

The Gospel of Matthew

Kip and Friends

The big question!

Who was Jesus: was he the messiah Judaism had waited for, or not?

What was happening?

After the death and resurrection of Jesus, his followers, most of whom were Jews, lived a kind of ‘split’ life. They lived as Jews; in their eating, dressing, religious practices and customs, but they also gathered to remember Jesus and what he had done for them. Around about the year 80 CE, they were forced to make a choice: would they live as followers of Jesus and give up their old ways, or would they return to their previous religious beliefs and abandon their faith in Jesus.

Who is this Gospel written for?

Matthew’s Gospel spends a lot more time linking Jesus to Judaism than Mark or Luke do. So, we think this Gospel was written for Jews. We think Matthew wanted to persuade his readers, to convince them that Jesus *was* the messiah the Jews had waited for. Matthew is sure he is, and he is determined to show them why!

Who was Matthew?

We call this Gospel the Gospel of Matthew but in fact we really don’t know who wrote it. The early Church thought that it could have been written by the tax collector Levi – who is called Matthew in this Gospel (See Mt 9:9-13). The early Church thought it was the first one written and that’s why it comes first in the New Testament. We don’t think that whoever wrote this was Levi/Matthew now though, it seems to be have been written too long after Jesus’ death and resurrection. What we do know is that this writer knows the Jewish story really well and is very clear that Jesus is the messiah that the people had waited for.

What might I see in the Gospel of Matthew?

Writers make their point in particular ways. Matthew loves to use Old Testament quotes and to remember the stories of the Jewish people. He arranges his gospel into 5 books, reminding his readers of the Torah, and he makes sure that key moments happen on a mountain – a reminder of the giving of the commandments at Sinai.