

DID MATTHEW WRITE THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW?

The apostle Matthew did not write the gospel that bears his name.

The oldest testimony that supposedly claims he did write it comes from Eusebius (Bible Dictionary, page 140) who quoted Papias. But Eusebius stated that Papias was stupid. This proves that Papias was the only person saying it for if he were not Eusebius would have referred to somebody he could trust. Papias meant a book called the Sayings of the Lord which could not have been our present Gospel of Matthew but would have been the words of Jesus minus the deeds. You would not call a book like Matthew the Sayings of the Lord when it was stories about Jesus. Catholics were so alarmed at this that they tried to “explain” that Papias called the Matthew gospel Sayings of the Lord for he was writing a commentary on the words of the Lord and was only interested in the sayings recorded in the gospel. So to please the Catholics and Christians we are to think that he just called it that for it was only the writings he cared about. But the sayings of Jesus often mean nothing or anything when taken out of their context. Therefore, Papias was not focusing on the sayings only if he had the full gospel. Some sayings out of it were all he had and could have had. This is what he proclaimed to be from Matthew. It was not our gospel and the gospel was not well-known then.

Tradition says that the gospel meant by Papias was the first one. Until recently, most orthodox Christians held that Matthew was written before the other three which are Mark and Luke and John. Whatever Papias had was not Matthew’s work. The real Matthew would not have said that it was the first but a forger would. The tradition that Matthew was the first has been definitively refuted so what else was Papias wrong about? If Matthew had written the gospel, he would have been remembered a bit better.

Papias declared that the work he attributed to Matthew was written in Aramaic and translated into Greek. It is known that this is false for the text gives no hint of being a translation into Greek from Aramaic. Commonsense says the Gospel was written in Greek and then translated into the less common tongue of Aramaic.

If a book emerged from a place where an apostle was known to be active and looked divinely inspired it would only have been natural for Christians to suppose that the apostle wrote it. But objective people need better grounds than that.

The gospeller wrote as if he was not there when any of the events he records happened. A man who wanted to bring people to the faith would say if he were there for he would want his gospel to be his testimony. He would have written that we were leaving not that they were leaving meaning the apostles at Matthew 9:32. He is saying that he was not an apostle and that is stronger evidence than any tradition that says that he was the apostle Matthew. So, it should be ignored.

If Matthew wrote it one would expect to read mostly things that are different from the other gospels. But he used Mark. At times he even tried to correct Mark. Mark said that God hardens the heart but Matthew changed this to say people harden their own. This shows that he either denied that Peter supervised Mark or that Peter was an authority implying that he was not an apostle himself.

Matthew was a tax collector – a legalised and professional liar and thief (Matthew 9:9-13). If he wrote the gospel would he have revealed that and given no evidence of a change of heart? A liar and a thief cannot make a witness for God. He writes as if Matthew were a different person. He had no need to hide his identity if he was a preacher of the word. He wrote like a novelist and made no effort to prove that his version was the truth. The Christians say he had no need to for the audience who would have heard the gospel read out to them would have recognised it as the truth but that is speculation – nobody knows who or if anybody heard the gospel before the time a pack of lies about Jesus would have got easy acceptance. He would not downgrade his own experience of the resurrection by concentrating on other people’s visions and the collective ones. He does not tell us what his experience taught him or what it was like. Strange witness!

In the parables, the author goes into detail about sums of money like somebody that had a lot of dealings with money might do through habit (The Unauthorized Version, page 128). Is this an indication that Matthew or Levi the tax collector wrote the book? It could easily indicate that Zacchaeus or a banker or the fisherman’s treasurer wrote the book. Most importantly the author is saying that Jesus not him was the one who was pedantic about sums of money.

Matthew like Mark and John would have been dead by the time the gospels were written. The way the supernatural is used to rationalise any incoherence in the scriptures by Christians will make us surprised if some of them don’t start claiming that they were raised from the dead to write the gospels!