

In my previous post I showed that the claim that Matthew, the tax-collector, was the author of the Gospel of Matthew (as we continue to call it) cannot be traced earlier than about 180 CE. It is not found in Justin, who lived in Rome in 150 CE and who quotes the Gospel - along with Mark and Luke - without indicating who wrote them. And the evidence of Papias (120-140 CE) is more than just ambiguous: he actually does not appear to be referring to *our* Gospel of Matthew when he says that the disciple Matthew collected the sayings of Jesus in the Hebrew language.

In this post I want to give two reasons for thinking that the Gospel was not in fact written by Jesus' disciple Matthew (and at every point it needs to be remembered that the Gospel does not *claim* to be written by Matthew; quite the contrary, not only is it anonymous: it speaks of Matthew as one of the characters in the story in the third person).

FIRST point. According to the Gospel of Matthew (chapter 9), Matthew the tax-collector was a Palestinian Jew. As such, his native language was Aramaic. That makes it highly unlikely that he could have written this book.

To begin with, apart from the books written by the extremely highly literarily elite Josephus, we don't have any literary books composed in written Greek by any Palestinian Jews of the first century. Zero. And as I will be showing in a moment, this book was certainly composed in Greek.

Relatedly, as I have stressed before on this blog, the vast majority of Palestinian Jews in this period were illiterate - probably around 97%. The exceptions were urban elites. There is nothing to suggest that Matthew, the tax collector, was an urban elite who was highly educated.

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