cooper, Dr. Bill, *The Authenticity of the New Testament*, Vol. 1]

QUESTION: Is Dr. Cooper misrepresenting the attitude of the Jewish leaders here? Let me share a personal experience that may shed some light on the attitude of some Jews, even in the Twenty-First Century on this subject. For years, I worked out in a certain gym, and while I didn’t work out with a friend who was a Jewish business man, we often visited in the dressing room or in the dry sauna.

My friend (I will call him Phillip) had commented to me earlier: “I am a Jew, but I am not religious. I am a scientist.” Later, Phillip told me about going to a friend’s funeral. He suddenly asked, “Why do they always have to talk about Jesus?! They always talk about Jesus! Jews hate....!” He caught himself before he finished the statement. Later, he told me he had gone to his daughter’s home for Christmas dinner, and shaking his head, he said, “They kept talking about Jesus!” Why do they have to talk about Jesus?! He and I were friends and from time to time he would ask me questions about the church, God, or Jesus. Still later, he told me his rabbi was moving to New Jersey and asked me if I would like to take the Rabbi’s place in their weekly poker game! We were friends and I loved Phillip and grieved for him because of his rejection of Jesus.

E. Rome Chose Matthew for a Tax Collector.

1. This position was often abused by the Tax Collector. The tax collector worked for Rome, so he was identified with Rome. Rome had enslaved the population of many countries and none of them could have been happy about it. The resentment of the Jewish people would have been particularly intense because of their attitude toward Gentiles. The Pharisee, so I have read, might stand on a street corner and pray aloud, "God, I thank you that I was not born a woman or a Gentile." If a Jewish worshiper had been on the way to Jerusalem for Passover and the shadow of a Gentile had fallen him, he would have been declared "unclean" and disqualified to participate in Passover until he was cleansed.

At the temple there was a court marked off for Women and one for Gentiles. There was also a warning between the Court of Gentiles and the temple that warned that any Gentile who passed that point would be stoned to death.

2. The tax collectors were hated by the Jews. Matthew was not only collecting taxes for Gentiles, he was collecting taxes from his own people for the enemy, the Roman Empire which totally controlled them. Rome avoided continuous uprising by allowing certain privileges that would be lost if the people rebelled. For example, the Jewish Sanhedrin was allowed control over all things religious among Jews, not only in Israel but also in other places. That would lead some of the leaders among the Jews to try to maintain order. To the Pharisee this meant position and respect; to the Sadducee, it also meant power, position, and wealth.

3. Matthew would never have been chosen by religious leaders. The scribes would never have choose Matthew to serve in any capacity because, to them, he was religiously and politically compromised because of his service to the Roman Empire, which controlled Israel. The Pharisees would never have chosen Matthew, the cursed tax collector for Rome, because he served the enemy. The Sadducees would not have chosen Matthew for any position of leadership, unless the Roman governor could show them how they might benefit from his service. In addition, it seems that some tax collectors abused their position and power over their own people.

F. Jesus Chose Him as One of His Apostles.

1. Jesus chose him one of His Disciples. The word disciple carries two possible meanings. The first idea is that of a follower, and the second is that of a learner. So, a disciple, in the New Testament context, is one who follows after another to learn from him. Jesus had no physical classroom, but the world in which He traveled was the classroom for His disciples in general and His twelve apostles in particular. The number twelve carried special significance. In it simplest meaning the number twelve (in Gematria) represents organized religion. Now, what is Gematria? According to Wikipedia,

Gematria is an Assyro-Babylonian system of numerology later adopted by Jews that assigns numerical value to a word or phrase in the belief that words or phrases with identical numerical values bear some relation to each other or bear some relation to the number itself as it may apply to a person's age, the calendar year, or the like. The best-known example of Gematria is the Hebrew word Chai ("alive"), which is composed of two letters that (using the assignments in the Mispar gadol table shown below) add up to 18. This has made 18 a "lucky number" among Jews, and gifts in multiples of 18 are very popular. [Wikipedia, electronic encyclopedia]

Where Christians are concerned, there are more important numbers. The number 1, for example, stands for unity, whereas the number 2 stands for added power (two heads are better than one, or "lend me a hand"). The number 3 (to Christians) is the divine number (Father, Son, Holy Spirit), the number 4 is the universal number (four corners of the earth denotes the four directions - north, south, east, and west). The number 7 is the number for perfection, completion, or maturity (the divine number plus the universal number:  $3 + 4 = 7$ ). The number ten is the number for human completion. Multiples of these numbers may be used to intensify the significance of them. In other words, a meaning is intensified by multiplying it by itself, by 2 or by 10 ( $10 \times 10 = 100$  -  $100 \times 10 = 1000$ ). To continue along the same line,  $12 \times 12 = 144$ . And what do we get if we multiply  $144 \times 1000$ ? Right, we get 144,000 from that one.

If you go back to the Book of Genesis (Chs. 48 -49) you will see something of the significance of the number twelve. Jacob (Israel) had 12 sons, but neither Levi nor Joseph had a tribe named for them. Instead, Joseph had a double blessing when his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh had tribes named for them. The tribe of Levi would have priestly responsibilities. God was their blessing.

2. He was faithful to Jesus. Some evangelists and pastors over the years have sought to communicate in the simplest way what it means to commit oneself to Jesus Christ. One man would hold up his hand and, beginning with his thumb, touch each finger, and as he did so he would say as FORSAKING ALL I FOLLOW JESUS. That is exactly what eleven of the twelve Apostles did when Jesus called them to follow Him: Forsaking all, they followed Jesus. Andrew and Simon, James and John, Matthew and all the others, with the exception of Judas, forsook all to follow Him.

### III. MATTHEW WAS INSPIRED TO WRITE THE FIRST GOSPEL.

#### A. He Wrote the First Book in the New Testament.

1. The date of the Gospels has been often debated. I am well aware of the fact that many serious students of the New Testament assume that those for whom the Gospels are named found earlier sources and compiled their accounts from those sources. While



various writers debated the date of the earliest books of the New Testament, I have found it interesting that Dr. Bill Cooper, a long time student of the Word of God, does not hesitate in claiming that the Gospel According to Matthew reached his island of Brian within ten years of the resurrection of our Lord. I can only imagine what some of my New Testament professors might have said about that.

Now, if you think I have lost a marble or two here, let me stress that one of my majors at Mississippi College, one of the oldest and academically strongest Christian universities around, was Bible, and then I graduated from two seminaries. I never heard one professor say what Dr. Cooper writes in *Old Light on the Roman Church*, or *The Authenticity of the New Testament, Part 1*. Not one. But, neither did I hear one of them mention Caradoc, Lady Pomponia, Linus, Claudia, or Rufus, or Anaclatus. My good friend has a number of books available on Amazon.Com and other places. Rather than a semester or two of graduate work in a university in London, Bill Cooper has spent over forty years doing serious research into these matters.

NOTE: Anyone who wants to see what Dr. Cooper has written may go to [SermonCity.Com](http://SermonCity.Com), click on Authors, go to my name and then click on Commentaries, and scroll all the way to the end and there you will find OLD LIGHT ON THE ROMAN CHURCH. If you look up that volume, let me assure you that I have not plagiarized it! It is there with his permission. While you are there, don't forget to read about Richard Hunne and "the Bible" he read that led a church leader to sent men to prison to murder him. They killed him, but that Bible was on exhibit in America just a few years ago. In this study, I am going to assume Dr. Cooper knows that about which he has written.

2. The Gospel According to Matthew Opens the New Testament. No one would argue that the Gospel According to Matthew is the first book in the New Testament, but there have been a lot of questions about which was the first Gospel written. Some believe Mark is a condensed version of Matthew, while others insist that Matthew is an extended version of Mark. Seminary students who study the various books of the Bible read about the various "sources" this writer or that writer used to compose the Gospel that bore his name, or an epistle. One radio personality claimed that the Bible grew out of the Roman Catholic Church, and gave a date around A. D. 400.

I am convinced that the Apostle John could have named every book in the New Testament before his death, and I am just as convinced that John had disciples like Polycarp who could have listed the books of the New Testament. As a matter of fact, I read somewhere that in one surviving letter Polycarp did mention most of them. Marcion, around A. D. 140, deliberately and intentionally corrupted the New Testament and the Catholic Church settled on what leaders were convinced were the original books of the New Testament.

B. The Gospel According the Matthew Introduces the New Covenant.

1. Matthew reveals the miracle of the birth of Jesus.

(18) "The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After His mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. (19) So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly." (Matt 1:18-19, (HCSB)

2. Matthew reveals how the birth of Jesus fulfills prophecy (Matt. 1:18).

(20) "But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is by the Holy Spirit. (21) She will give birth to a son, and you are to name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins."

(22) Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: (23) See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name Him Immanuel, which is translated "God is with us."

(24) When Joseph got up from sleeping, he did as the Lord's angel had commanded him. He married her (25) but did not know her intimately until she gave birth to a son. And he named Him Jesus." (Matt 1:18-25, HCSB)

3. Wise men from afar come to visit the child was born king. (Matt. 2:1-12) When they arrived in Jerusalem they must have been surprised that the people of that city were not celebrating the birth of the King. They inquired and when Herod heard the news he sent for religious leaders who told him of the ancient prophecy concerning the coming King:

"In Bethlehem of Judea," they told him, "because this is what was written by the prophet: (6) And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah: because out of you will come a leader who will shepherd My people Israel." (Matt 2:5-6)

Herod reportedly killed one of his own sons who seemed a little too interested in his throne. In fact, there was a saying that it would be better to be Herod's pig than his son (the words are similar in the Hebrew).

These wise men, we normally assume, came from Persia. They may well have read Daniel's prophesy and interpreted it to refer to the birth of an infant in the land of Judah at about this time. The number of wise men are usually portrayed as three, which may well have been because of the three gifts (works well for pageants). The problem

with that number is that camel caravans normally numbered many times that many. A small caravan would have been an inviting target for thieves.

Now, here is a point to ponder: Can you imagine that these wise men, assuming they were from Persia, had read some ancient prophecy from the highly respected Israelite prophet Daniel? The writings of highly respected statesmen were often copied and saved in libraries in ancient times. Some prophecies spread to other countries and some prophecies were kept alive for centuries. I remember reading somewhere that Tacitus or Suetonius made a statement about an ancient prophet concerning a coming king, and that Israelites thought it was a prophecy about Israel, but the prophecy actually applied to Rome.

4. Joseph took his family and fled to Egypt to escape Herod. (Matt. 2:13-15)

“After they were gone, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Get up! Take the child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. For Herod is about to search for the child to destroy Him.” (14) So he got up, took the child and His mother during the night, and escaped to Egypt. (15) He stayed there until Herod’s death, so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled: Out of Egypt I called My Son.” (Matt 2:13-15)

5. Herod massacred the children 2 years old and younger in Bethlehem. People have estimated the number of children from just a few to hundreds and even thousands. Bethlehem was a village, not a large town and the children killed were two years old and younger, so while the slaughter of one baby or toddler would have been tragic, the slaughter of several babies would have been devastating for those families and for the village. To me, one of the saddest words in the Old Testament are found again in this passage:

“A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she refused to be consoled, because they were no more.” (Matt 2:18, bold added by this writer)

After the death of Herod the Lord sent his angel tell Joseph to leave Egypt and go to Nazareth. “Then he went and settled in a town called Nazareth to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets, that He will be called a Nazarene.” (Matt 2:23)

6. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. In Chapter three, we read about the ministry of John the Baptist (3:1-12) and the baptism of Jesus:

“After Jesus was baptized, He went up immediately from the water. The heavens suddenly opened for Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and

coming down on Him. (17) And there came a voice from heaven: This is My beloved Son. I take delight in Him!" (Matt 3:16-17)

7. Jesus was tempted by the devil for forty days (4:1-11). As Moses and Elijah fasted forty days before the Lord, so Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights before He began His ministry, which would involve a new covenant.

(1) THE FIRST TEMPTATION OF JESUS: The Devil said, "If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." (Matt. 4:3) (Satan tempted Jesus to "Serve Yourself")

Jesus answered the first temptation: (4) "It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

(2) THE SECOND TEMPTATION OF JESUS: (5) Then the Devil took Him to the holy city, had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, (6) and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: He will give His angels orders concerning you and, they will support you with their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." (Satan challenged Jesus to entertain the people)

Jesus answered the second temptation: (7) "Jesus told him, "It is also written: Do not test the Lord your God." Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:16: "Do not test the Lord your God as you tested [Him] at Massah." (Deut 6:16) The Israelites tested Yahweh at Massah, but He neither punished nor rebuked them at that time. However, in Deuteronomy 6:16 He tells them never to do that again. What is the difference between what happened in Exodus 17:1-7 and what the Lord said in Deut. 6:16? They had been to Mt. Sinai since their sin in Exodus 17. After Sinai they should never again test the Lord.

(3) THE THIRD TEMPTATION OF JESUS. (8) "Again, the Devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. (9) And he said to Him, "I will give You all these things if You will fall down and worship me." (10) Then Jesus told him, "Go away, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve only Him." (11) Then the Devil left Him, and immediately angels came and began to serve Him." (Matt 4:1-11) (Satan said, serve me and I will give you the world)

If Satan would try to put Jesus to the test he will put us to the test - and he will tempt us to sin against Jesus. Our only help (or hope) is in Jesus Christ. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." (James 4:8)

#### IV. THE MAN CALLED MATTHEW WAS THERE.

A. He Was There When Jesus Preached the Sermon on the Mount.

NOTE: The following material is from this writer's commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, which is posted on SermonCity.Com. It is free for anyone who would like to read this material or copy it. Certain parts are in bold for emphasis.

## INTRODUCTION

NOTE: Here is a thought to keep in mind as we look at The Sermon on the Mount: "This Book will keep you from sin, and sin will keep you from this Book" (Written in the front of her Bible by my mother, Claudine Cofer Sanders many years ago).

I stood with contractor looking at the beautiful molding he had installed around the front of the new addition he had added on to the front of our church sanctuary. My son Mark had drawn the plans and explained them to contractor Jim Hayes, just as he had done on a number of other projects. I was reminded of how well they worked together when I thought of a house Jim had built from blueprints Mark had redrawn for a very discriminating physician, and the cabinets they had collaborated on for a lady who hosts a very popular cooking show on a well known television station.

On our church addition, Mark had sought a certain look and the molding was an important part of it. He explained to Jim that instead of one piece of molding he wanted three pieces of molding of the same width joined to form one larger molding to compliment the large area it surrounded. Jim confided to me, "Mark sees things I cannot see, and he cannot understand why I can't see them. But as I begin the work, following his plans, it begin to come together and then I see what he has in mind."

God, the Master Designer, not only designed and created the universe, He also created mankind in His Own image and provided him with a plan for a fruitful and meaningful life. The Bible is that blueprint for man's life. In particular, the Mosaic Law sets down principles by which men and women should live. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus fine-tuned the Law, and in so doing He set down the highest and most noble standard of ethics the world has ever known, superseding even the Mosaic Law. And if it superseded the Mosaic Law it superseded the Code of Hammurabi and all other guides and principles ever set down as a guide for individuals, societies, and cultures. By the way, for those critics of the Bible, the Mosaic Law did not draw on the Code of Hammurabi as some claim. Instead, the Code of Hammurabi drew on the principles Noah received from the Lord and passed on to his sons, who in turn passed them on to their children, and they to their children. One of those descendants of Noah decided to set down in a codified form that which he had been taught. Since the Mosaic Law goes back to the original source, it easily supersedes all other codes of ethics the ancient world knew. It replaced the "thus reasoneth the mind of man" with the "thus saith the Word of God."

The Mosaic Law is superior to anything else the world had ever seen before the coming of Jesus Christ. And then Jesus gave us the Sermon on the Mount, which sets before His followers the highest standard man will ever know on earth. There has never been anything else with which to compare it. It stands alone as the supreme standard by which Christians should live their lives. It is Christ's blueprint for living a life of purpose, a blueprint for building meaningful relationships, written plans which will guide nations as well as individuals. The Sermon on the Mount sets forth God's plans for developing the individual believer from spiritual infancy to full maturity in the faith.

It is the foundation upon which God builds character and integrity into His people - it is not a foundation upon which we build character or grow ourselves to maturity. You did not save yourself and you cannot nurture and grow yourself into what God wants you to be. Justification comes by grace, through faith, plus nothing - it is totally the work of God, realized when, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit one goes to the Father through His only begotten Son (John 3:16).

The nurturing and developing process is called Sanctification, and the best definition I have ever found for Sanctification is that which is revealed in Romans 8:29-30:

"For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified."

Thus, it is God's expressed purpose for everyone who is justified (by grace through faith) "to become conformed to the image of His Son" (sanctified by grace through faith), and all who are justified are so secure in Jesus Christ (Romans 8:33-39) that God can go on and pronounce them as glorified.

God has given us a blueprint for the Christian life. The lost person cannot possibly understand it or appreciate it, though he may admire the basic principles and praise many of the concepts. It is only when an individual is born from above and indwelt by the Holy Spirit that he can really begin to understand the principles set down in the Sermon on the Mount. Peter admonishes us to "...grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). The more one grows in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ the more he sees how the principles set forth in this Scripture really work. [Dr. Bill Cooper, The Authenticity of the NT, Vol. I]

B. Matthew Heard the Beatitudes "Up Close and Personal."

Over the years I have heard and read a number of theories on the Sermon on the Mount:

1. It is a collection of notes from various sermons preached by Jesus.
2. Matthew collected quotes, edited them and recorded them.
3. This is a statement of doctrines set before us in sermon form.
4. The sermon was too long for one sermon.

To the last one, I have an answer. During the days of Thomas Chalmers, Jonathan Edwards, and Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the clock was not the primary interest of worshipers. The late Dr. H. R. Herrington was pastor of First Baptist, Rayville, Louisiana back in the fifties and sixties. He memorized the Sermon on the Mount and "preached" it in one sermon. The late Leonard Ravenhill, in a taped discussion about his preaching, stated that he did not receive a lot of invitations to preach at that time (advanced age), but, "If I preached I normally preach about two and one-half hours. And when I finish you do not see people jumping up and running all over the building. Some sit for fifteen or twenty minutes before they begin to get up and slip out, very reverently."

Dr. Bill Cooper stressed that Matthew would have had no trouble taking down this sermon in the short hand he used all the time. I am sure he and I would agree that, had Mathew not been there, the Holy Spirit would have made sure he got it right.

NOTE: The following notes dealing with the Beatitudes are copied from this writer's commentary on the Sermon on the Mount posted on SermonCity.Com.

As we begin the Beatitudes, we should be aware of different approaches taken in trying to understand how they are to be applied in the life of the believer.

- 1) The beginner may not see any connection between them. He may recall two or three of three of them and appreciate their beauty, but never try to relate each one to the others.
- 2) Some may make a serious effort to live by all of these principles daily.
- 3) Still others see the Beatitudes as a series of steps the citizen of the Kingdom of God must take if he is to reach the state of blessedness, or abiding joy. Some see steps as indicated below.

The Beatitudes

- (3) "Blessed are the poor in spirit, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

- (4) Blessed are those who mourn, because they will be comforted.
- (5) Blessed are the gentle, because they will inherit the earth.
- (6) Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, because they will be filled.
- (7) Blessed are the merciful, because they will be shown mercy.
- (8) Blessed are the pure in heart, because they will see God.
- (9) Blessed are the peacemakers, because they will be called sons of God.
- (10) Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.
- (11) "Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of Me. (12) Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matt 5:3-12, HCSB)

The Holman Bible Dictionary carries a brief summary of the Beatitudes which should help us to understand each Beatitude and relate them to each other.

BEATITUDES are the opening sentences of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount which describe the quality of life of a citizen of the kingdom of God.

The word "Beatitude" comes from a Latin word meaning "happy" or "blessed." Various forms of the word "bless" are used many times in both the Old and New Testaments, but this passage alone is known as the Beatitudes. The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) sets forth the spiritual principles of the kingdom of God. They define the character of a child of the King. The Beatitudes are not to be seen as separate blessings for different believers. All the Beatitudes are to be applied and developed in all disciples both now and in the future. The eight Beatitudes have continuity. 1. "The poor in spirit" denotes the fact of sin (5:3). 2. "They that mourn" means to repent of sin (5:4). 3. "The meek" describes not the weak, but rather strength that is surrendered to God in a new birth experience (5:5). 4. To "hunger and thirst after righteousness" signifies the strong desire to become more Christ-like (5:6). 5. "The merciful" show an attitude of forgiveness (5:7). 6. "The pure in heart" strive daily for clean living (5:8). 7. "The peacemakers" exert a calming influence in the storms of life (5:9). 8. "They which are persecuted" denotes faithfulness under stress (5:10-12). Each Beatitude carries with



it a strong promise of ultimate good for those who develop the blessed life. [Lawson Hatfield, – Holman Bible Dictionary]

## CHRISTIAN MATURITY

9--Reviled - for His Sake

8--Persecuted. . . Righteousness

7--Peacemakers

6--Pure in Heart

5--The Merciful

4--Hunger & Thirst after Righteousness

3--The Meek

2--They that Mourn

1--Poor in Spirit

## SPIRITUAL BANKRUPTCY

Only the poor in spirit will begin this walk; only the poor in spirit will take the next step. Only the poor in spirit and those who mourn over sin will be meek. Only those who have reached the first three steps will hunger and thirst after righteousness. The climb continues and as one continues to grow, he will begin to think and behave more and more like Jesus. And that person will be persecuted and reviled, and he will be accused of all manner of evil for the Lord's sake. But, even the persecution will produce spiritual maturity (James 1:3-4).

## KEY TO THE BEATITUDES

### FROM SPIRITUAL BANKRUPTCY TO CHRISTIAN MATURITY

BLESSED ARE YOU

IF YOU ARE YOU WILL RECEIVE

REVILED FOR HIS SAKE-9- REWARD IN HEAVEN

PERSECUTED FOR-8- KINGDOM OF  
RIGHTEOUSNESS SAKE HEAVEN  
PEACEMAKERS -7- CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD  
PURE IN HEART -6-SEE GOD  
MERCIFUL-5- MERCY  
HUNGER & THIRST-4- SHALL BE FILLED  
AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS  
THE MEEK-3- THE EARTH  
THEY THAT MOURN-2- COMFORT  
POOR IN SPIRIT-1- KING. OF HEAVEN  
SPIRITUAL BANKRUPTCY

C. Matthew Knew the Sermon on the Mount Well.

Earlier, in this study I mentioned material from the pen of my friend Dr. Bill Cooper in England which I would be using in this study. At this point I would like to impose on his research and some more material he has written in *The Authenticity of the New Testament, Volume I*. This quote is a little long, but when you read it I believe you will appreciate it. This deals specifically with the Sermon on the Mount:

“Before we go any further, now might be a good moment in which to take a breather and think upon what we have just witnessed. Looking back over our own lives, we can count many events which range from the deeply traumatic to the wonderfully happy. Yet how many of those events will have left a recognisable and permanent imprint in the archaeological record? There is every chance that none of them – not even one – will have left behind even the slightest trace of itself. So the fact that there should be, after two thousand years, such clear and identifiable traces of events and people that are mentioned in the gospels is truly remarkable. It is certainly not something which we should ignore, because, as we shall come to see, it is not there as a matter of chance.

“Of course, it’s not just a matter of simple archaeology either. It is also a matter of written documentation, and documents concerning our own lives will almost certainly be preserved for future generations to read – for a time, anyway. And this is where the

importance of the Gospels comes in. They are each a document, Matthew's not the least among them, and they tell us things which otherwise we could never discern from buried ruins and pottery. Archaeology could never preserve a conversation, for example. But a document can, and Matthew's does, many of them in fact. But again the question presents itself, how can we trust that what Matthew wrote down is actually what was said?" [Cooper, Dr. Bill, The Authenticity of the New Testament, Vol. 1, bold added by this writer]

There are people who watch the History Channel and the Discovery Channel "religiously" and assume they are getting the truth. That may not always be the case. Many times, it depends on the subject as to the reliability of the "research." When I see a program and learn that they are depending upon a liberal professor from a liberal university I make a point of listening closely. I watched a group discussion about some subject on Hannity one evening a year or two ago and whatever the discussion was, a liberal woman interrupted several times with the question, "But what about slavery?" I wished someone had said, "Lady, slavery does not bother you, except for you employment in an attack on conservatives, or an attack on those who live in the south 150 - 200 years after slavery was abolished." How long has it been since you have heard anyone express a deep concern for the sex slaves, young girls who are moved across the country and sold to someone who will carry them across the border into Mexico and then ship them to some foreign country. When have you heard anyone on a television news program express any concern whatsoever when a group of radical Muslims kill Christian parents and enslave their children?

I learned that a young man I have known almost from birth had enrolled in a class in a well-known and highly respected university and the woman who taught the class lectured one day on race relations in the south - being from one part of the country seems to automatically qualify some people to straighten out those from a different part of the country. At one point, the young man raised his hand and when the professor recognized him this very quiet and respectful young man said, "That is not true," and began to tell her about race relations where he live in the Mississippi Delta.

The professor reported him to the dean and one charge was that he was frightening blacks in her class. The dean said, "Jim, you are right, and I agree with you, but the only thing you can do is drop that class." What that professor could never have imagined was that Jim is from the third generation of whites in Mississippi who have had the best long term relationship with black people of any family I have ever known. When the patriarch of the family died, I went to the visitation and saw that fully one-third of those present were black people and they interacted comfortably with the family. The next day at the funeral, two black people presented special music and two were pall bearers. At the close of the service one black man who loved his friend like a family member said to the wife of the deceased, "Mama, Pop would have been proud of these black people." Only, he didn't say black people - he used the "N" word. When the deceased

stood or sat with a group of black people they all used the “N” word and not one of them thought he was being discriminatory.

“Pop” had saved a house for one black family, cars for others, and furniture for others. This man applied principles set forth by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount that the professor could not have imagined. In fact, the black people who knew “Pop” would have laughed at his grandson’s professor.

Dr. Cooper comments on some of the critics of the Sermon on the Mount:

“Critics look at the Sermon on the Mount and say that it could not possibly have been written down as spoken. No scribe – even if there’d been one present – could have kept up with it. Therefore, it is made up of half remembered traditions which were sewn together by later editors some seventy or eighty years after the supposed sermon was given. In other words, as history it isn’t worth a light. But how accurate is that supposition?

“It would be accurate if the History Channel’s portrayal of scribes was in any way accurate. There, and in similar TV portrayals, scribes of old are presented as painfully and slowly scratching out letters, one at a time, tongue on chin, like barely literate children, on a tatty old sheet of papyrus. They take so long to dip their reed pens in the ink that half the speaker’s sentence has already disappeared into the aether by the time the scribe begins to form the next letter. And by the time he’s finished shaping that letter, the speaker is either onto another subject altogether, or is already back home with his feet up. Under those circumstances, of course we would be entitled to doubt whether Matthew had recorded the Sermon on the Mount accurately. But the real circumstances are somewhat different to those suggested. What the critics forget to tell their readers (and the History Channel their viewers) is that in Matthew’s day – and long before – scribes and secretaries employed for all their various scripts and languages very efficient systems of shorthand. One of them is even mentioned in the Book of Psalms – Psalm 45:1 to be exact: “...my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.” – Heb. *sopher macher*. The Greek version of the Old Testament (LXX) translates the term ‘ready writer’ as *oxygraphos*, a shorthand writer, or as we might say, a stenographer.<sup>7</sup> (Bold added by this writer)

“Cicero (106-43 BC), the Roman philosopher, employed his secretary, Tiro, to write down all his speeches in shorthand. He referred to them as his ‘Tironian notes.’ Likewise, Tertius, who wrote down at dictation speed Paul’s letter to the Romans (Romans 16:22), was just such a shorthand writer, as was Sosthenes who wrote out Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians (1:1), leaving Paul to sign off with a salutation in his own hand (16:21-24). There even exists from the 2nd century a specimen of Christian shorthand writing on leather which was discovered in the Wadi Murabba’at near the Dead Sea.<sup>8</sup>

“Again, as a Judaeen tax collector, Matthew would have had to be proficient in the art of shorthand in three languages, Aramaic, Greek and Latin, and the Sermon on the Mount would have been delivered by Jesus at a considerably slower speed than that of normal conversation. He was addressing a large open air crowd, and His words would have been lost on the air had He spoken them quickly. But as it is, Matthew would have had no trouble at all with writing down the words of Jesus as He spoke them. So yes, we can trust Matthew to have written down the Sermon on the Mount – and all of our Lord’s other sayings and conversations which he records - accurately.<sup>9</sup> He’d been professionally trained to do it. Interestingly, Matthew had not yet been called by Jesus into discipleship when He gave the Sermon on the Mount. That Matthew was there, taking note of every word which was spoken, explains the readiness with which he left his customs office when Jesus did call him. That customs office, standing in a harbour close to Capernaum, has been excavated in recent years. It stood close to where the Sermon on the Mount was given, and Matthew would have had no great journey to get there when he heard that the crowds were gathering to hear Jesus.<sup>10</sup> Paying such close attention to His words that he could write them all down, he found the words of Jesus, in every sense, life-changing. That is why, when the call came, he was ready.” [Bill Cooper, *The Authenticity of the New Testament*, Vol. I] (Bold added by this writer)

#### D. Matthew Learned Some Things from the Sermon on the Mount.

1. Jesus taught a higher standard with the Beatitudes.
2. He taught that we are to be the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13-16).
3. He shows how He fulfills the Law (5:17-20).
4. He shows that murder begin in the heart (5:21-26).
5. He taught that adultery begins in the heart (5:27-30).
6. He stressed the value of the truth (5:31-37).
7. He taught that we should love our enemies (5:38-48).
8. He gave us the Model Prayer (6:9-13).
9. He taught how we should find His will (7:7-12).
10. He taught how to enter His kingdom (13-21).

#### E. Matthew Personally Witnessed the Work of the Messiah.

1. He was called to follow Jesus (Matt. 9:9 ff)
2. He heard Jesus speak with authority (Mt. 7:28)
3. He saw him heal Peter's Mother-in-Law (8:14-15)
4. He saw the wind and waves obey Him (8:23ff)
5. He saw demons obey Him (8:28; 9:32)
6. He saw Jesus raise the dead (9:18)
7. He saw Him give sight to the blind (9:27)
8. He heard Jesus speak in parables (13:1ff)
9. He was one of the disciples Jesus sent on a mission (10:1ff)
10. He saw Him feed 5,000 men (plus women and children) with a child's lunch (14:13ff)
11. He saw Him feed 4,000 men (plus women and children) (16:32)
12. He saw Him walk on water (14:22)
13. He saw the wind obey Him (8:23f)
14. He heard the Great Commission (28:19-20)
15. He saw Him cleans the temple complex (21:12ff)
16. He saw Jesus on the cross (27:32ff)
16. He saw the risen Christ (John 20:24f)
17. He saw Jesus show Thomas the wounds in his side and hands (John 20:24f)
18. He heard Jesus predict that they would obey His Great Commission (Acts 1:8)
19. He saw the Ascension (Acts 1:9ff)
20. He heard the promise of His return (Acts 1:11)

## CONCLUSION

What should we conclude from these lists - from Matthew's eye witness reports on the life, ministry, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ? For one thing, Matthew was a follower of the long awaited Messiah almost from the time that He launched His ministry. But there is more where Matthew is concerned. The others witnessed it and shared what they saw. Matthew, on the other hand, wrote down much of what Jesus said and did. If he, as Dr. Bill Cooper believes, he made notes in short hand and then translated that information into the record we have in the Gospel account that bears his name. In other words, he would have spent a lot more time with the record of events, messages, and discussions than the other disciples. That certainly would not have given him an advantage over the inner circle of Apostles, Peter, James, and John, but he would have had the accurate history, the chronicled order of events, plus the records to check on what he wrote. That takes nothing away from his eye witness knowledge of those events, and it most definitely does not diminish the importance of the inspiration of Scripture by the Holy Spirit. Written accounts do, however, remind us of things that happened, jog our memory of events, and refocus our attention when memory fails us. I have said many times to family members that my father's father died when he was 26 years, but when my son Mark and I looked at the census records we found that he was 28 years old when he died. I had said that my father was four years old, but discovered that he had been three years old when his father died. What difference does my memory glitch make to anyone else? None what so ever, but I prefer the correct dates. Matthew probably reviewed his information from time to time, whether or not anyone else did or not.

Eleana Andrews Cooley recently posted a picture from her father's pastoral records. In my pastor's hand writing I read that Linda Sanders had made a profession of faith one Sunday and that I had baptized her the next Sunday. I remember when she made her profession of faith, and while I remember that I baptized our younger brother Mike, I did not remember that I had also baptized my little sister. Those notes, written in the hand writing of the pastor we loved, were very special. However, there was more to it than the sentimental relationship. The record is also important.

While the Holy Spirit inspired John to write the Fourth Gospel, and Mark and Luke to write different accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, Matthew has the longest Gospel and it would be interesting to know if other Apostles may have asked him questions about what Jesus did or what He said at a certain time. I have a feeling they did, based on my propensity for forgetting certain events, people, and dates.

For this study, even though I am aware of the problem many would have with the date, I would like to entertain the early date Dr. Cooper has embraced for the date the Gospel of Matthew reached his Island of Briton. My reason for accepting the early date is explained in the following material from Dr. Cooper:

## Pilate's Report to Tiberius

"The chances of a local rumour doing the rounds in Jerusalem reaching the emperor's ears back in Rome are extremely slight. To reach the emperor at all, the rumour would have to hitch a ride to Rome on the back of an official communication, and there is good evidence indeed that just such a communication was sent from Pontius Pilate to the Emperor Tiberius about the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of our Lord. While that is not something that the critics would like to hear, it is important enough for us to consider just what this evidence is. We need firstly to bear in mind the fact that such a communication - an update on events in the province of Judaea - would be nothing extraordinary. Such communications were an expected and everyday occurrence, and woe betide the governor who neglected to send them. At the least, dereliction, treasonous thoughts or sabotage would be suspected. Nevertheless, this report must have been something special, because it seems to have had a profound effect on Tiberius himself who received it, Tiberius putting a motion to the Senate to have this Jesus added to the gods of Rome. Happily, the Senate declined the invitation because they'd hitherto heard nothing about this Man. We turn to Tertullian (AD 160-225) who, after describing the events leading up to the Crucifixion and Resurrection, writes: "Pilate, who in his conscience was a Christian, sent Tiberius Caesar an account of all these proceedings relating to Christ...."20 (Bold added by this writer)

"Earlier, but on the same general subject, he invites the recipients of his Apology to: "Consult your annals...."21 Now, just who was Tertullian writing to? Was it a friend or colleague? - a sympathiser of the Christians perhaps? No, by no means. He was writing to the magistrates of Carthage, to the very men who were then persecuting the Christians. To invite them to consult the state archives to test the truth of what he was saying was a brave move - and a foolish one if the annals had not existed, or had told a story contrary to his own. But this same record is also mentioned by a slightly earlier apologist of the Christian faith, Justin Martyr (AD 100-165): "...and for the truth of this you may satisfy yourselves from the acts of Pontius Pilate...."22

"Again the invitation to consult the state archives. Who was Justin writing to? - none other than the emperor of Rome at that time, Antoninus Pius, his sons, and the Senate of Rome. That again is quite a readership, and Justin would have been the most foolish man on earth to invite a hostile emperor to consult the archives on Pontius Pilate if those records had not been there to consult. Moreover, those archives must have held papers on the Crucifixion of Jesus and His subsequent Resurrection, including a report on the rumour that Matthew records about the disciples being thought to have stolen His body. It's a wonder that the critics forget to mention these things. But there's more. Eusebius, expanding on the subject, tells us:



“Tiberius, therefore, under whom the name of Christ was spread throughout the world, when this doctrine was announced to him from Palestine where it first began, communicated with the senate, being obviously pleased with the doctrine; but the senate, as they had not proposed the measure, rejected it. But he continued in his opinion, threatening death to the accusers of the Christians; a divine providence infusing this into his mind, that the gospel, having freer scope in its commencement, might spread everywhere over the world.”<sup>23</sup>

“And it did spread everywhere too under Tiberius, as we know from the evidence concerning the Lady Pomponia and the arrival of the Gospel in Britain whilst Tiberius still reigned. But regarding the report sent by Pilate to Tiberius, it is important to consider this. Our secret and intelligence services get to know that things are about to happen by listening to ‘chatter’ on the internet and mobile phone networks, and what we have just examined is precisely the same kind of chatter that they listen to. In other words, what we have just read about the report from Pilate in Justin, Tertullian and Eusebius, would not be there for us to read unless that report had at one time existed, and had been available in the state archives for others to consult some two hundred years or more afterwards. It is as simple and as straightforward as that. The critics can howl that it isn’t true till they’re blue in the face if they wish, but eggs is eggs, and facts are facts are facts!” (The Authenticity of the New Testament, Vol. 1, by Dr. Bill Cooper, Middlesex England - Bold added by this writer)

The Apostles, including Matthew, soon moved out in various directions, obeying the Great Commission (Matt. 29:19-20) from Jesus to His disciples, both then and now, to take the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to the entire world. According to early traditions, all of the eleven loyal apostles gave their lives for the sake of the Gospel. We do know that John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos because of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They were trying to silence him, but Jesus had something else in mind for the beloved disciple. It was while he was on the Isle of Patmos that Jesus appeared to him and gave him the Revelation. Rome was trying to shut him up, but the Lord used the Roman postal system to deliver the Revelation to the seven named churches, from which this message would spread throughout the world.

The man called Matthew left his profession, his tax collector associates, and his home to follow Jesus and to tell others about Him. If early traditions are right Matthew gave his life for the Savior Who had given His life for him.

Christians everywhere should celebrate the spread of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ today. I had the honor of serving on the Board of Trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources, where I was assigned to the Broadman and Holman Committee. In my very first meeting with the Broadman and Holman Committee we met with Dr. Ed Blum, who would become the Editor in Chief for the proposed Holman Christian Standard Bible. We voted that morning to recommend to the plenary session that we go forward

with the proposed new translation of the Bible. That was my very first vote, other than a vote on Minutes and the Agenda. Since that time the Holman Christian Standard Bible has been circulated through Christian Book Stores and the Scripture is used, along side the KJV, in literature printed for one hundred thousand churches.

“Then Jesus came near and said to them, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (19) Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matt 28:18-20, HCSB)