

A Trustworthy Gospel: Arguments for an Early Date for Matthew's Gospel. By Daniel B. Moore. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2024. 177 pages. \$34.12 Hardcover..

The Lord's churches have long realized that the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 was practiced by the Lord Jesus Christ and His disciples before it was officially given to them at the conclusion of the first gospel. That is to say, Christ and his church preached the Gospel, immersed those that believed, and then instructed those baptist believers in the teachings of the Lord. Biblically speaking, it is utterly indefensible to surmise that Mark was written before Matthew, or that Matthew would have waited any length of time to publish his Gospel. In fact, it is scripturally sound and theologically reasonable to conclude that Matthew was writing Matthew during the events recorded in Matthew and that he published it as soon as possible in obedience to the Great Commission.

Daniel B. Moore has added another good resource to this longheld view of Matthean Priority with *A Trustworthy Gospel*. In this work, he demonstrates that Matthew was certainly completed first of the four Gospels, and that it was in circulation during the events recorded in the book of Acts, within a decade or less of the resurrection of Christ. As Phil Fernandes says in the introduction, "There is nothing unreasonable about the view that Matthew wrote his Gospel very early - possibly within a few years after Jesus' ascension" (vii). The tendency to date the Gospels, and all books of the NT, late, derives from the skeptical tendencies of higher criticism which rejects inspiration and all supernatural aspects of divine revelation.

Moore begins his book with an introduction where he makes that very point, that those whose ministry is to question the Bible always require a late date for the books, and likewise speculate that Mark was written first (based off of the nonexistent "Q Document") and then Matthew and Luke evolved in turn. He states that the reader should care about this subject "because the earlier the first Gospel was published, the greater will be your innate confidence in the accuracy of all the Gospels" (1). Moore is open to the possibility that "Paul took the Gospel of Matthew with him on his first missionary journey" (2) and affirms that "Matthew was published within roughly a decade of the resurrection" (2).

Chapter two is an excellent courtroom defense of Matthean priority by Moore, wherein he shows that an early date for Matthew (30s AD) is reasonable, based on means, motive, and opportunity of the author. Writing was a very common practice during the life of Christ, with Matthew himself being a trained writer, and it is less reasonable to suppose that Matthew heard the words of Matthew 28:19-20 being spoken to him and decided to wait three or four or five decades before writing down what Jesus had taught him and which he was responsible to teach to others. In fact, Moore points out that churches expected to have these written witnesses to Christ and that Matthew would have been motivated to meet that desire. Moore concludes this chapter by exposing the deficiencies of the modern Gospel origin theories, almost all of which lead those who are duped by them to ultimately reject Matthean authorship of the first Gospel.

In chapter three, Moore turns to the historical argument of the early church fathers. This chapter is very valuable for how it reconciles Irenaeus' various statements concerning Matthew

being written first, Paul and Peter's use of the Gospels, and the reference to a Hebrew version of the first Gospel. This section is thorough and answers every challenge to Irenaeus' assertion of Matthean priority. Moore further is able to reconcile Irenaeus with the other church fathers who wrote on the subject, and can conclude that "the right conditions exist(ed) for the composition of the Gospel of Matthew between AD 30-44" (39).

In chapter four, Moore makes several very interesting and compelling arguments from Galatians and the Pauline corpus to bolster Matthean priority, showing that Paul "would likewise have found it essential for the followers of Jesus to promptly publish a Gospel chronicling Jesus' life and teachings after his death" (40). One particular verse is Galatians 3:1, wherein the Apostle Paul reminds the Galatians that Christ was "publicly portrayed" (ESV) before them. We note here that the KJV's "evidently set forth" reflects well the sense of *proegraphie*, and that in fact Mr. William Tyndale's "described before the eyes" comes from the Latin "to write down," that is to say that Christ was written down before the Galatians' eyes. Using synchronic and diachronic analysis Moore concludes that the document referenced in Galatians 3:1 is the Gospel of Matthew, and the student of Scripture may rightly conclude that Paul was referring to making sure the Galatian churches had copies of this Gospel (at least) during his missionary journey among them.

In chapter five Moore compiles a robust testimony of post-Reformation era scholars "who contended that the first Gospel, Matthew, was published within just a few years or perhaps within a decade of the ascension" (62) and that these authors "often found evidence for an early date within the text of Matthew's Gospel itself" (69). Lardner, Owen, and several others are cited along with twelve motivational arguments for an early Matthew.

In chapter 6, Moore appeals to the arguments from the ancients on memory and orators, and rejects Bauckham's eyewitness memory theory and engages with Keener as well, showing that "the New Testament indicates that the early Christian evangelists and apostles engaged directly with the elites of Greco-Roman society, with those who were most likely to be literate or to have had ready access to professional scribes" (87). And in chapter 7, Moore includes arguments from the ancients on written materials, and shows why the modern preference for oral traditions is an indefensible theory that must be rejected, citing NT examples including Christ's handling of the Isaiah scroll in Luke.

Chapters 8 and 9 are highly significant, with chapter 8 showing the exegetical impacts of an early date for the publication of Matthew, including that the Apostles' admonitions to "read" and "preach" would not have been limited to the Hebrew Tanak, anymore than the word "scripture" in II Timothy 3:15-16 applies only to the OT. In his section on Pastoral Use of Broad Reference, Moore notes, "Acts reports that Apollos came to Ephesus and that he was "competent in the Scriptures," but that he "knew only the baptism of John" (Acts 18:25). By this I infer that it was Matthew's Gospel which Apollos knew, as Matthew lacks any reference of the baptism of the Holy Spirit" (135). Chapter nine gives a fascinating study of Matthew as the Messiah's Royal Chronicler, showing that "Matthew was intent on recording and publishing the account of the Messiah from his earliest days as a disciple, perhaps even before his calling to be part of the

inner-circle of twelve” (138). An updated version of this chapter would benefit from a more explicit showing of the connection of Matthew to John the Baptist, the King’s Herald, and how Matthew had plenty of material to work with from the Messiah’s forerunner.

Moore concludes his book with an overview of his main points and a direct appeal to the reader to see the importance of this issue. Matthean priority is an essential doctrine to understand God’s Word and Christ’s dealings with mankind. The false teaching of the priority of Mark is in fact a schismatic and nonsensical fantasy that has no business being repeated by God’s churches, and reveals a lack of biblical scholarship on the part of those who are duped by it. Moore summarizes: “The proposition that Matthew was published within a decade of the resurrection is reasonable, defensible, and even preferable, over the popular belief that the church instead waited for decades before publishing the life and teachings of Jesus in written form...Let us recognize the very words which Matthew chronicled on behalf of the messianic King were the words which Paul laid before the Galatians, as he presented the crucified Christ; and that these are the same trustworthy words which we can employ, as we now present this Christ to our world” (152).