

Matthew's Authorship

Question:

Why is the apostle Matthew credited with authoring the gospel bearing his name?

Our Answer:

Although the gospel of Matthew does not specifically identify the apostle Matthew as its author, there exists substantial evidence that suggests he was.

The early church uniformly attributed this gospel to Matthew.

In his ecclesiastical history (AD 323), Eusebius quoted a statement by Papias (c. AD 120-130) that Matthew wrote "Logia" ("Sayings") in Aramaic. Some believe that Matthew used this abbreviated version of Jesus' sayings to write the gospel of Matthew in Greek for a larger circle of readers.

Origen (AD 186-253), a leading third century theologian and the man regarded by some to be the "father of biblical criticism," wrote "As I have learned by tradition concerning the Four Gospels, which alone are received without dispute by the Church of God under heaven: the first was written by St. Matthew, once a tax gatherer, afterward an apostle of Jesus Christ..."

In the second century, this gospel was given the title *Kata Matthaion*, "According to Matthew."

Additionally, traces of Matthew's former occupation as a "publican" (tax collector) can be seen in his gospel. For example:

Money is mentioned more often in Matthew than in any other gospel.

Additionally, rarer and more valuable coins are mentioned. Mark for example, refers to only three coins: the "mite," the "farthing," and the "penny." Luke refers to the "mite," the "farthing," and also the "pound." Matthew, however, makes mention of coins such as the "talent" which is worth sixty times as much as the pound and about eight thousand times as much as a penny. Furthermore, Matthew employs three money words that appear nowhere else in the gospels: "tribute" (*didrachmon* Mt. 17:24), "piece of money" (*tater* Mt. 17:27), and "talent" (*talenton* Mt. 18:24; 25:15, et al).

The parables of the "Talents" are recorded only in Matthew.