



# NEW TESTAMENT BACKGROUND COMMENTARY

A NEW DICTIONARY OF WORDS, PHRASES  
AND SITUATIONS IN BIBLE ORDER



## W. HAROLD MARE

**MENTOR**





This book is dedicated to

Elizabeth P. Mare  
and  
Maria Deutschmann



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**Dedicatory Foreword**  
**W. Harold Mare**  
**(1918-2004)**

The Rev. Dr. William Harold Mare faithfully served Christ and His church as a preacher, teacher, writer, and archaeologist for over 60 years. Born in Portland, Oregon on July 23, 1918 he attended Wheaton College (B.A., 1941 and M.A., 1946), Faith Theological Seminary (B.Div., 1945), and the University of Pennsylvania (Ph.D., 1961).

Dr. Mare was ordained in 1944. During his ministry he served as a pastor in Arden, Delaware. (1945-46); as an instructor at Faith Theological Seminary (1946-53); as the founding pastor of the First Bible Presbyterian Church in Denver, Colorado (1953-60); and as pastor of Faith Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, North Carolina (1960-63).

Dr. Mare was a founding trustee of Covenant Theological Seminary and joined the faculty in 1963. He served as Professor of New Testament until retirement in 1984. After his retirement, Dr. Mare continued to teach as an emeritus professor at Covenant Seminary until his death in 2004 while doing archaeological excavations in Jordan. As a colleague, Dr. Mare insisted that I call him “Harold,” but he was my seminary professor first and I always felt a bit cheeky if I didn’t address him as “Dr. Mare”. Dr. Mare’s great passion was the study of Biblical Archaeology. He served as director and professor for the Near East School of Archaeology in Jerusalem in 1963 and was a leader of the Near East Archaeological Society. His many books, articles, and lectures helped both students and scholars better interpret the history and language of Scripture. In 1980, Dr. Mare became director of the excavation at Abila of the Decapolis, in Jordan. He organized continuing digs at the site for over 20 years. Covenant Theological Seminary now houses the W. Harold Mare Archaeology Institute, a museum and research lab home to hundreds of artifacts from Abila and other Holy Land sites.

New Testament backgrounds remained Dr. Mare’s passion throughout life because of his commitment to understand and confirm the truths of scripture. His observant eyes read forgotten history in the dust and dirt, in the shards and debris, that still powerfully evidence the



reliability of God's Word. Harold Mare was most at home among such relics of the long-past days of the Middle East. The Lord's calling him home from that ancient land is a special blessing recognized by friends and family alike.

W. Harold Mare leaves a legacy of faith for his family, his friends, his colleagues, and his many students through his contributions to Biblical Archaeology. He will be long remembered for the simple faith that he unabashedly applied with great intellect and energy to the conundrums of geological sediment and fragmented artifacts. The Lord blessed us by providing this man who never lost his childlike delight in uncovering the goodness and glory of the gifts of the Father in whose arms "Dr. Mare" now rests.

Bryan Chapell,  
President and Professor of Practical Theology,  
Covenant Seminary,  
St. Louis, Missouri, USA





## Preface

The author of this book desires to make available to its readers a variety of background information for the books of the New Testament, information which can help the readers to understand the Bible better. There are study Bibles published which give some historical background, but in this commentary I have given detailed information on important biblical linguistic nuances, cultural settings, historical information, and results of archaeological excavations as they relate to the biblical story, cities, and locations; biblical cross-references are plentiful, and many bibliographical sources are cited for the reader's study and research.

The author has had the valuable help of his assistant, Maria Deutschmann, who has spent many long hours typing and re-typing this manuscript. We have labored to make sure there are no mistakes in the many details given in this text, but, of course, the author is responsible for any errors which may have slipped through.

I also want to give thanks for my beloved wife, Elizabeth Mare, who recently went to be with the Lord (May 11, 2002), who patiently stood by me as I labored over the earlier sections of this book.

I express my gratitude, too, to my colleague, Dr. David Chapman, Professor of New Testament, Covenant Seminary, who has reviewed my manuscript and has given me valuable suggestions.

I trust that this *New Testament Background Commentary* will be used of the Lord to help many readers understand the Bible better.

W. Harold Mare  
Professor Emeritus of New Testament,  
Covenant Theological Seminary,  
St. Louis, Missouri, USA



# Matthew



### **Author**

Although there is no place in Matthew where Matthew or any other person is named as the author of the first Gospel, the consensus of the early church was that the author was the Apostle Matthew, and earliest textual witnesses give testimony to Matthew as the author by their use of the title *Kata Matthaion*, 'According to Matthew.' Matthew is attested by Papias (ca. 135) according to Eusebius.<sup>1</sup> Some have argued that Matthew's Greek is too good for a Galilean Jew, yet this argument has failed to take into account that New Testament Palestine was trilingual (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek), that Galilee, among other areas, had, through Alexander the Great, been heavily influenced by the Greek culture and the Greek language of the eastern Mediterranean world, and that, by his trade as tax collector (Matt. 9:9-13), Matthew had sharpened up his Greek and other dialects used there by people of various cultures. As a matter of fact, the apostles of Jesus, no doubt, were note-taking historians, and must have looked at each other's notes as each disciple worked on his own material, whether it was Mark first (using Peter's material), which Matthew or Luke used for comparison, or whether one of the other Synoptic Gospels (Matthew and Luke) was first used for comparison.<sup>2</sup>

### **Recipients and Place of Writing**

The internal evidence points to the recipients as Jewish Christians, as indicated by Matthew's heavy emphasis on quotations from the Old Testament and their fulfillment in Christ, emphasis on Jesus as the Messiah, and the use of such Jewish concepts as the kingdom of heaven (cf. Matt. 13:11, 24, 31). However, there is no indication as to the exact place where these people were living, but probably it was somewhere within the Roman province of Syria.

### **Date of Writing**

Within the Gospel itself there is no clear indication as to the time of its writing, but based on such statements of Jesus, as in Matthew 24:2, '...not one stone [of the temple] will be left one on another,' we conclude it was composed before the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, written roughly about AD 65.

### **Occasion**

Matthew wanted to impress upon his Jewish readers that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah by indicating that the Old Testament had predicted his

birth (Matt. 2:6); that he was the one who was called out of Egypt, as Israel was (Matt. 2:15; Hos. 11:1); that he served as one healing the people, as Isaiah 53:4 foretold (cf. Matt. 8:17); that he is the son of David (Matt. 21:9; cf. Ps. 118:26); that contemporary Jews proclaimed him as Messiah (Matt. 16:16), etc.

**Outline**

- 1:1-25 Genealogy and Birth of Christ.
- 2:1-23 The Magi, the Flight to and from Egypt and the Settlement in Nazareth.
- 3:1-17 The forerunner John the Baptist and the Baptism of Jesus.
- 4:1-11 Jesus' Temptation.
- 4:12-25 Beginning ministry in Galilee, 'He returned to Galilee,' 4:12 (This ministry continues until 18:35).
- 5:1-7:29 The Sermon on the Mount.
- 8:1-9:38 Jesus' Healing Ministry.
- 10:1-42 Jesus calls and teaches his Apostles.
- 11:1-12:50 Jesus' witness to John the Baptist, woe to the unrepentant, rest for the weary, and his declaration of being God's chosen one.
- 13:1-52 Ministry through parables.
- 13:53-17:27 Jesus' assorted preaching, teaching and miracles.
- 18:1-35 Jesus' teaching about humility, the Lost Sheep, the Sinning Brother, and the Unmerciful Servant, journeying toward Jerusalem.
- 19:1-20:34 Journeying toward Jerusalem by 'the other side of the Jordan' (Perean Ministry), 19:1. Confrontation about divorce, teaching about little children, the need of the Rich Young Ruler, the Parable of the Vineyard Workers; the Two Blind Men (in the Jericho area).
- 21:1-22:14 The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, 'they approached Jerusalem,' 21:1; questions about Jesus' authority, the parables of the Two Sons, the Tenants, and the Wedding Banquet.



- 22:15-46 Teaching about paying taxes to Caesar, on marriage at the resurrection, on the greatest commandment, and on Christ the Son of David.
- 23:1-39 Jesus' Castigation of the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law.
- 24:1-25:46 Jesus' instruction about the end times.
- 26:1-27:66 The Passover/Lord's Supper, Gethsemane, the trials before the Sanhedrin and Pilate, the crucifixion and burial of Jesus.
- 28:1-20 The resurrection and the Great Commission.

**1:1. A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ** (Gr. *Biblos geneseōs*; *Biblos*, 'book,' especially sacred book, scroll. *Genesis*, 'beginning, origin'). The expression, *Biblos geneseōs*, in the LXX (Septuagint Greek translation) in Genesis 2:4 and 5:1 is equivalent to saying 'the history of the origins'; 'the history of the "origin" of the heavens and the earth' (2:4); and 'the history of the "genealogy" (origin) of men' (5:1). In Matthew 1:1-17 is 'the history of the genealogy of Jesus Christ'.

**1:1-16. The genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David.** He is the son of David, which connects him to the Davidic royal line; he is 'the son of Abraham', which connects him to his Jewish roots; from Abraham (the forefather of the Jews/Israelites) to Joseph (the legal heir of the Davidic kingship).

**1:16. Of whom was born Jesus, the one called Christ.** The feminine form of the Greek pronoun 'whom' (Greek, *hēs*) shows that Jesus was born of the human agency of Mary, 'from' the divine agency (Greek, *ek*) of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18). Matthew 1:2-16 details the legal Jewish ancestry and kingly ancestry of Jesus through his legal father Joseph, while showing that Mary is Jesus' human physical mother through her genealogical line. The genealogy in Luke says that Jesus was only thought to be the son of Joseph (3:23), and goes back from Mary's time, back through David, Judah, Jacob, Abraham, Noah and Adam, who was created by God. Thus in the two genealogies, Jesus' Davidic kingship rights and his Adamic (Rom. 5:12-19) human origins are stressed. The line from Abraham to David is given in the two lists (Matt. 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38, although the latter is in reverse order).