INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW

Matthew's Sources.

Matthew most likely used the Gospel of Mark as a source for his own Gospel. Matthew reproduces some 90% of Mark, much of it verbatim. He has edited out unnecessary words, improving the general sentence structure considerably. He improves Mark's Greek at many points. Scholars agree that it is easier to explain why and how Matthew may have redacted (edited) Mark than Mark would have Matthew.

Because of the great differences between the Gospels, it is most unlikely that the author of Matthew knew the Gospel of Luke or that the author of Luke knew the Gospel of Matthew.

The Structure of Matthew.

Five Discourses – these are the teachings Jesus gave which all end with the phrase: *"When Jesus finished all these sayings"* Matthew 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1 and 26:1.

As in the case of the Fourth Gospel, Matthew alternates the teaching discourses with narrative blocks concerning the mighty deeds of Jesus.

The discourses are the construction of the evangelist and have clearly a teaching interest:

1) The Sermon on the Mount – chapters 5-7;
2) mission directives to the twelve – chapter 10;
3) parables of the kingdom – chapter 13;
4) discipleship and discipline – chapter 18;
5) end times – chapters24-25.

B. W. Bacon suggests that Matthew intended the fivefold structure to correspond to the five books of Pentateuch with Jesus represented as a new Moses who is the five of a new law. I only pose this as a point of interest, not as a theological certainty.

Two major turning point – two pivotal points in Matthew are noted with the repeated phrase: *"from that time Jesus began"* in chapters 4:17 and 16:21. J. D. Kingsbury, followed by D. R. Bauer, has understood these phrases as indicating the basic structure of the Gospel, which he accordingly describes under the following three headlines:

1) the person of Jesus Messiah – chapters 1:1-4:16;
2) the proclamation of Jesus Messiah – chapters 4:17-16:20;
3) the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Messiah – 16:21-28:20.

Such critical junctures are important to the general shape of the story.

D. C. Allison has proposed the following general outline:

1-4	narrative	Introduction: the main character Jesus is introduced.
5-7	discourse	Jesus' demands upon Israel.

8-9	narrative	Jesus' deeds within and for Israel.	
10	discourse	Extension of ministry through words and deeds of others.	
11-12	narrative	Israel's negative response.	
13	discourse	Explanation of Israel's negative response.	
14-17	narrative	Establishment of the new people of God, the church.	
18	discourse	Instructions to the church.	
19-23	narrative	Commencement of the passion, the beginning of the end.	
24-25	discourse	The future: judgment and salvation.	
26-28	narrative	Conclusion: the passion and resurrection.	

Matthew's use of the Old Testament.

Matthew contains will over 60 explicit quotations from the Old Testament and this does not include a great many allusions. This is more than twice as many as any other Gospel. This heavy dependence on the Old Testament reflects Matthew's interest in the gospel of the kingdom as the fulfillment of the Old Testament expectations.

The importance of the quotations is theological. They are Matthew's own way of undergirding the manner in which the events of his narrative, indeed, its totality, are to be understood as the fulfillment of what God has promised in the Scriptures.

The Purpose of Matthew.

Matthew is by genre, a Gospel, an account of the life of Jesus. It is an ancient type of biography.

Matthew can be classified as:

A *Midrash* – the meaning of *midrash* is to seek or to inquire, to expound. Matthew sets forth an edifying, theological interpretation of Jesus in the form of an historic narrative.

A *Lectionary* – a composition that appointed to be read in the liturgical sense.

A *Catechesis* – given its discourses through the teachings of Jesus, the Gospel could be thought of as a work used for the edifying and discipleship.

A *Correctives* – Matthew provides correctives to a community facing serious difficulty, given its opposition to false prophets and hypocrites.

A *Missionary* work – Since Matthew proclaims Jesus as the Messiah, it would be obvious that the mission of proclaiming him to the world would end Matthew's narrative.

A *Polemic against the rabbis* – Jesus both debates and criticizes the Pharisees so frequently through the course of this Gospel that this point could hardly be missed. To Matthew, the Pharisees did not hold a proper view of Torah therefore, he struggles with their Pharisaic Judaism and offers a correct counterpart to rabbinic activity.

Matthew's Theology.

Matthew sees Jesus as the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God; he beholds the *already-not yet* ideal of that Kingdom; he proclaims Jesus as the Messiah which is a proper *Christology.* He holds to personal *righteousness and discipleship*; Matthew uphold *Law and Grace,* that Jesus kept the Law thus fulfilling it, and that the Mosaic Law ultimately was spoken and lived out by Jesus as the antecedent to the call to live out the righteousness of the Law. He also encourages believers in the Kingdom Community to support one another as division, lawlessness, and apostasy abounds within and without. He sees the *eschatology* of history and presents this in his narrative.

Date of Matthew's Gospel.

There is much debate here and one would be wise to understand how difficult it is to dogmatically place a date. That said, the dating seems to be placed at the late 60's of the first century or post 70's of the same century. The language of Matthew suggests that the temple still stands at the time of his writing but detractors for this view offer that he simply redacted the known material to fit the narrative.

Authorship.

Matthew, like all the Gospels in the New Testament, in an anonymous document. The title was affixed to the Gospel sometime in the 2nd Century. The unanimous tradition of the Church supports Matthew as the author (Papias, who received the tradition from the Elder, John, Pantaenus, Irenaeus, Origin, Eusebius, Jerome).