



Conclusion on the likely date of Matthew

examples of a codex gospel, and may be much earlier than the generally accepted date of c.150AD. Although Thiede has performed a useful service in questioning some of the assumptions which underlie the consensus that, Matthew's gospel was not written until well after the death of virtually all of the disciples, it seems more likely that Matthew wrote his gospel around the 60's AD.

If Thiede proved his case, then clearly the gospel would have a claim to a much more obvious historical authenticity in its description of Jesus' life and ministry. The criticism of Thiede's work by Graham Stanton is that Christianity is about more than 'mere historical record' (Stanton p10). When Matthew was written is not as important as how we respond to the claim it makes. Seeing Matthew's story of Jesus as an authentic record may help us to trust Matthew's conclusion that Jesus really was the Son of God. Only if we see that this is what Matthew wanted to do, will we really understand what is at stake in the study of the gospels.

Final comments putting the discussion into a wider context

1400 words

Approximate word count

Book List

C.P. Thiede & M.D'Ancona *The Jesus Papyrus* (London 1996)

G. Stanton *Gospel Truth ?* (London 1995)

D. Hill *The Gospel of Matthew* (London 1972)

R.T. France *Matthew* (Leicester 1985)

J. Drane *Introducing the New Testament* (Oxford 1986)

Book list includes the main book discussed, Stanton's counterbalance to it, two commentaries and a general introduction. Each book has date and place of publication noted, so that they can be easily located again.

Leave a space at the end of tutor's comments

have been written c.40AD by an eyewitness follower of Jesus, within a decade of the crucifixion.

3. Conclusion

Thiede's argument is an interesting one. It must be said, however, that it rests on quite shaky foundations. There is no reason why he cannot be right: but we should be clear that he has very little evidence for his claim that Matthew was written before c.40AD. Stanton says that Thiede's theory gives a significantly different version of Christian origins from that generally accepted by NT scholars. His case rests on pushing the earliest possible date for P64 to 65AD. To accept this dating, however, you must accept his judgement that the handwriting of P64 matches that of the Oxyrynchus letter, and even if it does, he has only established that it *could* have been written then, not that it was.

The conclusion reviews the main points of the assignment

Some questions about Thiede's

Thiede's case is for the possible writing of Matthew in c.40AD. This is an extension of his argument that the P64 was a codex version of the gospel which was first written on a scroll. It is not clear why Thiede thinks that the gospel must have been written on a scroll, though it suits his argument to do so. In Chapters 2 and 6 of *The Jesus Papyrus* Thiede shows why he believes that it is probable, as well as possible, for Matthew's gospel to have been written in c.40AD, but his argument there is based on different grounds from the discussion of dating papyrus. Most other scholars accept a dating of around 80AD for the final composition of Matthew's gospel (e.g. D. Hill *The Gospel of Matthew* pp 49-50), though this is far from certain, and Thiede has a good point when he questions how easily one date is accepted and not examined. Most of the arguments for a late date accept that there are signs in the text of the gospel which may imply that Jerusalem had already been attacked by the Romans, an event which happened in 70AD (e.g. Matthew 22:7, 24:3-28 etc). As R.T. France points out, however, there are also indications of the gospel being written before the destruction of the Temple e.g. Matthew 5:23-24, 23:16-22, which discuss temple practices not worth mentioning after the temple was destroyed, and 17:24-7 which discusses the temple tax which after 70AD was diverted to pay not for the temple in Jerusalem but the Temple of Jupiter in Rome.

Accepting that Thiede, while he may be right, has made an important point

Final judgement on Thiede's claims

Thiede has suggested that Matthew's gospel could have been written as early as 40AD. His argument rests on his claim that a codex version of the complete gospel was in circulation as early as c.60AD. He has not proved that the gospel was written in c.40AD; he has merely shown that it is possible to create a hypothesis that it was written almost 40 years before most scholars believe it was. The fragments of P64 and P67 may be very early

1. Introduction

"Of making many books there is no end and much study is wearisome to the flesh"
Ecclesiastes 12. 12

The writer of Ecclesiastes obviously knew a thing or two about study. Study on its own, or for its own sake, can be 'wearisome to the flesh.' But study, as a means to a goal of being equipped for the ministry which God is calling you into, should be a delight and a joy. Remember what St Paul said

Learning is about being 'transformed by the renewing of your mind' (Romans 12. 2)

Study for a reason is a joy, but it is always hard work too, and it may well be quite a long time since you did any. Perhaps you are approaching some study with the fear that it might be just like school again..... If so, this booklet is designed to help you. Your tutors will also do their best to help you, but remember that you will have to be adult as to how you approach the work. We all spend so many years of our lives at school that it is easy to fall back on patterns we were in when we were teenagers. Remind yourself that it doesn't have to be like that, and that all the surveys show that people can perform much better when studying as adults than they did when they were young, so long as they are motivated to do it. There are no short cuts or magic formulas, but the following tips may help you to get the best out of the time you spend studying for the course.

Above all, you will work better if you begin each study session with a short prayer – it will remind you that there is a reason why you are doing this work, and it will remind God that you are there (not that he needs reminding, of course!)

2. Learning Effectively

Here are four things you will need if you are to learn effectively:



1. Clear and Realistic Aims

Identify, clearly, both the short-term and the long-term goals, which will give you a clear target to aim for.



2. A Business-like Approach

Good organisation, rather than intellectual brilliance, is often the key to success. You will be less anxious if you try to:

- Plan what you want to achieve, the next day, week, month, etc.
- Stick to your plans, or modify them for good reasons only.
- Make use of every scrap of time when studying.
- Remember your priority is the successful completion of the course.



3. A Desire to Learn

You will enjoy this course more if you approach it like this:

- Open your mind and senses to new, perhaps conflicting, ideas and experiences.
- Read and write about the discussion questions that may or may not have answers (and ask them too).
- Establish links between new subject matter and your own practical experience of the world.



4. A Knowledge of Techniques of Effective Study

Which you will find an introduction to in the rest of the booklet, **so read on!**

a) 'Nomina Sacra'

P64 contains examples of 'nomina sacra', that is, abbreviations of Jesus' name or title ('kyrie'). This practice consciously copies the Jewish custom of abbreviating the name of God in the Old Testament. C H Roberts argues that such developments must have occurred with the agreement of the primitive church in either Antioch or Jerusalem. He is inclined to Jerusalem, which would date the decision to take this momentous step (which clearly accepted that Jesus was God) to before 70AD, when Jerusalem was sacked by the Romans and the church there was scattered. If Roberts was correct (and this theory was only a theory, he had no definite evidence for it), then Thiede argues that there is no reason why P64 could not date from before 70AD.

b) Comparison with Qumran

The 'Dead Sea Scrolls' were found at Qumran in Syria in 1947. They are the writings left by the community of the 'Essenes' in caves which were sealed up in 68AD, during the Jewish revolt. None of the papyri found at Qumran can be later than 68AD, therefore. Thiede argues that among the scrolls can be found examples of handwriting which are like that found in P64 (Thiede p86). Thiede also claims that a papyrus from Oxyrynchus in Egypt, written in the same kind of script as P64, has a clear date on it of 65/66AD. So he concludes that P64 *could* have been written at the same period.

c) The Codex

It is widely assumed by New Testament scholars that codexes were not introduced until the later third century (after 250AD). Accepting P64 as coming from the late second century, as C H Roberts did, thus already assumed that it was a very early example of the form. Thiede suggests that codexes were in fact used in much more widespread fashion by the mid to late first century (50 – 100 AD) especially in the Christian community. He points out that the Roman poet Martial (lived c. 40 – 102AD) mentions the codex form as readily available in Roman bookshops in some poems written about 60AD. 2 Timothy 4:13 refers to note-books ('membranae'), and Thiede thinks Paul wrote this letter about 60AD (though many scholars would disagree with this date, and suggest that it was written later by a disciple of Paul). On the basis of these two pieces of evidence, Thiede concludes the P64 could have been written in a codex by the mid first century.

Noting that scholars think this about 2Tim does not mean that you agree with them - only that you see why they may be sceptical about Thiede's evidence

d) Implications

This is the summing up of the main body of the assignment before the conclusion itself

On the basis of these three points, Thiede proposes that by the mid-60sAD a complete version of Matthew's gospel was in circulation. He then goes further, to suggest that if this is so, then the first edition of Matthew's gospel, which he assumes was written on a scroll, must date from some time before this codex. Therefore, he argues, Matthew might

An example of an assignment

A.N. Other

June 2003

How early could Matthew's Gospel have been written?

1. Introduction

It is not clear when Matthew's Gospel was written. Some scholars (the majority) date it around 80AD (e.g. David Hill's commentary *The Gospel of Matthew* (London 1972) p.50). Others would put it around 60-70AD (e.g. R T France *Matthew* p.30). A few would date it to around 40-50AD. The latter date is supported by Carsten Peter Thiede, in his recent book *The Jesus Papyrus*.

Introduction states the problem to be tackled

Why Thiede is significant

Thiede claims that some fragments of papyrus found in Egypt in the late nineteenth century, and now in the library of Magdalen College, Oxford, are the oldest fragments of a complete gospel to have survived. Few scholars would disagree that they are the oldest; where Thiede is controversial is in his suggestion that these fragments date from c.60AD. Most scholars would date the fragments no later than c.150AD, though this still makes them the oldest existing fragments of a gospel. Professor Graham Stanton concedes that Thiede's claims, 'If accepted...would revolutionise our understanding of the origin of the Gospels and just about every other aspect of early Christianity.' (Stanton p13).

Stanton is a scholar who accepts that the case is worth examining. Full details of book quoted in book list at end.

2. Theide's Case

The Magdalen College fragments are known to papyrologists as P64. Since they are written on both sides of the papyrus they must come from a codex (i.e. papyrus bound like a book) rather than a scroll (only written on one side). Further fragments in Barcelona, coded P67, have been shown to be from the same original codex. P64

contains recognisable fragments of the established text of Matthew 26. P64 has fragments of Matthew 3 & 5. C H Roberts established the unity of both sets of fragments and dated them to the later second century (after 150AD) on the basis of a comparison of the style of handwriting, an opinion shared by other leading experts. (Stanton p12).

Thiede's case for redating Matthew's gospel is based on an intensive examination of P64. It rests on four main points: 'Nomina Sacra', the comparison with Qumran, the codex, and the implications drawn from these three points.

Tells the reader how the assignment will proceed

3. The Time and the Place

When you study and where you study are as important as what you study in getting the best out of the course.

"There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven"

Ecclesiastes 3. 1

Where to Study?

You probably won't have a wide choice of places to study, so try to find somewhere which can be your study space (even if it is the kitchen table, or your bed). Make things easier for yourself by trying to do the following:

- Keep all your course notes and books for the current module together in one bag or briefcase so you know where they are when you want them.
- Explain to the rest of the family (if you have one) that if you're studying they should let you get on with it and try not to interrupt – that way you'll be finished sooner, get less cross with them, and have more time to give them.
- If your house is crowded, then why not try going down to the local library, or asking someone in your church who lives alone if you might pop round for an hour a week and work there?

When to study?

Planning ahead is very important. Decide, with your diary, when you are going to study. Mark in your deadlines and make sure that you plan to prepare for them before they happen!

Some of the following steps may also be helpful:

- Try to make time for reading and study every week. Make a habit. Use odd half-hours as well as longer spells (if you can read for half an hour a day, then by the end of the week, you'll have gained three hours reading time). This is easy if you know exactly what you are going to do and have books, etc. planned and marked ready to read.

- Tackle the toughest work at times when you are at your best. You alone will know when this is. For some people it is early morning and for others it is at the end of the day.
- Leave enough time for recreation (including sleep) and leisure activities.
- Make a note as to what you hope to achieve in each study session. e.g. making notes on a chapter of a book, or completing the writing of an assessment.
- Begin work right at the start of each study session, and give yourself a structure, e.g.:
 1. First review what you did in your last session on the topic;
 2. Force yourself to keep concentrating, but;
 3. don't work for more than an hour without a 5-10 minute break.
 4. End by reviewing what you have achieved.
- Did you finish your set task? If not, did you expect to do too much, and should you aim to do less next time?

Now you are ready for...

Stage 3

- **Write the first draft** of your assignment – very few people can produce their final version at once.
- **Write simply and directly**, remembering that someone else has to understand what you are trying to say. Avoid jargon!
- **List the sources** you have referred to for information at the end.
- **Rewrite** the assignment (if possible, after a gap of a few days) to eliminate weaknesses.

Last of all...

Stage 4

- **Don't worry if the final product is not perfect**; deadlines are important! You have to get used to them when preaching – a perfect sermon ready for Monday is no good if you have to preach it on Sunday!
- **Leave plenty of space** at the end of the assignment for your tutor's comments, and when it is returned read the comments carefully; they will show you particular ways in which you can improve your next assignment. If there is a criticism which you feel is unjustified or which you do not understand, **ask!**

5. Written Assignments

Writing your ideas down and deciding which ones are relevant and which ones are not will give your tutor an opportunity to judge how well you are able to use the knowledge you have gained. It is also a good discipline to learn when preparing to preach, where you will have to be able to express yourself clearly and concisely. You may fear this aspect more than any other, because you have not written anything down since you left school. Don't worry – there will be others on the course like you! And if you are very anxious, why not ask if you can discuss the outline you make with a tutor before handing it in? Here are a few guidelines about the process of writing an assignment.

Stage 1

- **Be sure that you know the precise subject** and the kind of treatment that is called for (beware of being irrelevant).
- Then **note any restrictions in length**.
- Now, **select the most useful and relevant** of the information available.

Stage 2

- **Write a logical outline** for your assignment, e.g.
 - **Introduction** – brief comment on the subject and how you will deal with it.
 - **Main body** – your argument and the three or four points you want to make.
 - **Conclusion** – summary and final comment.
- Some people find it helpful to write a **preliminary draft of the final paragraph** at this point – so as to give the assignment a clear target.

4. Reading Better

Most people could read faster and more effectively if they tried to do so. But you need to practise in order to increase the speed and efficiency of any mental exercise, just as you would do with physical exercise. Like physical exercise, it will also take time for you to notice an improvement, so stick with it!

How to Read Faster

Most people can read at least half as fast again as they do, and still understand just as well.

Six ways you can start helping yourself to read faster

1. **Have your eyes tested** - many people turn out to need reading glasses for continuous study.
2. **Don't mouth words** or say things aloud as you read.
3. **Try to read in 'thought units'** (two or three words at a time) so that your eyes only stop three or four times in a line of print instead of every word.
4. **Build up your vocabulary** by using a dictionary whenever new words crop up in your reading, noting new words and making lists of words commonly used. Don't be put off by theological jargon (e.g. Christology, Soteriology) - it's just a pretentious way of talking about things you have already grasped (i.e. who was Jesus, what do we believe about salvation).
5. **Practise reading faster** (force yourself). The aim is to vary the speed of reading according to the complexity of the material and the purpose for which you are reading it. If you are simply trying to get the gist of a piece of narrative type writing, you should be able to read two or three times faster as when you are trying to unravel the detailed development of a complex argument. See how much more quickly you can read Mark's gospel than Paul's letter to the Romans, for example.
6. **Be prepared to read something more than once**. Mostly you will benefit from scanning the material quickly before you read it more intensively, but don't expect to understand everything first time you read it. You may have to go through it several times, but several rapid readings will probably give you an increasingly clear understanding than



How to read more efficiently

A good formula for reading is **S Q 3R (Survey Question Read Recall Review)**

Survey the material first to get a general view of what you will then consider in detail (look through the sub-headings or the table of contents to understand the flow of the argument.

Question what the writer is saying; why is the material divided up in the way it is, for example?

Read the material two or three times quite fast, rather than once quite slowly.

Recall after each section by stopping to make notes of the main ideas and any short quotes that you might use later.

Review what you have read by reading your notes to see if they make sense!

During the Read stage of S Q 3R

- Pick out the **main idea** in each paragraph – usually contained in the first or last sentences.
- Look for **important details**, e.g. proofs, examples, support for main idea.
- **Don't ignore diagrams and illustrations**, they may make things clear where the text does not.
- **Think up your own examples** – look for applications in your own experience.
- **Be sceptical**. Don't take the author's word on trust. Look for every statement to be justified (if it is not, and it is an important point, check with another book or if possible a tutor).
- **Don't be afraid to skip** paragraphs and whole sections if you see that they are not relevant to your purpose. (There is no law that says that you have to read every page of a book!).
- If after chewing it over for some time, you still find a section difficult to understand, **take a break**, try to discuss the difficulty with other course members, or a tutor, or find another author's treatment of the topic and then come back and read it again.

Remember what Sir Francis Bacon said:

“Some books are to be **tasted** others are to be **swallowed** and some few to be **chewed and digested**”

5. Making Notes

It's always useful to keep a slip of paper in a book you have read, because it will remind you of parts which were especially useful. You may also want to make more extensive notes.

- Take care in making notes because they:
 - a) keep you **ACTIVE** – and concentrating (so you learn and remember better).
 - b) provide a written record if you want to refer to them again.
- Store your notes in a **LOOSE-LEAF BINDER**. This gives you maximum flexibility to re-write sections of your notes and re-arrange them in more useful groupings as your understanding of the subject develops.
- Always file notes together by topic rather than in the order in which they happen to be written.

Suggestions for writing notes

- Note the author, title, publisher and any date of publication of any books you are making notes on - then you will be able to find the book again if you need to.
- Use loose-leaf papers of A4 size.
- Write clearly or type.
- Use a logical and memorable layout on the page, e.g. a new page for each set of notes, label clearly, leave plenty of space and wide margins, use colour diagrams, capitals, underlining, etc. for emphasis.
- Work out a set of useful abbreviations (e.g. J = Jesus).
- Make use of standard abbreviations: ie for that is; eg for example; cf for compare; NB for note well; = for equals or is the same as; \neq for does not equal or is different from.