

Theo 210, Week #07:
Questions about the Gospel of Matthew
(ANSWER KEY)
The University of St. Francis

According to Matthew's Gospel...

True/False

1. False Many scholars cite Rome as the probable place of composition of the Gospel of Matthew.
The author probably wrote this gospel in Antioch or Syria.
2. True One of Matthew's primary purposes for writing his Gospel is to demonstrate Jesus' credentials as Israel's true Messiah.
3. True The only two Gospels to describe the circumstances of Jesus' birth are Matthew and Luke.
4. True When Satan tempts Jesus in the wilderness in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus responds to Satan each time by quoting from the Hebrew Scriptures.
5. True The Sermon on the Mount in Mt 5-7 is the most extensive collection of Jesus' teachings and admonitions in the Synoptic Gospels.
6. False The "Beatitudes" that Jesus pronounces in the Sermon on the Mount express a radical confirmation of the present world's social values. (Mt 5: 3-11)

7. False The word Jesus commonly uses for hell in the Gospel of Matthew is "Sheol."
- The correct term is "Sheol," though the common translation is misleading; the phrase means not the powers of evil but the power of death; for Sheol is the biblical abode of the dead.*
8. False In Matthew's account of Jesus' Jerusalem ministry, Jesus is repeatedly hailed as "Son of Man," one of Matthew's favorite designations for Jesus.
- The phrase "Son of Man" is used 45 times in the NAB version of the bible; the term "Messiah" is used 27 times, "Son of God" is used 15 times and "Son of David" is used 14 times. However, the "Son of David," one of Matthew's favorite designations of Jesus (1:1, 20; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 31; 21:9, 15; 22:42-45), underscores Jesus' royal status and also recalls God's choice of unlikely persons for important roles in salvation history. "Son of Abraham" relates Jesus to the prime figure in Israel's history, the one whose struggle to be obedient to God brought blessing for all the peoples on earth.*
9. True To stress the earth-shattering significance of Jesus' crucifixion, the Gospel of Matthew reports that Jesus' death was accompanied by an earthquake. (Mt 28: 2)
10. True Only the Gospel of Matthew reports that the Sadducees plotted to bribe the soldiers guarding Jesus' tomb into claiming that Jesus' disciples stole his bodies while the soldiers slept. (Mt 28: 11-15)

Multiple Choice

1. Which of the following is NOT a characteristic of the Gospel of Matthew that emphasizes the Gospel's strong connection to the Hebrew Bible?
 - a. *Matthew describes in detail the Hebrew lineage of the apostle Matthew.*
 - b. Matthew provides a genealogy of Jesus' ancestors that traces his lineage back to Abraham.
 - c. Matthew stresses Jesus' fulfillment of ancient prophecies in the Hebrew Bible.
 - d. Matthew stresses that Jesus both taught and fulfilled the principles of the Mosaic Law.

2. Which of the following sources do most scholars NOT think Matthew used in composing his Gospel?
 - a. *L*
 - b. M
 - c. Mark
 - d. Q

3. Which of these parables, about being ready for the second coming of Jesus, is only found in the gospel of Matthew? (Mt 25)
 - a. *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*
 - b. The Sower
 - c. The Prodigal Son
 - d. The Good Samaritan

The Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan appear only in Luke's gospel. The Sower is in Matthew, Mark and Luke. The background to this story is the typical wedding feast of Jesus' time. The virgins (bridesmaids) had to be ready for the arrival of the bridegroom which happened, not at an appointed time, but in quite a wide timeframe. Some of the bridesmaids were prepared; some weren't and missed out. Preachers through the centuries have aimed this parable at churchgoers but it is probable that Matthew's original target was the wider Jewish community. They had not recognized Jesus when he first came. Would they be ready a second time?

4. Matthew is the only one of the gospel writers to record an unusual occurrence that accompanied Jesus' crucifixion. Which of these does he record? (Mt 27: 50-53)

- a. The death of the high priest
- b. Pontius Pilate experiencing a nightmare
- c. *Graves opening and the dead coming back to life*
- d. The river Jordan drying up

Frustratingly, Matthew doesn't tell us how the situation subsequently unfolded. Did the dead go on to die a second death? Did they, at some point, climb back into their tombs or collapse and have to be reburied? Did they ascend into heaven? We are not told.

Short Answer

1. Who is the traditional author of the Gospel of Matthew? According to scripture scholars, who *really* wrote it?

One belief is that the apostle Matthew assembled the sayings of Jesus in Aramaic and the final version in Greek was written by another writer. The writer, though, wrote from a Jewish-Christian outlook with an eye to the Gentile community.

2. Matthew, Mark and Luke all record an incident where Jesus calls Matthew from his work as a tax collector. Mark and Luke, however, call Matthew by a different name. What is this name? (Mark 2: 14; Luke 5: 27)

Levi

Matthew is sitting at his tax booth when Jesus approaches with the simple instruction, "Follow me." Matthew follows. (Mt 9: 9) As Matthew is the only one of the gospel writers to use this name for the tax collector, it has historically been assumed that they are one and the same person.

3. Mark calls his text a “Gospel.” How might Matthew perceive his text? Why is that important?

Possibly as a reference to a “textbook” of conduct for the church leaders reading it.

4. Three titles applied to Jesus in this gospel are “Son of Man,” “Son of God” and “Son of David.” Why are these titles important?

a. *“Son of God” – Baptism (3: 17), Peter’s confession (16: 16), the transfiguration (17: 5) and the trial and cross (26: 63; 27: 40, 43, 54).*

b. *“Son of David” – used 10 times (including 1: 1), new Solomon*

c. *“Son of Man” – Matthew 28: 18-20, based on Dan 7: 13-14*

5. According to Johnson, what role do the infancy narratives play in Matthew’s gospel? (Johnson 192)

(Johnson 192) The infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke have little in common beyond the characters of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Even here, however, there are differences: in contrast with Luke’s account, Joseph is a more dominant character than Mary. Moreover, while the two Gospels interpret Torah midrashically, they do so in very different ways. They also use distinct literary devices and divergent geographical emphases. Each, in short, is fitted to the distinctive witness of the Gospel it begins.

Matthew’s version is distinguished by its genealogy (1: 1-17) and dense clustering of formula citations (1: 23; 2: 6, 15, 23). They help define the place of Jesus within traditional Jewish messianic expectation. For Christians in conversation with an aggressive Pharisaic movement (see 23: 15), proclaiming Jesus as resurrected Messiah was insufficient; the credentials of a Davidic king required demonstration. For this, Jesus’ dubious parentage and lowly place of origin were problematic (see John 1: 46; 7: 27). The formula citations prove that Jesus meets prophetic expectations, and the genealogy

connects him to the royal line. Together, they answer – at least to this community's satisfaction – the questions of who Jesus is and whence he came.

6. Concerning the Genealogy of Matthew (1: 1-17), why are the references to women so important in this text (especially in reference to Mary?)

Inheritance usually is attributed to the first born son of the Man. In this case, the son of Joseph is adopted. Therefore, Jesus receives the inheritance of the line of Abraham through adoption.

7. There are many differences between the infancy narratives in Matthew and Luke. Name three of the infancy stories *unique* to the gospel of Matthew.

Of the many choices...

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|----|---|
| a. | <u><i>The emphasis of Joseph's story over Mary's in Matthew 1</i></u> |
| b. | <u><i>The story of the wise men.</i></u> |
| c. | <u><i>The flight to Egypt; slaughter of the innocents.</i></u> |

8. According to Matthew, in what city was Jesus born? (Mt 2: 1)

In Bethlehem of Judea (Mt 2: 1)

9. Matthew begins his gospel by providing a genealogy for Jesus that traces his family tree all the way back to which biblical character?

Abraham.

Most scholars agree that Matthew is writing with Jews in mind. His immediate audience was probably a community of "Jewish" Christians who came into contact with fellow Jews on a daily basis. He, therefore, strives to show that Jesus is not a new departure but the supreme realization of all that has gone before in the Old Testament. His interest in the genealogy is to demonstrate that Jesus

is descended from Abraham, the father of the Israelite nation. Luke, on the other hand, who is writing for gentile Christians, traces the lineage back to Adam, the universal man.

10. The Magi or “wise men” who come searching for the infant Jesus in Matthew were probably what by profession?

Astrologers

11. According to scripture scholars, how long did Jesus’ ministry appear to take place (following his baptism)?

Similar to Mark, Matthew’s Jesus apparently makes only one trip to Jerusalem in the gospel text during his ministry.

12. How does Matthew retell the story of Jesus’ temptation in the desert, as opposed to Mark?

- *Matthew is much more thorough in the temptation story than Mark.*
- *Matthew elaborates on the ways that Jesus was tested in the desert.*
Luke’s tests are similar to Matthew’s but in a different order. Matthew is much more thorough in the temptation story than Mark.
- *Matthew elaborates on the ways that Jesus was tested in the desert.*
- *Luke’s tests are similar to Matthew’s but in a different order.*

13. What differences can you cite between the way Mark’s Gospel approaches the character of John the Baptist and Matthew’s version?

Of the many choices...

- a. *Matthew’s John focuses more on themes of judgment (1: 7-10, 12) than Mark’s version.*
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- b. *Matthew's John specifically condemns the Pharisees and Sadducees for their actions.*
 - c. *Matthew adds a section to the baptism story focusing on John's unworthiness. Jesus insists that John baptize him for the sake of setting an example.*
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14. Where did the disciples and Jesus first meet? How does Matthew differ with Mark in the way he deals with the "Peter" character in this passage?

Peter is seen in a much more favorable light in Matthew's gospel than in Mark's. The prime example focuses on Peter's testimony of faith (Mt 16: 13-20; Mark 8: 27-30). Matthew's approach elevates Peter to the "head" disciple who will lead the Church after Peter's death; Mark's focus does not give Peter that type of distinction.

15. Matthew's "Sermon on the Mount" is considered, to some, Matthew's greatest composition. What, in the Old Testament, does this sermon parallel?

Moses' sermon on Mt. Sinai.

16. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus rejects the principle of *Lex Talionis*. What does this mean?

The Law of Retaliation (An Eye for an Eye)

17. Talk about Matthew's view of ethics during the Sermon on the Mount. What is the import of Jesus' words?

Matthew elevates the role of discipleship in the sermon to a higher level. Rather than just following the law, Jesus expects the faithful to act even greater than the law.

18. What is the Golden Rule? (Mt 7: 12)

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." (Mt 7: 12)

19. Matthew is the only New Testament Gospel to use the term *ecclesia*, which means what?

Church

20. In Matthew, Jesus commonly teaches by providing detailed interpretations of the meaning of the Mosaic Torah. The Jewish faith used what term to describe these detailed interpretation?

Midrash

21. The gospel writers emphasize that one of Jesus' major themes was preaching that God's kingdom is very near. Matthew is no exception but chooses, mostly, to use which alternative phrase? (Mt 4: 17)

The Kingdom of Heaven

"From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."" (Mt 4: 17) The phrase is unique to Matthew, occurring 32 times in his gospel and nowhere else in the Bible. The most likely reason for its usage is that Matthew is showing a typically Jewish reticence to utter the name of God.

22. Matthew is the only Gospel in which Jesus tells which apostle, "On this rock I will build my Church." (Mt 16: 18)

Peter

23. What does Jesus say is the greatest commandment? (Mt 22: 27)

You shall love the Lord thy God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.

24. Where you find a beatitude in Matthew's Gospel?

Mt 5: 1-12

25. In what part of Matthew's Gospel did the cleansing of the temple take place? When, in John?

- a. *In Mark & Matthew, the cleansing story takes place after Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.*
- b. *In John, the cleansing takes place at the beginning of the Gospel.*
- c. *Matthew adds a section to the baptism story focusing on John's unworthiness. Jesus insists that John baptize him for the sake of setting an example.*

26. What is the Greatest Commandment? (Mt 22: 37, 38)

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." (Mt 22: 37,38)

27. What is the second Greatest Commandment? (Mt 22: 39)

"Love your neighbor as yourself." (Mt 22: 39)

28. There are many differences between Matthew's version of the Passion & Mark's. Name some, especially in reference to....

- a. *Peter's denial. In Peter's denial story, Matthew simplifies the text by claiming that Peter will deny Jesus 3x before the cock will crow once (Mark has the cock crowing twice).*
- b. *The role of Judas. Judas' role (and death) are fleshed out in greater detail in Matthew.*
- c. *The role of Pilate. Pilate "washes his hands" clean of Jesus' condemnation in Matthew; Mark does not elaborate on Pilate's story.*

29. Where is the Eucharistic Institution Narrative found in Matthew's Gospel?

Matthew 26: 26-29

30. What is the Great Commission? (Mt 28: 19-20)

"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age." (Mt 28: 19-20) This commissioning is unique in that it provides the baptismal formula that is used during the Rite of Baptism at Mass. It also provides a Trinitarian formula that provides the foundation for the Church's Trinitarian theology.

Essay

1. According to Johnson, what are the basic differences in the portrayals of Jesus in Mark and Matthew?

(Johnson 196 ff.) Matthew's distinctive understanding of Jesus as teacher affects his presentation of Jesus as parable speaker... In contrast to Mark, however, Matthew's parables are truly intelligible to the insiders. The disciples have been given "to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (13: 11). Outsiders do not perceive; the prophecy of Isa. 6: 9-10 about blindness and deafness applies to them, while the disciples do "see and hear" (13: 16-17). The division between insiders and outsiders is here lacking irony. The role of knowledge, furthermore, is central for Matthew in a way it is not for Mark... This is indicated by the interpretation of the parable of the sower (13: 18-23). In the parable itself, Matthew already made the seeds plural rather than singular, and the growth of the seed distributive, "some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." These changes invite a more individualizing interpretation, which Matthew provides. Now, it is "anyone who hears" the word of the kingdom, and the point of differentiation is "understanding." The one who

hears but “does not understand” has the word taken away (13: 19). The one who “hears and understands” will yield fruit (13: 23).

2. According to Johnson, how is the Torah central in the symbolism of Matthew’s Gospel? (Johnson 197)

(Johnson 197 ff.) The central religious symbol of the Pharisaic tradition was Torah (see chap. 2, pp. 43–44). It was the source of wisdom and the measure of righteousness, the reflection of the mind of God, the blueprint for creation, the ideal frame for humanity. Though revealed through Moses on Sinai, Torah was eternal; though dwelling among humans, it would live forever. Taking upon oneself the observance of Torah was to “take on the yoke of the kingdom of heaven.”

Since the Matthean community interpreted its life in reference to this tradition, it was required both to separate itself from the actual synagogue and to reinterpret the symbols it shared with that tradition. Both aspects find their focus in Jesus. Because messianists confessed him as Christ and Lord, they were regarded as heretics (minim) by the synagogue. The figure of Jesus therefore also organizes the Christians’ appropriation of the rabbinic symbolic structure. We can approach this dialectic in four stages: (1) Jesus as polemicist against scribes and Pharisees; (2) Jesus as the authentic interpreter of Torah; (3) Jesus as the fulfillment of Torah; (4) Jesus as the personification of Torah.

3. According to Johnson, why is Matthew’s Gospel appropriately called “the gospel of the Church?” (Johnson 187)

(Johnson 187) Matthew is the gospel of the Church. Not only is it the only Gospel to use the term “church,” ekklēsia (16: 18; 18: 17), but both its contents and structure indicate an interest in providing clear and coherent guidance to a community of believers. In contrast to the Gospel of Mark’s rather marginal early existence, Matthew has been from the beginning the Gospel most used by the church in its worship, and in consequence, it has provided the text for the most preaching

and commentary. Already quoted directly by Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 115), it was given a full-scale commentary by Origen (ca. 185–254). So far as ecclesial use is concerned, Matthew is the most successful edition of Mark's Gospel.

4. According to Johnson, how does Matthew's gospel portray Jesus in chapters 5-7 (the Sermon on the Mount)?

(Johnson 199) One form of messianic expectation within Judaism looked for the Messiah to interpret Torah definitively: "They shall not depart from any commandment of the law... until there should come a prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel" (1QS 9.9-11). Such an interpretation of Torah is one of the essential messianic functions given to Jesus in Matthew's Gospel. It is expressed programmatically in the Sermon on the Mount (chaps. 5–7). Matthew has prepared the reader to see in the one who speaks from the mountain a faithful representative of Israel, even a Mosaic figure. But Jesus is no new Moses and delivers no new law. He is God's Son who through Torah shows the real intent of God's word. He is a messianic interpreter.

5. According to the online lecture, explain some differences between what is presented in Matthew 5-7 and what is portrayed in the movie video clip.
6. According to the online lecture, explain the teachings presented in Matthew 5-7. Be specific.
7. In light of Matthew 16: 8 and paragraphs #551-553 of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, explain the scriptural significance and symbolism of the role of the papacy, both in the first century and today.

#551 From the beginning of his public life Jesus chose certain men, twelve in number, to be with him and to participate in his mission. He gives the Twelve a share in his authority and "sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal." They remain associated for ever with Christ's kingdom, for through them he directs the Church:

As my Father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint for you that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

#552 Simon Peter holds the first place in the college of the Twelve; Jesus entrusted a unique mission to him. Through a revelation from the Father, Peter had confessed: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Our Lord then declared to him: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it." Christ, the "living stone," thus assures his Church, built on Peter, of victory over the powers of death. Because of the faith he confessed Peter will remain the unshakeable rock of the Church. His mission will be to keep this faith from every lapse and to strengthen his brothers in it.

#553 Jesus entrusted a specific authority to Peter: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." The "power of the keys" designates authority to govern the house of God, which is the Church. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, confirmed this mandate after his Resurrection: "Feed my sheep." The power to "bind and loose" connotes the authority to absolve sins, to pronounce doctrinal judgments, and to make disciplinary decisions in the Church. Jesus entrusted this authority to the Church through the ministry of the apostles and in particular through the ministry of Peter, the only one to whom he specifically entrusted the keys of the kingdom.