

## Matthew's Audience

Question:

To whom was the gospel of Matthew written?

Our Answer:

Although the gospel of Matthew does not specifically identify its audience, most authorities believe Matthew is a gospel written by a Jew, to Jews, about a Jew. Matthew is the writer, his countrymen the readers, and Jesus Christ the subject. Early church authorities support this conclusion. Irenaeus (AD 120-200), Bishop of Lyons and a student of Polycarp, wrote, "Matthew issued a written gospel among the Hebrews" and "The gospel of Saint Matthew was written for the Jews." Origen (AD 186-253), a leading theologian who is regarded by many as the "Father of Biblical Criticism," wrote that "Saint Matthew wrote for the Hebrews." The great church historian Eusebius (AD 260-340) wrote that "Matthew... delivered his gospel to his countrymen."

The complexion and content of this gospel abundantly confirm the conclusion of these early church leaders. Through a carefully selected use of terminology, as well as a series of Old Testament prophecies and quotations that would bear the greatest significance to a Jewish reader, Matthew thoroughly documents Jesus' claim to be the Messiah. His genealogy, message, and miracles all point to the same inescapable conclusion: Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ.