

Historical Jesus

Outlines and Notes

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The Historical Jesus: Select Theories

Scholar	Theory	Comments
Geza Vermes <i>Jesus the Jew</i> (1973) <i>The Religion of Jesus the Jew</i> (1993)	Jesus was a <i>hasid</i> , a charismatic Jewish holy man who did miracles of healing and exorcism.	Vermes's model of the <i>hasidim</i> is based on very late rabbinical sources; Jesus' miracles were signs of God's kingdom.
Richard A. Horsley <i>Jesus and the Spiral of Violence</i> (1987)	Jesus was a peasant prophet of social revolution, "executed as a rebel against the Roman order."	Horsley must deny that Jesus associated with tax collectors—something the Gospel writers would not have invented.
Burton Mack <i>A Myth of Innocence</i> (1988) <i>Who Wrote the New Testament?</i> (1995)	Mark created a myth based on the beliefs of the "Jesus movement," which saw him as a Jewish reformer, and the "Christ cult," which had reinvented Jesus as a divine being.	Mack thinks that "the Markan Jesus is no longer good news." He cannot explain why Jesus was killed.
F. Gerald Downing <i>Christ and the Cynics</i> (1988) <i>Cynics and Christian Origins</i> (1992)	Jesus was a wandering preacher of nonconformity, like the Cynics, advocating simple living, begging, and individualism.	Downing's view depends on a selective, question-begging use of the Q material to the exclusion of nearly all other sources.
Ben Witherington <i>Christology of Jesus</i> (1990) <i>Jesus the Sage</i> (1994)	Jesus was a Jewish sage who thought of himself as Wisdom incarnate.	Witherington's view minimizes the prophetic aspects of Jesus' speech.
John Dominic Crossan <i>The Historical Jesus</i> (1991) <i>The Birth of Christianity</i> (1998)	Jesus was a peasant philosopher-poet like the Cynics, wandering around Galilee and preaching freedom and love—a kind of first-century Jewish hippie.	Crossan relies heavily on later, apocryphal writings. He does not always follow his method of reliance on early, multiply attested traditions. His denial of the apocalyptic aspects of Jesus' teaching is indefensible.
John Shelby Spong <i>Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism</i> (1991) <i>Liberating the Gospels</i> (1996)	Jesus was simply a man "who had the courage to be himself" and whose message was essentially, "Be all that you can be." The Gospels are midrash, not history.	The Gospels are not midrash. Why would the government want a preacher of self-realization executed?
Marcus Borg <i>Jesus: A New Vision</i> (1987) <i>Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time</i> (1994)	Jesus was a charismatic Jewish peasant "spirit person," like Buddha or Lao Tzu, combining qualities of sage and prophet, who sought to reform Jewish society and was killed for it.	Why Jesus should combine such varied functions in his ministry, but not those of apocalyptic or messiah, is not clear.
John P. Meier <i>A Marginal Jew</i> (1991, 1994, 2001)	Jesus was Jewish but does not fit neatly into any existing type of Jew; his ministry was focused not on social reform but the imminent coming of God's kingdom.	Meier seeks to show that a secular historical study of Jesus can yield fairly traditional conclusions about Jesus; but there are limits.

The Jesus Seminar Rules

“The Seven Pillars of Scholarly Wisdom” (with an added eighth)¹

1. The man Jesus is not the Christ of the creeds (begs the question).
2. The Gospel of John is an historically unreliable, Greek reinterpretation of Jesus (20th-century research has demonstrated the Jewishness of the Gospel).
3. Matthew and Luke both borrowed heavily from Mark (likely, though not quite everybody agrees).
4. Matthew and Luke also used another source, one that has not survived, called “Q” (again, probably true, but whether it was written or oral and what it included are matters of speculation).
5. Jesus did not proclaim an impending judgment or cataclysm, although his followers mistakenly thought he did: “The search for the authentic words of Jesus is a search for the forgotten Jesus.” (The Seminar here admits they think they know Jesus better than his immediate disciples. Warnings of judgment on Jerusalem appear in all of the Gospels, in Jesus’ parables, sayings, etc.)
6. Because Jesus lived in an oral-media culture, not a print-media one, his teachings were in the form of short, pithy sayings (aphorisms) and short stories (parables); long discourses, arguments, or prophecies are inauthentic. (The Gospel writers lived in the same culture, and they wrote!)
7. The burden of proof is on those who would claim that anything in the Gospels is historically true; i.e., the Gospels are assumed to be unhistorical fictions unless it can be proved otherwise. (This is scholarly foolishness in any other context; Luke, for example, clearly claims to be writing history, Luke 1:1-4; 3:1-2.)
8. “Beware of finding a Jesus entirely congenial to you.” (Actually, the Jesus Seminar is supremely guilty of violating this principle!)

Specific assumptions made by the Seminar about Jesus and the Gospels²

1. Any words attributed to Jesus “from the fund of common lore” or from the Old Testament are regarded as suspect. (This means that Jesus is not allowed to quote the Old Testament or to use proverbial statements from his own culture.)
2. Any references by Jesus in the Gospels to his dying for sins, rising from the dead, and the like, were put in his mouth by the early church. (This assumes what is at issue, whether Jesus did die for our sins and rise from the dead.)
3. Any words attributed to Jesus that relate to the period after Jesus’ death (e.g., concerning persecution of Jesus’ followers, the fall of Jerusalem, the preaching of the gospel to all nations) were creations of the church. (Thus, Jesus is assumed not to be a prophet, or even to have foresight.)
4. Jesus’ words are assumed to be surprising and shocking, upsetting the status quo. (Some of his sayings do fit this criterion, but to limit his authentic sayings to this category is unwarranted; it assumes Jesus never agreed with his contemporaries.)
5. Jesus never offered to heal people, and never claimed to be the Son of God, the Messiah, the Son of Man, or claimed any other exalted status. (Then where did the early church get the idea that this crucified peasant was a divine figure? Again, the Seminar assumes what it should be trying to prove.)

¹Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*, A Polebridge Press Book (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 2-5.

²*Ibid.*, 22-32.

The Gospels as Ancient Greco-Roman Biographies

Analysis of Chapters 5-9 of Richard Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?* (2nd ed., 2004) by Rob Bowman*

Features (ch. 5)	Greco-Roman <i>Bioi</i> (chs. 6-7)	Synoptic Gospels (ch. 8)	Gospel of John (ch. 9)
A. Opening Features			
Title	<i>On the Life of Moses; Lives of the Caesars</i>	“The gospel of Jesus Christ” (Mark 1:1); “according to...”	“According to John” (of the same type as the Synoptics)
Opening	Subject’s name in first words (<i>Moses, Cato</i>); prologue	Luke’s prologue (1:1-4); Mark & Matt. start with <i>Jesus</i>	Jesus, identified as the Logos, is the subject from 1:1
B. Subject			
Analysis of verbs’ subjects	Agésilau (9.5%); Euripedes (26%); Cato (15%)	Jesus in Mark (24%), Matthew (17%), Luke (18%)	Jesus (20%)
Allocation of space	Varies: 37% of <i>Agésilau</i> on the Persian campaign; 9 chaps. in <i>Agricola</i> on one day	15% of Matt. and Luke, 19% of Mark, focus on his last days and death	20% on Jesus’ last days (plus another 13% for the Upper Room Discourse)
C. External Features			
Mode of representation	Usually prose narrative (e.g., <i>Atticus, Moses, Agricola</i>)	Prose narrative	Prose narrative
Size and length	<i>Agésilau</i> , 7,500 words; <i>Moses</i> , 32,000; <i>Cato</i> , 16,500	Matthew, 18,300 words; Mark, 11,300; Luke, 19,400	15,600 words
Structure or sequence	Loosely chronological framework from birth or youth or entrance into public life, interrupted by topical material, and usually concluding with death	Loosely chronological framework from birth (Matt., Luke) or entrance into public life (Mark), interrupted by topical material, ending with death, burial, resurrection	Chronological framework from preexistence (Prologue) and entrance into public life, interrupted by topical material, concluding with death, burial, resurrection
Scale	Focusing on one individual	Focused on Jesus throughout	Focusing on Jesus throughout
Literary units	Stories, sayings, speeches	Stories, sayings, speeches	Stories, dialogues, speeches
Use of sources	Both oral and written sources (<i>Moses</i> 1.4); author’s firsthand testimony (<i>Agésilau</i>)	Both oral and written sources (Luke 1:1-4)	Uncertain sources [claims to be based on eyewitness testimony, 21:24-25]
Methods of characterization	Subject’s character shown mainly by deeds, words; sometimes authors editorialize	Jesus’ character shown by his deeds, words (cf. Acts 1:1)	Jesus’ character shown by his deeds, words [cf. 20:30-31]
D. Internal Features			
Setting	Geographical locations where the subject is and goes	Geographical locations where Jesus is and goes	Geographical locations where Jesus is and goes
Topics/motifs	Ancestry, youth (often <i>not</i> birth), deeds (<i>Epamonidas</i> 1.4), death, burial	Ancestry, birth (Matt., Luke), boyhood (Luke), deeds, death, burial (all)	Eternity rather than ancestry and birth; deeds, death, burial
Style	From high-brow (Xenophon) to popular (Lucian)	Rough but competent (Mark), good (Matt.), literate (Luke)	Comparable to popular biographies
Tone/mood/attitude/values	Usually respectful and serious (<i>Agricola</i> , etc.); occasionally light-hearted (<i>Euripedes</i>)	Reverential and serious, with occasional light moments	Reverential and serious throughout
Quality of characterization	Stereotyping of subject as virtuous (not always flawless)	Each is a “portrait” of Jesus both “real” and stereotypical	Portrayed as divine (“unreal”) and yet very much human too
Social setting and occasion	Usually upper class, but can have wider interest	Debatable and uncertain [but see Luke 1:3]	Cannot be specific, but likely a wide intended readership
Authorial intent and purpose	Praise; exemplify; inform; entertain; preserve memory; instruct; apologetic/polemic	Primarily inform, preserve memory, instruct, apologetic/polemic; others also apply	Primarily inform, instruct, apologetic/polemic [add: preserve memory, 21:24-25]

*Material added in brackets is mine.

Select Problems in Gospel Criticism

I. The Synoptic Problem

Matthew (1068 verses)	Mark (661 verses)	Luke (1149 verses)
Triple Tradition About 540 verses of Mark		
Matthew-Mark: About 90 verses of Mark		
	Mark-Luke: About 10 verses of Mark	
Matthew-Luke (Q) About 200 verses		Matthew-Luke (Q) About 200 verses
Matthew alone (M) About 300 verses	Mark alone: About 20 verses	Luke alone (L) About 500 verses

Note: Totals do not add up exactly because the number of verses for the same passage differs from one Gospel to another. Also note that scholars count parallel verses somewhat differently.

A. Basic Facts

1. Passages in Common
 - a. Of Mark's 11,025 words, all but 304 are paralleled in Matthew (97%) and all but 1,282 are paralleled in Luke (88%). The material shared by Matthew and Mark but not by Luke is considerable (Mark 6:17-29, 45-52; 7:1-37; 8:1-10; 9:11-13, 43-47; 11:20-26; 15:17-20). Very little material is shared by Mark and Luke that is not also found in Matthew (Mark 1:23-28; 12:41-44). The material unique to Mark amounts to only about 20 verses (Mark 3:20-21; 4:26-29; 7:31-37; 8:22-26; 14:51-52).
 - b. Approximately 200-235 verses—very roughly, one-fifth of the total in each—are common to Matthew and Luke but are not found in Mark. Matthew's versions of these texts tend to be longer (4,290 words) than Luke's (3,559 words). By common convention in modern scholarship, this material is called Q.
 - c. There is substantial material unique to Matthew (some 300 or more verses) and Luke (some 500-560 verses).
2. Words in Common
 - a. In common passages the Synoptics agree verbatim about 50% of the time.
 - b. In some passages the verbatim agreement is nearly total.
3. Order of Events in Common
 - a. In general, Matthew and Luke present events in the same order as Mark, although Luke departs from Mark's order more than Matthew does.
 - b. Matthew and Luke tend *not* to follow each other's order in the material that they have in common with each other but not with Mark (Q).

B. Most Common Literary Dependence Theories

1. Two-Source Hypothesis (*Mark* → *Matthew/Luke*; Streeter; Stein; the dominant view)
 - a. **Markan priority**: Matthew and Luke both used Mark (or some version of Mark)
 - b. **Q**: Matthew and Luke both used an unknown (probably written) source, dubbed Q
2. Mark Without Q (*Mark* → *Matthew* → *Luke*; Farrer; Goodacre)
 - a. Mark was first, but there was no Q.
 - b. Luke used Mark and Matthew.
3. Two-Gospel Hypothesis (*Matthew* → *Luke* → *Mark*; Griesbach; Farmer)
 - a. Matthew is held to have been written first.
 - b. Luke's main source was Matthew.
 - c. Mark was a digest of Matthew and Luke.
4. Augustinian View (*Matthew* → *Mark* → *Luke*; Wenham)
 - a. Matthew was first; Mark used Matthew.
 - b. Luke used Matthew and Mark.

Note: The following tables use the NRSV translation.

TABLE 1

Matthew 24	Mark 13	Luke 21
<p>¹⁵So when you see</p> <p>the desolating sacrilege standing in the holy place, as was spoken of by the prophet Daniel</p> <p>(let the reader understand),</p> <p>¹⁶then those in Judea must flee to the mountains;</p> <p>¹⁷the one on the housetop must not go down</p> <p>to take what is in the house;</p> <p>¹⁸the one in the field must not turn back to get a coat.</p> <p>¹⁹Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days!</p> <p>²⁰Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a sabbath.</p> <p>²¹For at that time there will be great suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.</p> <p>²²And if those days had not been cut short, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.</p> <p>²³Then if anyone says to you, 'Look! Here is the Messiah!' or 'There he is!'--do not believe it.</p> <p>²⁴For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce great signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.</p> <p>²⁵Take note, I have told you beforehand.</p>	<p>¹⁴But when you see</p> <p>the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be</p> <p>(let the reader understand),</p> <p>then those in Judea must flee to the mountains;</p> <p>¹⁵the one on the housetop must not go down</p> <p>or enter the house</p> <p>to take anything away;</p> <p>¹⁶the one in the field must not turn back to get a coat.</p> <p>¹⁷Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days!</p> <p>¹⁸Pray that it may not be in winter.</p> <p>¹⁹For in those days there will be suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, no, and never will be.</p> <p>²⁰And if the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he has cut short those days.</p> <p>²¹And if anyone says to you at that time, 'Look! Here is the Messiah!' or 'Look! There he is!'--do not believe it.</p> <p>²²False messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, the elect.</p> <p>²³But be alert; I have already told you everything.</p>	<p>²⁰When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near.</p> <p>²¹Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those inside the city must leave it, and those out in the country must not enter it; ²²for these are days of vengeance, as a fulfillment of all that is written.</p> <p>²³Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days!</p> <p>For there will be great distress on the earth and wrath against this people...</p> <p>[Luke 17]</p> <p>²³They will say to you, 'Look there!' or 'Look here!' Do not go, do not set off in pursuit.</p>

TABLE 2

Matthew 12	Mark 2	Luke 6
<p>¹At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the sabbath;</p> <p>his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat.</p> <p>²When the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath."</p> <p>³He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry?"</p> <p>⁴He entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him or his companions to eat, but only for the priests.</p> <p>⁵Or have you not read in the law that on the sabbath the priests in the temple break the sabbath and yet are guiltless? ⁶I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. ⁷But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless.</p> <p>⁸For the Son of Man is lord of the sabbath."</p>	<p>²³One sabbath he was going through the grainfields;</p> <p>and as they made their way his disciples</p> <p>began to pluck heads of grain.</p> <p>²⁴The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?"</p> <p>²⁵And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food?"</p> <p>²⁶He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions."</p> <p>²⁷Then he said to them, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath;</p> <p>²⁸so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath."</p>	<p>¹One sabbath while Jesus was going through the grainfields,</p> <p>his disciples</p> <p>plucked some heads of grain, rubbed them in their hands, and ate them.</p> <p>²But some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?"</p> <p>³Jesus answered, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry?"</p> <p>⁴He entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and gave some to his companions?"</p> <p>⁵Then he said to them, "The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath."</p>

TABLE 3

Matthew 6	Luke 11
⁹ Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.	² When you pray , say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. ³ Give us each day our daily bread. ⁴ And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.

TABLE 4

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: A SYNOPTIC TABLE

CODES

L	Luke only	MP	Matthew and Mark but not Luke
M	Matthew only	PL	Mark and Luke but not Matthew (no occurrences)
P	Mark only (for Peter)	T	Matthew, Mark, and Luke (triple tradition)
Q	Matthew and Luke, not Mark *		[Text not in best manuscripts]

Code	Description	Matthew	Mark	Luke
Q	Jesus on the mount, taught disciples	5:1-2		6:12
Q	Blessed are the poor	5:3		6:20
Q	Blessed are those who mourn/weep	5:4		6:21b
M	Blessed are the meek	5:5		
Q	Blessed are those who hunger	5:6		6:21a
M	Blessed are the merciful, pure, peace	5:7-9		
Q	Blessed are the persecuted	5:10-12		6:22-23
L	Woe to the rich, well-fed, laughing...			6:24-26
T	You are the salt of the earth	5:13	9:50	14:34-35
M	You are the light of the world	5:14		
Q	No one hides a lamp under a basket	5:15		11:33
M	Let your light shine before others	5:16		
M	I did not come to abolish the Law	5:17-20		
M	Don't be angry, be reconciled	5:21-24		
Q	Make friends before you get to court	5:25-26		12:58-59
M	Lustful looking is adultery of heart	5:27-28		

M	Losing hand or eye better than hell	5:29-30		
M	It was said, give certificate of divorce	5:31		
Q	Whoever divorces makes her adulterer	5:32		16:18
M	Make no oath at all	5:33-37		
M	You heard, Eye for eye	5:38		
Q	Turn cheek, give shirt, lend freely	5:39-40, 42		6:29-30
M	Forced to go one mile, go two	5:41		
M	Love your neighbor, hate your enemy?	5:43		
Q	Love your enemies and pray for them	5:44		6:27-28
Q	Love like sons of God should	5:45		6:35
Q	Loving only brothers not good enough	5:46-47		6:32-33
L	Don't lend only to those who will pay			6:34
Q	Be perfect/merciful like your Father	5:48		6:36
M	Pray and give alms in secret	6:1-8		
L	Disciples ask Jesus how to pray			11:1
Q	Lord's prayer	6:9-13		11:2-4
MP	Forgive, your Father will forgive you	6:14	11:25	
M	If you don't forgive, the Father won't	6:15	*[11:26]	
M	Don't fast to be noticed	6:16-18		
M	Don't store up treasures on earth	6:19		
Q	Store up treasures in heaven	6:20-21		12:33-34
Q	The eye is the body's lamp	6:22-23		11:34-36
Q	You can't serve God and money	6:24		16:13
Q	Don't worry, seek God's kingdom	6:25-33		12:22-31
M	Don't worry about tomorrow	6:34		
L	The Father will give you the kingdom			12:32
Q	Don't judge, lest you be judged	7:1-5		6:37-38, 41-42
M	Don't throw pearls before swine	7:6		
Q	Ask, seek, knock; the Father is good	7:7-11		11:9-13
Q	Treat people as you would be treated	7:12		6:31
Q	Enter through the narrow gate/door	7:13-14		13:24
M	Beware of wolves in sheep's clothing	7:15		
Q	Trees are known by their fruit	7:16-18, 20		6:43-44
M	Trees with no good fruit to be burned	7:19		
Q	Why do you call me Lord?	7:21		6:46
M	Lord, Lord, didn't we...	7:22		
L	Lord, open up... We ate and drank...			13:25-26
Q	Depart from me, you evildoers	7:23		13:27
Q	Build your house on the rock	7:24-27		6:47-49

C. Markan Priority

1. Matthew has almost all of what is in Mark, and Luke has most of what is in Mark as well. It is hard to know why Mark would omit so much of either Matthew or Luke if he was using either or both as sources.
2. Where Matthew or Luke or both have the same material as Mark, they often seem to have a more polished wording:
 - a. Improved grammar or style; less colloquialism (e.g., Mark 5:9-10; Luke 8:30-31)
 - b. Lack of Aramaic expressions (e.g., Mark 5:40-41; Matt. 9:25; Luke 8:54)
 - c. Less redundancies (e.g., Mark 2:25; Matt. 12:3; Luke 6:3 [see table 2 above])
 - d. Apparent elimination of “difficulties”
 - (1)The Abiathar reference in Mark 2:26 (see table 2 above)
 - (2)Matthew’s version of Jesus’ statement about God alone being good (Matt. 19:16-17; cf. Mark 10:17-18 and Luke 18:18-19)

D. Was There a Q Document?

1. The many close verbal parallels between Matthew and Luke in the material common only to them would seem to require one of two conclusions:
 - a. Matthew and Luke used a common source (or, possibly, two slightly different versions of a common source); this is what is commonly called Q
 - b. One of the two Gospels made use of the other (or, possibly, of an earlier version of the other) as a written source (if so, usually Luke is said to have used Matthew)
2. There are many places where it seems unlikely that Luke used Matthew, e.g., Luke’s version of the Lord’s Prayer (see Table 3 above).
3. Cautions about Q
 - a. The source Q might be an oral tradition or a written document; we don’t know
 - b. Since we don’t have any version of it, hypothetical reconstructions of the contents and especially of the omissions or theological perspectives of Q should be avoided

II. Matthew

A. When Was Matthew's Gospel Written?

1. Dates between AD 50 and 90 have been seriously proposed
2. Main question: whether it was written before or after the fall of Jerusalem (AD 70)
3. The Olivet Discourse clearly refers to the fall of Jerusalem (24:2), but as a prophecy; Matthew never refers to the event as having already happened
4. Matthew's references to what Jews in the Jerusalem area said (27:8; 28:15) suggest, though probably do not prove, that he was writing before Jerusalem had fallen
5. The dual emphasis on the Jewish/OT context of Jesus' ministry and on the mission to the Gentiles is most easily explained if the Gospel was written before AD 70 (since after AD 70 most Christians were Gentiles, not Jews)
6. Early traditions ascribe the Gospel to the apostle Matthew; if this tradition is correct, it suggests a date before AD 70 to be more likely.
7. If one accepts Markan priority, ca. AD 60 is the earliest realistic date for Matthew.

B. Did Matthew write the Gospel?

1. Since the Gospel is anonymous and the author makes no claims for himself, it is not necessary or essential to defend Matthew's authorship.
2. Early church tradition clearly supported Matthew as the author.
3. Some internal evidence suggests the tradition is correct:
 - a. Only in this Gospel is Matthew explicitly described as having been a tax collector; when Mark and Luke refer to him as a tax-collector, they call him Levi (Matt. 9:9; 10:3; cf. Mark 2:14; 3:18; Luke 5:27; 6:15)
 - b. Only in this Gospel do we have the following passages, all of which focus on money:
 - (1)the account of Peter catching the fish with the "stater," a coin to pay two persons' temple tax (Matt. 17:24-27)
 - (2)the parable of the servant who was forgiven a large debt but refused to forgive a much smaller one (Matt. 18:21-35)
 - (3)the parable of the laborers paid the same wages for working different amounts (Matt. 20:1-16)
 - (4)the account of the soldiers being bribed with money to lie about Jesus' empty tomb (Matt. 28:11-15)
 - c. Elsewhere Matthew often gives the most precise references to money (e.g., Matt. 10:9; cf. Mark 6:8; Luke 9:3; Matt. 22:19; Mark 12:15; Luke 20:24).
4. In sum, it seems likely that Matthew wrote this Gospel, probably in the 60s.

C. Why Was Matthew's Gospel Written?

1. Settling disputes within the church?
 - a. Mainstream liberal scholarship tends to see Matthew's Gospel as written to settle various disputes in the late first-century church, such as:
 - (1)the nature of Christ

- (2)the place of the Jewish Law
- (3)the meaning of the Lord's Supper
- (4)the proper formula for baptism
- b. Problems with this approach to Matthew
 - (1)This idea is usually connected to the claim that the writer of the Gospel put words on the lips of Jesus to settle theological disputes within the church—that is, the idea here is that Jesus may not have actually said many of these things.
 - (2)There is no evidence that any of the churches entertained the belief that Jesus was a merely human rabbi, or that Matthew sought to refute false beliefs within the church about Christ.
 - (3)Matthew's presentation of Jesus' teaching about the Law seems to be more relevant to refuting Jewish criticisms of Jesus as a Law-breaker than settling internal disputes within the church about the Law.
 - (4)The fact that nothing is said in Matthew about circumcision, which was so controversial in the church throughout the apostolic era, implies that Matthew was not writing to settle church disputes but to set forth Jesus' life and teachings in their OT Jewish context.
 - (5)Matthew seems more concerned to explain the significance of Jesus' death than to settle any controversy about the meaning of the Lord's Supper.
 - (6)There is no evidence that the church ever debated the question of a "proper" baptismal formula; the triune reference in Matt. 28:19 is not presented as a liturgical formula, though of course it can be used as such.
- 2. Vindicating Jesus as the Messiah
 - a. The traditional view: Matthew's Gospel was written primarily for two related purposes:
 - (1)to convince Jews that Jesus was the Messiah
 - (2)to strengthen the faith of Jewish believers in Jesus
 - b. The traditional view would seem to explain many things about the Gospel:
 - (1)the prominence of the genealogy showing Jesus to be David's son (1:1-17)
 - (2)the greater use in this Gospel of the title "Son of David" (13x compared to 3x in Mark, 4x in Luke, 0x in John)
 - (3)the frequent line, "that what was spoken by the prophet might be fulfilled" (13x in Matthew; cf. similar expressions 2x in Mark, 3x in Luke, 6x in John)
 - (4)the exceptionally frequent references to the OT
 - (5)the expression "kingdom of heaven," found only in Matthew, was used because Jews commonly used euphemisms for "God" (cf. Matt. 26:64)
 - (6)the emphasis on the fact that Jesus was not negating the OT Law despite his sharp criticisms of the Pharisees (especially chs. 5, 23)
 - (7)the emphasis on explaining why the gospel was taken to the Gentiles (Jews were more likely to see this as an objection to belief in Jesus)
 - (8)the reference to and historical refutation of the most common Jewish explanation for the Resurrection (Matt. 28:11-15)

III. The Gospel of John

A. The Purpose of John's Gospel

1. John's stated purpose (20:30-31)
 - a. "That you may believe" — aimed primarily at non-Christians or "seekers"
 - (1) John wants to convince or persuade people to believe.
 - (2) John, no less than Paul, is an apostle of faith.
 - b. "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God"
 - (1) The title "the Christ" shows that John does not use "Christ" merely as a proper name but as a title, "the Messiah" (note John 1:17, 20, 25, 41)
 - (2) The title "Son of God" may have been understood as a synonym for Christ by Jesus' disciples at first (John 1:34, 49), but John seeks to show that the Son of God is indeed fully God (1:1, 18; 5:17-18; 20:28).
 - (3) John's stated purpose here indicates that this is the one book of the Bible that specifically has as its main goal to tell us *who Jesus is*.
 - c. "that believing you may have life in his name"
 - (1) The whole Gospel presents Jesus as source of life (e.g., 1:4; 11:25-26; 17:3).
 - (2) The whole Gospel also emphasizes faith in Jesus (e.g., 1:12; 3:16; 11:26-27).
2. Apparent secondary apologetic purposes
 - a. To oppose an early form of Gnosticism (so Irenaeus), e.g., Docetism (from Gk. *dokein*, "to seem"); note the emphasis on the humanity of Christ and the reality of his death (John 1:14; 19:33-35)
 - b. To correct or oppose those who regarded themselves as followers of John the Baptist (note 1:6-8, 19-21; 3:26-30; 10:40-42)
 - c. To bridge the cultural and philosophical gap between Jews and Greeks in support of belief in Jesus (this is evident especially in the use of the *logos* in John 1:1-18)

B. The Historical Intent of the Gospel

1. The Gospel claims to be based on the eyewitness testimony of an apostle.
 - a. John 21:20-25 attributes the whole Gospel to the testimony of an unnamed "disciple whom Jesus loved."
 - (1) Verse 24a explicitly attributes the writing of "these things" to "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (cf. v. 20).
 - (2) Verse 24b seems to speak for a group (cf. also 1:14, 16), while in v. 25 the author writes in the first person singular. From 1:14 it may be concluded that the "we" or 21:24b cannot be a post-Johannine "school" (since they would not have "beheld his glory"), and in fact *included* John.
 - (3) From these verses it may be concluded that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is the principal author, while allowing for the possibility that there were others involved with him in the process of putting the Gospel into final form.
 - b. Although "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is unnamed, it is clear that he was the apostle John, the son of Zebedee (see table on next page).
 - c. John especially insists that he was an eyewitness to the death of Jesus (19:35).

- d. Irenaeus, writing c. 200, reported that Polycarp, a bishop who knew John personally, said that John “issued” (*exedoke*, “gave out”) the Gospel. This would be consistent with John as the principal author of the Gospel.

“The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved” <i>Process of Elimination:</i>	
21:20; 13:23-25; cf. Mark 14:17	<i>One of the eleven disciples</i> (Not Judas Iscariot, obviously!)
21:2, 7	Not Simon Peter Not Thomas Not Nathanael (probably = Bartholomew) <i>A fisherman, hence:</i> Not Matthew
1:35-41	<i>If the unnamed disciple here:</i> Not Andrew Not Philip
1:45-49; 11:16; 14:5, 22; 20:24-28	<i>Since he evidently avoids giving his name:</i> Not “Judas not Iscariot” (Judas son of James = Thaddeus)
21:23; cf. Acts 12:2	Not James the son of Zebedee (<i>since he did not live long</i>)
<i>Candidates left:</i> John son of Zebedee James son of Alphaeus Simon the Zealot <i>Additional Clues:</i>	
13:23-25; 20:2-8; 21:2, 7, 20-23; probably 1:35-42; cf. Luke 22:8; Acts 1:13; 3:1-4, 11; 4:13; 8:14; 12:2-3; etc.	The disciple is closely associated with Peter, as is John in Luke and Acts
19:25-26; cf. Matt. 27:56	Jesus’ aunt was evidently John’s mother, possibly why he was the beloved disciple
18:15-16	If this is the beloved disciple, he seems to know the high priest, unlikely for most of the Galilean disciples, but not for John if he was related to Jesus and thus to John the Baptist, who was of a priestly family (Luke 1:5-7).

Who Is “the Disciple Whom Jesus Loved”?					
	JAMES, JESUS’ BROTHER	LAZARUS	MARY MAGDALENE	THOMAS	JOHN SON OF ZEBEDEE
Peter’s close associate	Only much later	No	No	No	Yes
Male	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
One of the Twelve	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Not called by name in Gospel	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Lived longer than Peter	No	?	?	?	Yes
Already an adult when Jesus died	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
From Galilee	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

2. There is significant evidence to support the Gospel’s claim to be historical fact based on eyewitness testimony.
 - a. The Gospel is firmly rooted in the Jewish cultural milieu of Palestine before the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.
 - (1) Israel Abrahams, an orthodox Jewish scholar at Cambridge, stated in 1924, “To us Jews, the Fourth Gospel is the most Jewish of the four!”³
 - (2) Gary Burge summarizes the evidence for the Jewishness of the Gospel.⁴
 - (a) References to the OT which assume familiarity with it (e.g., John 3:14, cf. Num. 21:9)
 - (b) Jesus’ rabbinical-style arguments (e.g., John 10:34-36)
 - (c) References to several Jewish feasts (three or four Passovers, Tabernacles, Dedication [Hanukkah])
 - (d) Evidence that the Gospel was written either originally in Aramaic (C. C. Torrey, C. F. Burney) or, more likely, in Greek by a person whose first language was Aramaic (so Matthew Black)
 - (e) Accurate details about the geography and buildings in and around Jerusalem and throughout Palestine before AD 70 (5:1-2; 8:20; 10:23; 11:18; 19:17, 20)
 - (f) The older scholarly opinion promoted by Rudolf Bultmann and others that the Gospel of John was an essentially Greek, mythological interpretation of Jesus, has lost almost all support among Johannine scholars today.

³Quoted in Gary M. Burge, *Interpreting the Fourth Gospel*, Guides to New Testament Exegesis 5 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 20.

⁴*Ibid.*, 20-21.

- b. Although many biblical scholars still support a date for the Gospel c. AD 95, more and more are accepting a date c. AD 66.
 - (1) The Gospel seems to reflect a time when the Temple still stood (2:19-20; 5:2 [note the present tense]; 11:47-52). This seems to be the strongest argument.
 - (2) Even if John was about 15 when Jesus died in AD 33, this would make John in his late 70s in AD 95. (Of course, he might have lived that long.)
 - (3) If John is seen as independent (even ignorant) of the Synoptics, this would strongly support an early date. (This is a much disputed question.)
 - (4) The language and cultural forms of the Gospel have much in common with the Dead Sea Scrolls (all of which were written before AD 70).
- 3. Common reasons given for denying an historical intent and accuracy to the Gospel do not bear close scrutiny.
 - a. It is rarely asserted that the Evangelist was intending to write fraudulent history. Rather it is commonly claimed that he was creating stories about Jesus to teach lessons for his own time. But John distinguishes clearly between events occurring before Jesus' resurrection and those occurring after it (2:22; 12:16), and claimed to be telling about only *some* of the things Jesus did (20:30:21:25).⁵
 - b. The Jesus Seminar and other biblical scholars commonly assume that the theological discourses of Jesus in the Gospel of John are too dissimilar in style from the parables and other teaching forms of Jesus in the Synoptics. But this argument exaggerates the differences and overlooks important evidence, especially the so-called "bolt from the Johannine blue" (Matt. 11:25-27).

⁵Thomas D. Lea, "The Reliability of History in John's Gospel," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38 (1995):394.

When Were the Gospels Written?

	Conservative Dating	Non-Conservative Dating
Matthew	40s-60s, with most favoring 60s	80s
Mark	40s-60s, especially late 50s or early 60s	Late 60s to about 70
Luke	Late 50s to early 60s	80s
John	80-95, with some favoring late 60s	90s, but 80-85 possible
Textbooks & References	Guthrie; Carson, Moo, and Morris	Achtemeier, et. al.; Brown; Ehrman; Funk; <i>ABD</i> ; <i>OCB</i>

In short: Ignoring the earliest dates proposed, Mark is dated 25-40 years after Jesus' death; Matthew and Luke are dated 30-60 years after Jesus' death; and John is dated 50-70 years after Jesus' death. (Jesus died in 30 or 33.) Thus, all of the Gospel writers could have been alive at the time of Jesus' ministry.

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Apocryphal/Noncanonical Writings

Name	Date	Language	Source/Copies	Theology	Contents
Didache	100-120 (but some say 50-80)	Greek	11th-c. manuscript; Latin, Coptic translations; fragments (4th)	Orthodox	Moral instruction; baptism, prayer, Eucharist; church leaders, discipline
G. of the Nazareans (or, of the Hebrews)	late 1st/early 2d?	Aramaic	Brief quotes in Origen (Gk., 3d), Jerome (Lat., late 4th), margins of NT manuscripts	Nazarean or Ebionite	Edited version of Matt.? Miracles, teaching, death, burial
G. acc. to the Hebrews	2d (first half?)	Hebrew? Aramaic?	Brief quotes in Clement of Alex. (Gk., ca. 200) and Origen (Gk., 3d), Didymus the Blind (Gk., 4th) and Jerome (Lat., late 4th)	Nazarean	Described as a gospel; baptism, teaching, and resurrection; story about James
G. of the Ebionites	2d (early?)	Greek	Brief quotes in Epiphanius (c. 375)	Ebionite	Harmony of the Synoptics; no virgin birth; vegetarianism
G. of Peter	late 1st to mid-2d	Greek	Fragments, mainly one late fragment	Docetic	Trial, death, and resurrection
Egerton Gospel	100-150	Greek	Fragments dated ca. 150	Orthodox	Teaching and healing excerpts, all but one closely paralleled in NT
G. of the Egyptians	2d (first half?)	Greek	Brief quotes from Clement of Alex. (Gk., ca. 200)	Gnostic	Androgyny; focus on Salome
Coptic G. of Thomas	2d (disputed)	Greek or Syriac (Perrin)	Coptic 4th-cent. translation (one Nag Hammadi copy); a few Greek fragments	Gnostic	114 short passages with sayings
G. of the Savior	2d (?)	Greek	6th-c. or 7th-c. Coptic manuscript with holes	Orthodox (?)	Passion (prayer, heavenly vision, talking to cross)
Infancy G. of Thomas	mid to late 2d?	Greek or Syriac	6th-c. Syriac ms.; longer Gk. mss. from 14th-16th c.	Docetic	Child Jesus kills, raises the dead, is viewed as divine
Shepherd of Hermas	2d (mid?)	Greek	Incomplete Gk. ms. bound with Codex Sinaiticus (4th c.) ; full Latin version	Orthodox (sort of)	Visions, moral teaching, parables; offbeat but divine view of Christ
Proto-G. (or Infancy G.) of James	2d (mid to late?)	Greek	Partial 3d/4th c. Greek ms.; about 130 Gk. mss., mostly 10th c. or later; Syriac, Coptic, et. al. versions	Orthodox	Mary's miraculous birth, perpetual virginity implied; Jesus' birth
G. of Judas	2d (mid to late)	Greek	Coptic 3d/4th cent. trans., with some material missing	Gnostic	Jesus reveals secrets to Judas
G. of Truth	2d cent.	Greek	Nag Hammadi Coptic translation (3d/4th)	Gnostic	Gnostic reworking of John's motifs; no events; Jesus not named
G. of Mary	2d (late?)	Greek	Two 3d-c. Gk. fragments; partial 5th-c. Coptic ms.	Gnostic	Mary Magdalene (?) imparts secret knowledge after Jesus "departs"

G. of Philip	3d (?)	Greek	Nag Hammadi Coptic translation (3d/4th)	Gnostic	Virgin birth and resurrection not true; Magdalene was Jesus' lover; sacramentalism
Pseudo-Clementine Homilies/ Recognitions (incl. <i>Ascents of James</i>)	3d or 4th, from 2d c. sources	Greek	<i>Homilies</i> , medieval Gk. mss.; <i>Recognitions</i> , Gk. lost; 5th.-c. Syriac partial version of both	Ebionite or similar	John the Baptist sect; James leads Jerusalem church, Peter the leading traveling apostle
Acts of Philip	4th	Greek	14th-c. copy, likely of a 4th-c. copy (not yet in English)		Vegetarianism, celibacy; talking leopard, goat; slain dragon; women in men's clothes, hold church office

New Testament Writings	Apocryphal Writings
Matthew (50-85; anonymous; disputed)	Gospel of the Nazoreans (early 2d cent.)
Mark (50-70; anonymous; disputed)	Gospel of Peter (early 2d cent.)
Luke (58-85; anonymous; disputed)	Infancy Gospel of Thomas (early 2d cent.)
	Gospel of Mary (2d cent.)
John (66-100; unnamed disciple; disputed)	Coptic Gospel of Thomas (early 2d cent.)
	Gospel of Truth (2d cent.)
Acts of the Apostles (62-90; anonymous; disputed)	Acts of Thecla (ca. 200)
Paul's undisputed epistles (49-62)	3 Corinthians (late 2d cent.)
	Letter to the Laodiceans (late 2d cent.)
Paul's disputed epistles (52-90)	Letter of Peter to James (early 3d cent.)
General epistles (45-100)	
Revelation (66-96)	Secret Book of John (mid-2d cent.)
	(Coptic) Apocalypse of Peter (3d cent.)
Proto-Orthodox, Extracanonial Writings	
1 Clement (ca. 96)	Epistle of Barnabas (ca. 135)
Didache (ca. 100)	Epistle of the Apostles (mid-2d cent.)
Shepherd of Hermas (mid-2d cent.)	Apocalypse of Peter (mid-2d cent.)

Note: Dates shown for NT books represent a range of views (see p. 16). Dates for the apocryphal books reflect the majority of scholarly opinion (which can vary, notably for the Coptic Gospel of Thomas). Even with the latest dates for the NT writings, it is evident that they are the earliest Christian documents we have.

Josephus's Description of Jesus

Traditional Text with Possible Interpolations Italicized

Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, *if it be lawful to call him a man*, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. *He was the Christ*, and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; *for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him*. And the tribe of Christians so named from him are not extinct at this day.

Jewish Antiquities 18.3.3

Reconstructed Text with Possible Interpolations Omitted

At this time there appeared Jesus, a wise man. For he was a doer of startling deeds, a teacher of people who receive the truth with pleasure. And he gained a following among many Jews and among many of Gentile origin. And when Pilate, because of an accusation made by the leading men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him previously did not cease to do so. And up until this very day the tribe of Christians (named after him) had not died out.

Core Historical Facts in the Gospel of Mark

Virtually all historians agree that the following factual information reported in Mark is historically highly probable to (virtually) certain:

- John the Baptist's ministry in the Jordan river
- Jesus coming from the home town of Nazareth
- John's baptism of Jesus
- John's imprisonment
- Jesus gathering followers from the common people of Galilee, including Simon (Peter), James, John, and others, and leading them on an itinerant ministry
- Jesus being reputed during his itinerant ministry to be someone who was casting out demons and healing people
- Jesus touching and ministering to people typically regarded as unclean or wicked (lepers, tax-gatherers, prostitutes, Roman officials, etc.)
- Jesus telling stories (parables) to illustrate his messages
- Jesus being rejected by most of the people of his home town
- Jesus having a mother named Mary and several brothers (James, Joseph, Judas, Simon) and sisters
- John the Baptist being killed by order of Herod (Antipas)
- Jesus going to Jerusalem for the Passover
- Jesus driving out the moneychangers
- Jesus speaking about the destruction of the Jerusalem temple
- Jesus being arrested, tried before Pilate, and executed by crucifixion
- Jesus' death cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

This is a considerable core of historical fact, whatever one thinks of various details of the Gospel narratives.

Criteria of Authenticity

1. The Criterion of Embarrassment

Examples:

- Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist (Mark 1:4-11)
- Jesus not knowing the day or hour of his return (Mark 13:32)

Cautions:

- The reverse is not a valid criterion of inauthenticity, i.e., a statement that the church would not find embarrassing is not thereby proven inauthentic.
- Critics sometimes apply this criterion inconsistently to prove that a “heavy-handed redactor” introduced contradiction into the Gospels. For example, if the final redactor of John inserted the idea that Jesus did not perform baptisms (John 4:2) because he was embarrassed by the idea, why didn’t he take the supposedly embarrassing statements in chapter 3 out?

2. Criterion of Dissimilarity

Examples:

- Jesus calling himself “the Son of Man”
- Jesus speaking about the “kingdom of God”

Cautions:

- The reverse is not a valid criterion of inauthenticity, i.e., similarities with the church or first-century Judaism do not indicate inauthenticity.
- We often can’t be sure what would resonate with first-century Jews and Christians and what would not.

3. Criterion of Multiple Attestation

Examples:

- Jesus’ words of institution at the Last Supper (Mark 14:22-25 par.; 1 Cor. 11:23-26)
- Jesus’ cleansing of the temple (in all four Gospels)

Cautions:

- The reverse is not a valid criterion of inauthenticity: occurrence in only one source does not prove something inauthentic (e.g., Abba in Mk 14:36)

Did Jesus Do Miracles?

General Arguments in Support of Jesus' Miracles as Historical

- Stories of supposed miracle workers were not common in the period; the most often cited parallel is Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius*, written in the third century.
- Jewish thought did not usually associate miracles with the Messiah or with prophets (Moses, Elijah, and Elisha in the OT being the most notable exceptions).
- Non-Christian sources acknowledge that Jesus was a miracle worker; most notably, Josephus (who called Jesus' miracles *paradoxôn*).
- Jesus' critics accused him of doing his miracles by demonic power, or sorcery (Matt. 12:24 par.; see also the Babylonian Talmud; Celsus), and thus acknowledged that he did at least some miracles.
- Jesus' miracles are attested in all four Gospels, including the hypothetical Q source (material common to Matthew and Luke but not in Mark).
- Certain sayings of Jesus that are demonstrably authentic show that Jesus confidently claimed to be doing miracles.
 - **Luke 7:18-23 (Matt. 11:2-6)**. This "Q" saying must be authentic since it implies a possible criticism of John the Baptist (if the passage were fiction, we would expect a faithful response from John). The saying shows that Jesus was believed in his lifetime to be healing the blind, lame, and deaf, and even raising the dead.
 - **Luke 11:19-22 (Matt. 12:27-29; Mark 3:27)**. The early church was not likely to have invented a saying in which Jesus refers to other Jewish exorcists; and the association of exorcism with God's kingdom does not fit the early church setting.

Examples of Specific Miracles

- **Healing Peter's mother-in-law** (Mark 1:29-31; Matt. 8:14-15; Luke 4:38-39). The story is very brief and does not follow standard miracle-story forms. Further, it mentions a specific person, and we know Peter was married (1 Cor. 9:5).
- **Bethsaida blind man** (Mark 8:22-26). The early church is not likely to have created a story in which the healing took place in two stages or in which Jesus used spittle.
- **Raising Jairus's daughter** (Mark 5:21-43; Matt. 9:18-26; Luke 8:40-56).
 - The Gospels rarely name the individuals who approach Jesus for healing (Bartimaeus is the only other exception).
 - The early church is not likely to have made up a story of Jesus granting healing to the child of a synagogue official.
 - The Aramaic *Talitha cum* evidently expresses a vivid memory of Jesus' actual words at that occasion (the Gospels rarely report Jesus' Aramaic words).

The Jesus of Modernism vs. the Jesus of Matthew

A Study of Matthew 11:20-30

Who was Jesus? What did he do, and what was his message? Many scholars and religious leaders in the church today claim to find a liberal Jesus in such passages of the Gospels as the Sermon on the Mount. Since the Sermon is part of the Gospel of Matthew (chapters 5-7), we will here contrast this liberal or “modernist” view of Jesus with the view of Matthew—which, we will argue, was also the view of Jesus himself. Our primary text will be Matthew 11:20-30, but we will refer to other passages in Matthew, including the Sermon on the Mount.

Modernism	Matthew
Jesus did not preach hell, or if he did, it was only a symbolic condemnation of the rich and powerful oppressors of the common folk.	Jesus preached an eternal judgment on all who failed to repent, regardless of their class or position (11:20-24).

- The judgment was compared to judgments that came on whole cities in the OT (vv. 20-24), not just their religious or political leaders.
- Jesus spoke harshly of that generation as a whole (v. 16; cf. 12:39-45).
- Since Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom had already received a temporal judgment, Jesus must have been speaking of an actual *future* judgment that comes *after death*.
- Jesus healed the servant boy of a Roman centurion, whose faith he said exceeded that of his own Jewish people (8:5-13); that is, Jesus granted healing to an authority figure of the great oppressor, Rome!
- Jesus also healed the daughter of a synagogue ruler (9:18-19, 23-26).
- The suggestion that these words did not reflect Jesus’ considered opinion is shown to be false by the fact that Jesus had said almost exactly the same thing earlier (10:15) and spoke repeatedly of a coming judgment (e.g., 5:22; 7:22-23; 12:36; 13:41-42).

Modernism	Matthew
Jesus was not sure about his divine calling or purpose and expressed doubts and worries about failing.	Jesus knew exactly what he was doing and was confident that his Father’s purpose was being realized through him (11:25-26).

- Jesus warned people not to stumble over the fact that he did not fit their preconceptions of the Messiah (vv. 6, 19). This does not sound like a person who is himself unsure of his role.
- The ease and intimacy with which Jesus addressed God as “Father” (v. 25) shows that he was quietly confident about his relationship with God.
- Jesus’ penchant for beginning sentences with “Amen I say to you” (Matt. 5:18; 6:2, 5, 16; 8:10; 10:15, 23, 42; 11:11; 13:17; 16:28; 17:20; 18:3, 13, 18; 19:23, 28; 21:21, 31; 23:36; 24:2, 34, 47; 25:12, 40, 45; 26:13, 21), a dogmatic affirmation of the truth of what he said before he said it, demonstrates anything but a lack of certainty!

Modernism	Matthew
Jesus did not claim to be the Messiah, let alone the divine Son of God; these honors were bestowed on Jesus by the church long after his death. Of the Gospels, only John presents Jesus as considering himself to be God.	Jesus avoided the term “Messiah” because of its political implications, but he clearly claimed to fulfill OT Messianic expectations and to be the unique, divine Son of God (11:27).

- Jesus accepted the designation “the Coming One,” pointing to the Messianic works prophesied by Isaiah as proof (vv. 3-6, cf. Is. 35:5-6; 61:1).
- Since the NT writers freely used the title “Christ” (Greek for Messiah) for Jesus, almost as another name for him, the reluctance of Jesus throughout the Gospels to use this title for himself is almost certainly authentic, and shows that the Gospels were not simply putting exalted titles into Jesus’ mouth.
- Jesus claimed to be “the Son of Man” (v. 19), a Messianic figure spoken of in Daniel 7:13-14. That this title was not put on Jesus’ lips by the church after his death is proved by the fact that Jesus is virtually the only person in the NT who used the title (elsewhere only in Acts 7:56; Rev. 1:13).
- Jesus does not call himself “the Son” only in John: he does it here in Matthew also (v. 27) and in the parallel passage in Luke (10:22). Nor is this the only such passage in the Synoptic Gospels (see also Matt. 24:36//Mark 13:32; and Matt. 28:19).
- It is not merely the title “the Son” that shows that Jesus thought of himself as God, but the fact that as the Son Jesus claims to possess a unique knowledge of the Father and an exclusive authority to reveal the Father (v. 27; cf. John 14:6). This text is so similar to the way Jesus speaks in the Gospel of John that scholars often call Matthew 11:27 “the bolt from the Johannine blue”!

Modernism	Matthew
Jesus’ message was not about himself, but rather it was about following his teaching and example by seeking to challenge and correct injustice and to bring freedom.	Jesus’ message was that freedom was to be found in a relationship with him, not in any religious system or social program, however noble (11:28-30).

- Jesus’ call is not merely to imitate him or follow his instructions (though we should do both), but rather, “*Come to me . . . and I will give you rest*” (v. 28). This rest consists in the knowledge of God which only Jesus could give (v. 27).
- Jesus’ call here again clearly shows that he thought of himself as God, speaking as God did in the OT (Ps. 95:9-11; Is. 45:22; Jer. 6:16; 31:25, 34).
- Judaism in Jesus’ day encouraged Jews to submit to the yoke of the Law (cf. Ecclesiasticus 51:23-27 [Apocrypha]); Jesus replaces the Law *with himself* (v. 29).
- In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made himself the issue when he said, “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely *on my account*” (Matt. 5:11). Jesus also claims in the Sermon to be the “Lord” who will determine who will “enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 7:21-23).

The Beatitudes: Announcements of the Messianic Kingdom

Beatitude (Matt. 5)	Messianic Hope (Old Testament)	Fulfilled in Jesus (Matthew)	Fulfilled in Us (Matthew)
The poor in spirit will receive the kingdom (3)	Good news for the poor (afflicted) of God's messianic reign (Ps. 34:18; 37:14; 119:1; Is. 52:7; 57:15; 61:1)	Jesus humbled himself to serve all, then received the kingdom (20:25-28; 28:18)	Jesus heals and forgives unclean, sinners, Gentiles (8:1-13; 9:2-13)
The mourners comforted (4)	Those mourning sin will be comforted (Ps. 119:136; Is. 40:1; 61:2; Jer. 31:13)	Jesus grieved to take God's wrath for our comfort (26:27-28, 37-38)	Jesus heals, raises the dead, as signs of his power to forgive (9:1-25)
The gentle (meek) will inherit earth (5)	Those who wait meekly for God will inherit the land (Ps. 37:11); Is. 57:13	Jesus was meek (11:29) and is now Lord of heaven and earth (28:18)	Jesus' disciples meekly proclaim his kingdom (28:19-20)
Those hungry and thirsty for righteousness will be filled (6)	Those redeemed by God will not hunger or thirst again (Is. 49:10; 55:1-2; Jer. 31:12, 14)	Jesus was baptized as a sign of his purpose to fulfill all righteousness (3:15)	Jesus feeds many; gives his body and blood to forgive us (15:32-16:12; 26:26-29)
The merciful will obtain mercy (7)	The gracious will find God gracious (Ps. 18:25; Prov. 14:21)	Jesus died unjustly to obtain mercy for us (27:4, 19, 24-25)	Jesus' disciples expected to forgive (6:14-15)
The pure in heart will see God (8)	Only the pure in heart can be in God's presence (Ps. 24:3-5; Is. 6:1-7)	Jesus was forsaken by God so we might be restored to God (20:28; 27:46)	Jesus calls us to purity inside, not outside (15:1-20)
Peacemakers will be God's children (9)	Messiah will bring peace, first by suffering (Is. 9:6-7; 53:5)	Jesus refused the way of war (26:47-56), proving himself the Son (5:44-45)	Jesus' disciples must love their enemies, as God does (5:43-48)
The persecuted will receive the kingdom (10)	Messiah will be persecuted to restore God's rule (Ps. 69:7-8; Is. 51:7; 53:7-8)	It was through the cross that Jesus received the kingdom (16:21-28)	Jesus' disciples should expect persecution (10:16-33)

Major Messianic Passages Echoed in the Beatitudes

1. *Psalm 18:25-28*

A psalm of David, indisputably messianic (cf. title, vv. 43, 50)

- The kind find God to be kind (v. 25a), cf. Matt. 5:7
- The pure see God to be pure (v. 26a), cf. Matt. 5:8
- God saves the afflicted (*anawim*) people, not the proud (v. 27), cf. Matt. 5:3
- God lights David's lamp (v. 28), cf. Matt. 5:14-15

Messianic reversal: David celebrates his military victory over his enemies (vv. 17-19, 37-42), but Messiah will conquer through his own suffering at the hands of his enemies

2. *Psalm 24*

A psalm of David

- The one to approach God must:
 - have a pure heart (v. 4a), cf. Matt. 5:8
 - not have a proud soul (v. 4b), cf. Matt. 5:3
 - receive blessing from God (v. 5a), cf. all the beatitudes
 - receive righteousness from God (v. 5b), cf. Matt. 5:6
- The earth is the Lord's, and the Lord is the King (vv. 1, 7-10), cf. Matt. 5:3, 5

David, as the king of Israel, aspires to fulfill these requirements to enter God's presence; his son, the Messiah, fulfills them perfectly and is also the King of glory!

3. *Psalm 34*

A psalm of David (with possible messianic application)

- God hears the poor (v. 6), cf. Matt. 5:3
- Blessed is the person who takes refuge in the Lord (v. 8)
- Seek and pursue peace (v. 14), cf. Matt. 5:9
- God is near the brokenhearted, the crushed in spirit (v. 18), cf. Matt. 5:3

Messianic reversal: David escapes death with no broken bones (v. 20), but Jesus' suffering of death with no broken bones (John 19:36) makes him like the Passover lamb (Ex. 12:46; Num. 9:12)

4. *Psalm 37*

A psalm of David (regarded as messianic by at least some first-century Jews)

- "The humble will inherit the land" (v. 11), quoted in Matt. 5:5 ("land" and "earth" translate same Hebrew and Greek words; the Messiah's reign was to be worldwide)
- "Those blessed by him will inherit the land" (v. 22), gives us the rest of Matt. 5:5
- The afflicted and gracious are the righteous and will have their hunger satisfied (vv. 14-26), cf. Matt. 5:3, 6-7)

Since this psalm focuses on the Messiah's people, not the Messiah himself, there is no Messianic reversal here

6. *Isaiah 9:1-9*

A clearly messianic prophecy (cf. 9:7)

- The light will come to Galilee (vv. 1-2), cf. Matt. 4:13-16
- Instead of gloom and anguish, joy and gladness (vv. 1, 3), cf. Matt. 5:4
- The wonder child will bring endless peace (vv. 6, 7), cf. Matt. 5:9
- The child will establish an everlasting kingdom (v. 7), cf. Matt. 5:3, 10
- The child's kingdom will be founded on righteousness (v. 7), cf. Matt. 5:6
- The proud and arrogant of heart will not enjoy this kingdom (v. 9), cf. Matt. 5:3

7. *Isaiah 49-61*, especially 49:8-13; 52:7-9; 53:3-8; 55:1-12; 57:13-18; 60:19-61:9

Prophecies of the "Servant of the LORD"

- No more hunger or thirst (49:10; 55:1-2), in context for God's pardon and compassion (55:7), cf. Matt. 5:6
- God comforts the afflicted (40:1; 49:13; 52:9), cf. Matt. 5:4
- Good news preached on the mountains (cf. Matt. 5:1) of peace and blessing in God's reign or kingdom (52:7), cf. Matt. 4:17; 5:3, 9
- The servant suffers sorrow, grief, affliction, and oppression for our peace (53:3-8), cf. Matt. 5:3-4, 9-10
- Those who take refuge in God will inherit the land (cf. Ps. 37); they will be "contrite and lowly of spirit," and their mourning will be turned to comfort, joy, and peace (57:13-18), cf. Matt. 5:3-5, 9
- By God's light all the people will be righteous and possess the land forever; the Anointed One brings good news to the afflicted, binds up the brokenhearted, comforts those who mourn with gladness and joy by God's blessing (60:19-21; 61:1-3, 7, 9)

Did Jesus Predict His Death and Resurrection?

1. The multiple attestations of Jesus' predictions concerning his death and resurrection
 - a. The triple tradition, Matt. 16:21-28; 17:22-23; 20:17-19//Mark 8:31-9:1, 30-32; 10:32-34//Luke 9:22-27, 44-45; 18:31-33
 - b. "Q" sayings
 - (1)The saying comparing Jesus to Jonah—though only Matthew refers to Jonah's three days in the whale (Matt. 12:39-40//Luke 11:29-32)
 - (2)The lament over Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37-39//Luke 13:34-35)
 - c. A saying unique to Luke, 17:25
 - d. The saying about Jesus rebuilding the temple after three days, John 2:19-22, cf. Matt. 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58; 15:29
 - e. Paul's account of the institution of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-26); see below
2. The different forms in which Jesus is shown to have expected his death and resurrection
 - a. Straightforward sayings: Luke 9:22 par., etc.
 - b. Riddles: especially John 2:19
 - c. Parables: the wicked vinegrowers (Matt. 21:33-46//Mark 12:1-12//Luke 20:9-19)
 - d. Prayers: Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane (see below)
 - e. Actions
 - (1)Mary's anointing of Jesus (Matt. 26:6-13//Mark 14:3-9//John 12:3-8)
 - (a)The report that Jesus predicted that Mary's deed would be remembered wherever the gospel was preached is a strong claim to historicity
 - (b)The passage includes a "hard saying" (see below)
 - (2)Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26-29//Mark 14:22-25//Luke 22:15-20//1 Cor. 11:23-25)
 - (a)The multiple attestation in the Synoptics and Paul support the account
 - (b)Paul states that he is repeating a tradition (1 Cor. 11:23)
3. The "hard sayings" embedded in these contexts are unlikely to originate from the church
 - a. Jesus' rebuke to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan!" (Matt. 16:23//Mark 8:33)
 - b. Jesus' statement, "The poor you always have with you" (John 12:8)
 - c. Jesus' prayer, "Not my will, but your will, be done" (Matt. 26:39, 42//Mark 14:36//Luke 22:42)
 - (1)Critics often assert that the saying cannot be historical because Jesus' disciples were asleep when he would have said this and so no one could have heard it; but why could Jesus not have told them about it after his resurrection?
 - (2)The idea that Jesus might not have willed the same thing as the Father is unlikely to have been invented by Mark
 - (3)Mark reports Jesus using the Aramaic *Abba* at this very point, the only place it occurs in the Gospels
 - d. John's account of Jesus' discourse about eating his flesh and drinking his blood (John 6:51-71) reflects an awareness in the early church that the words of institution of the Lord's Supper were difficult sayings

Resurrection Apologetic in 1 Corinthians 15

A. It was part of the church's original message (vv. 3-4, 11)

1. Paul says he “received” the confession he presents here; evidently this is an early Christian confession that he learned from the church shortly after his conversion, thus dating it to within a few years at most of the event.
 - a. The stylized pattern (“that Christ...and that he...and that he...and that he...”) and the technical term “received” (often used for the transmission of a tradition) suggest that this is taken from an early Christian confession.
 - b. From Galatians we can infer that Paul must have learned this confession from Peter and James on his first visit to them three years after his conversion (Gal. 1:18-19).
 - c. Other chronological clues in Galatians (1:21; 2:1) and Acts (9:30; 15:2) show that Paul’s visit with Peter and James must have taken place no more than four or five years after Jesus’ death and resurrection.
2. The argument is both historical and theological. If the earliest Christians proclaimed that Jesus rose from the dead, that would tend to confirm it as fact and not later legend; and if the earliest Christians proclaimed it, then it is of the essence of the Christian faith.

B. It was attested by multiple witnesses (vv. 5-10).

1. Paul’s list is not exhaustive of all the appearances, because his main point is to show that there can be no authentic Christianity without the Resurrection.
 - a. The first and last witnesses mentioned are Cephas and Paul himself — two of the persons whom the Corinthians had improperly elevated (1:12). (Apollos was not an apostle and did not see the risen Jesus.)
 - b. Other than the one to the 500-plus, all of the appearances are to apostles.
2. Paul emphasizes the factual nature of these appearances, e.g., by noting that most of the witnesses are still alive (v. 6b).
3. Most of these appearances are confirmed outside Paul’s writings.
 - a. To Cephas (Luke 24:34)
 - (1) Paul’s use of the Aramaic *Cephas* instead of the Greek *Peter* shows that Paul knew him personally.
 - (2) Almost all critics of Christianity acknowledge that Peter at least thought or claimed to have seen Jesus.
 - b. To the Twelve — obviously a formulaic reference to the body of the Twelve, who at that time numbered eleven (Luke 24:33, 36; John 20:19-29)
 - c. To more than 500 — this number does not appear elsewhere, but the appearance could be that of Matthew 28:16 (if others were present)
 - d. To James — a Resurrection appearance is implied by his leadership of the apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18)
 - e. To all the apostles — this could refer to the last visit to all the apostles, probably Acts 1:4-11 (cf. v. 15)

- f. To Paul himself — the appearance is a major theme of the Book of Acts (especially 9:1-22; 22:3-16; 26:9-18).
 - (1) That Paul saw Jesus last and well after the other apostles was a point of humility for Paul (v. 8), but it is important historically because it rules out mass hysteria or hallucination.
 - (a) His separate experience obviously cannot be part of a mass delusion.
 - (b) Since Paul had not been a follower of Jesus and the appearances had stopped for some time, there is no reason psychologically for him to hallucinate such an appearance.
 - (2) Paul admits having persecuted the church before he saw the risen Jesus (v. 9) — an even bigger point of humility for him, but one that leaves no room to doubt his sincerity.

NATURALISTIC EXPLANATIONS OF THE RESURRECTION EVIDENCE

Explaining the Evidence for the Empty Tomb

- I. Jesus was buried in Joseph's tomb.
 - A. Jesus' body left the tomb.
 1. Jesus was buried in the tomb but had not died, and he was later revived.
 - a. Jesus revived long enough to convince his disciples he was the Messiah.¹
 - b. Jesus revived, recovered, and traveled outside of Palestine.²
 2. Jesus was buried in the tomb and was dead, and his body was later removed.
 - a. Jesus' body was removed to stage an apparent resurrection.
 - (1) The body was removed by humans to stage an apparent resurrection.
 - (a) Jesus' body was removed by some of his disciples.³
 - (b) Jesus' body was removed by someone looking just like Jesus.⁴⁻⁵
 - (2) The body was removed by aliens to stage an apparent resurrection.⁶
 - b. Jesus' body was not removed to stage an apparent resurrection.
 - (1) Jesus' body was removed by one or more Jewish authorities.
 - (a) Jesus' body was removed by Joseph to another burial site.⁷
 - (b) Jesus' body was removed by the Jewish authorities.⁸
 - (2) Jesus' body was removed by the Roman authorities.⁹
 - B. Jesus' body did not leave the tomb.
 1. The women went to the wrong tomb.¹⁰
 2. No one went to look at or for Jesus' dead body.^{3, 15-17}
- II. Jesus was not buried in Joseph's tomb.
 - A. Jesus was not crucified.
 1. Jesus was not crucified because he never existed.¹¹
 2. Someone else was crucified by mistake.¹²
 - B. Jesus was crucified and died, but was not buried in Joseph's tomb.
 1. Jesus' body was buried somewhere else.¹³
 2. Jesus' body was not buried.¹⁴

Explaining the Evidence for the Appearances

- I. Jesus did appear to his disciples, because he had never died.^{1-2, 12}
- II. Jesus did not appear to his disciples.
 - A. Someone looking just like Jesus appeared to his disciples.
 1. It was his identical twin.⁴
 2. It was his doppelganger.⁵
 - B. No one seeming to be Jesus appeared to Jesus' disciples.
 1. The appearances were fiction.
 - a. The disciples themselves made up the appearances stories.³
 - b. The appearances stories arose later.
 - (1) The stories were a later deliberate fabrication.¹¹
 - (2) The stories gradually developed as a legend.¹⁵
 2. The disciples thought they saw Jesus but actually saw no one.
 - a. The disciples were hallucinating.¹⁶
 - b. The disciples had a religious visionary experience.¹⁷

See the next page for the footnotes, which catalog these naturalistic explanations.

Cataloguing the Naturalistic Explanations

1. **The near-death swoon theory:** Jesus revived long enough to convince his disciples that he was the Messiah, but then died shortly thereafter (e.g., Schonfield's *The Passover Plot*).
2. **The survival swoon theory:** Jesus survived the crucifixion and left the country, traveling to France, Tibet, or some other distant land (e.g., Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*).
3. **The disciples did it:** The disciples stole the body and made up at least some of the appearances stories (first reported as an explanation in Matthew 28:11-15).
4. **The identical twin theory:** Jesus' identical twin, switched at birth, comes to Jerusalem the day of Jesus' death, steals the body from the tomb, and passes himself off to the disciples as Jesus (Robert Greg Cavin).
5. **The doppelganger theory:** A variation of the identical twin theory, but the "twin" is actually unrelated to Jesus (no known advocate).
6. **Aliens did it:** Aliens stole the body of Jesus, perhaps intending to start a religion around Jesus (unknown who advocates this theory).
7. **Joseph's temporary burial theory:** Joseph of Arimathea placed Jesus' body in his own tomb as a temporary measure and moved it over the weekend (e.g., Jeffery Jay Lowder).
8. **The Sanhedrin moved the body:** The Jewish authorities authorized the removal of Jesus' body to another burial site (unknown who advocates this theory).
9. **The Romans moved the body:** Pilate had the body moved to another burial site (no known advocate).
10. **The wrong-tomb theory:** The women went to the wrong tomb by mistake (Kirsopp Lake).
11. **Jesus never existed:** The story of Jesus being crucified, died, and buried was all taken from some myth or concocted as a fiction (e.g., G. A. Wells).
12. **Someone else was crucified:** Someone else was crucified in Jesus' place, and either Jesus' disciples misunderstood and thought he had risen from the dead, or the truth was later lost and Christians developed legends about Jesus dying and rising from the dead [see #15] (so Islam).
13. **Unknown burial theory:** Jesus' body was never buried in Joseph's tomb, but was buried at some other, unknown location (unknown advocates).
14. **No burial theory:** Jesus' body was not buried, or at least not decently buried, so that his body was destroyed by the elements or devoured by wild animals; the belief that Jesus had appeared to his disciples arose from their own experiences [see #16, #17] or as a later legend [see #15] (e.g., Crossan).
15. **Legend theory:** The story of Jesus' resurrection and appearances arose as a later legend; this theory must be correlated with an alternative explanation for the empty tomb [##1-2, 7-14] (widely held).
16. **Hallucination theory:** The disciples hallucinated their experiences of seeing Jesus; must be combined with an explanation for the empty tomb (e.g., Allegro).
17. **Subjective vision theory:** The disciples had some sort of religious visionary experience of seeing Jesus; must be combined with an explanation for the empty tomb (widely held).

The Resurrection: Evidences and Explanations	
Evidences for the Empty Tomb	Evidences for the Appearances
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent accounts in the Synoptics and John • Women are admitted to have found the tomb empty before the men • Paul's account in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 presupposes that an empty tomb (or at least an empty grave) was part of the church's earliest belief • Early Jewish polemic claimed that the disciples stole the body (Matt. 28:11-15), thus conceding the empty tomb 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent accounts in the Gospels • Women are admitted to have seen Jesus alive before the men • Paul confirms several of the appearances mentioned in the Gospels • Paul's epistles show that Jesus' earliest disciples from the beginning said that Jesus had risen • Paul tells us firsthand of his encounter with Jesus • Jewish expectations did not include the Messiah's death and resurrection before the Last Day
Theories Admitting the Empty Tomb	Theories Admitting the Appearances
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The women went to the wrong tomb by mistake. (And the men didn't catch this?) • The disciples stole the body. (And fooled everyone?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appearances were hallucinations. (All of them? to individuals and to groups?) • The Romans crucified the wrong man. (And no one caught this?)
Theories Admitting Both	
<p>Jesus just passed out on the cross and revived later in the cool dampness of the tomb. (And later ran away to France with Mary Magdalene?)</p>	<p>Jesus' identical twin, switched with another baby at birth, came to Jerusalem just as Jesus was being killed, and decided to steal his body and impersonate Jesus. (Is this a better explanation or a movie plot?)</p>

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