



INTRODUCTION

Matthew's Gospel is a substantial book to consider teaching through as a whole. With large teaching excurses and expansive theological reflection seeming to predominate over the 'action' of the story, it may seem daunting to the preacher, compared to the relative brevity and flowing action of Mark. But precisely because there are such rich seams of theology, and so much teaching from the mouth of the Lord Jesus himself, it is a wonderful treasure-trove for the Bible student. Moreover, as a way of explaining the message of the New Testament gospel so as to open up to the hearer a sense of its *continuity* with the whole Old Testament, and its *fulfilment* of all God's covenant promises from the beginning of time in Jesus Christ, teaching Matthew could hardly be bettered.

So, this book is designed to help and encourage Bible teachers, and stimulate study with a view to *teaching* Matthew's message. Though principally aimed at preachers who are preparing expository sermons, our hope is that Bible teachers in a variety of settings (as well as those simply reading Matthew for themselves) will gain help from the approach.



This is not an exhaustive exposition of the Gospel. Although we 'cover' all the chapters, the major focus is on the five great teaching sections which are so distinctive to Matthew. The chief aim is to try to show how the thread of Matthew's thought develops throughout as he himself teaches the gospel *in* his Gospel. So some parts are dealt with much more briefly, while others receive more substantial treatment. Far less is it a commentary, and certainly not intended to take the place of the commentaries, as if these were unnecessary for the preacher. Quite the opposite; we refer to helpful usage of these as we go along, and would encourage hard work on the text as a *sine qua non* of the preacher's preparatory task. But few commentaries seem to be written with the preacher and the congregation specifically in mind, and the sermon (or Bible exposition) as the point of reference that is being worked towards.

As we work through Matthew's Gospel, then, the aim is to help the Bible teacher find a way into the text that will enable him to use it for its given purpose: to be proclaimed as the living word of God. That is the *point* of Scripture, what it is meant for: not dry, academic study, but for the feeding of the people of God, calling them to the obedience of faith in Jesus Christ. Seeking to serve the minister (servant) of the Word is therefore uppermost in our minds throughout, and so each chapter ends with a brief conclusion to help crystallize thinking towards preparation of the sermon or Bible talk. Our hope is that we shall at least succeed in whetting the appetite for *Teaching Matthew*.