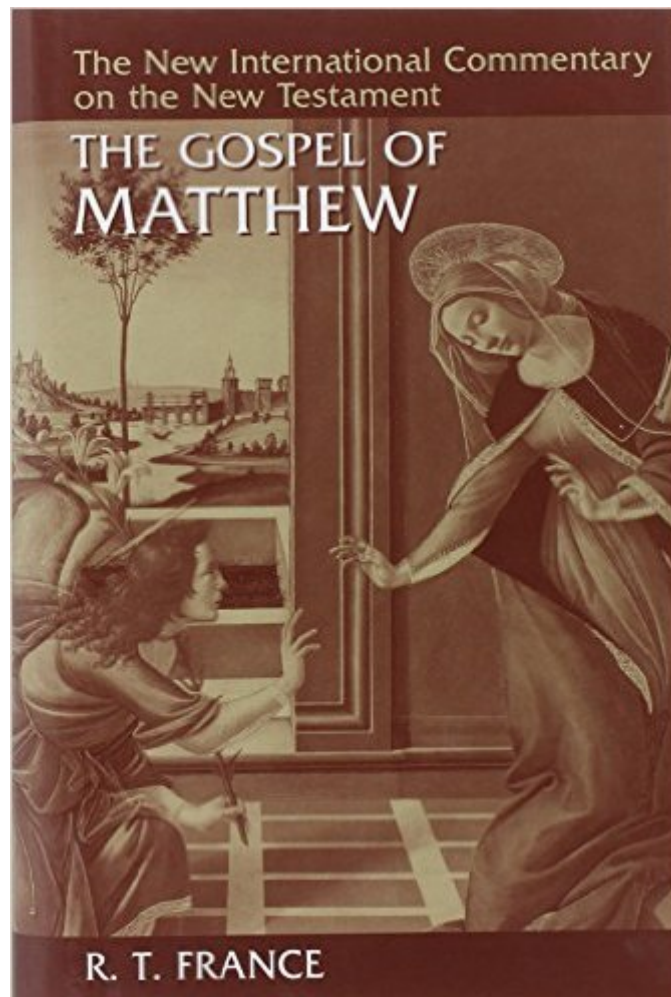


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The Gospel Of Matthew (The New International Commentary On The New Testament)



Synopsis

"It is a special pleasure to introduce R T (Dick) France's commentary to the pastoral and scholarly community, who should find it a truly exceptional - and helpful - volume." So says Gordon Fee in his preface to this work. France's masterful commentary on Matthew focuses on exegesis of Matthew's text as it stands rather than on the prehistory of the material or details of Synoptic comparison. It is concerned throughout with what Matthew himself meant to convey about Jesus and how he set about doing so within the cultural and historical context of first-century Palestine. Amid the wide array of Matthew commentaries available today, France's world-class stature, his clear focus on Matthew and Jesus, his careful methodology, and his user-friendly style promise to make this volume an enduring standard for years to come.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is the third important conservative commentary on Matthew to appear in the past decade; the other two being by Keener (1999) and Nolland (NIGTC, 2005). These three are massive commentaries (each one over 1000 pages), and taken together they provide the Christian community with excellent study tools for years to come. Somewhat 'earlier' volumes also of great importance include those by Carson (EBC, 1984), Blomberg (NAC, 1992), the two-volume set by Hagner (Word, 1993), and of course the three-volume work of Davies and Allison (ICC, 1988-1997). And France also penned the much shorter commentary on Matthew for the Tyndale series (TNTC,

1985). France has been a leading Matthean scholar for decades now, and his newest effort is well worth the price of the book. Unlike many recent commentaries, it does not go for overkill in certain technical and critical matters. For example, the introduction is a mere 22 pages, and footnotes are kept to a minimum. His NIGTC commentary on Mark was also in this (almost underkill) mode, and stood in stark contrast to the work of, say, Thiselton on 1 Corinthians in the same NIGTC series, which is inundated with countless footnotes, appendices, and so on (although many of us appreciate those sorts of commentaries as well; it is indeed a masterful work). It also stands in contrast to something like Keener's commentary on Matthew, with, for example, its 150-page bibliography of secondary sources! Unlike these sorts of commentaries, France offers us a much more user-friendly version. As an example, France devotes just one paragraph to the question of authorship. He contends that authorship cannot be proven, but the gospel seems "to make someone like the apostle Matthew as likely a candidate as any".

The long awaited volume on Matthew in the New International Commentary on the New Testament (NICNT) has finally arrived. This venerable commentary series was launched over a half century ago under the editorship of Ned Stonehouse (1947-1962), followed by that of F.F. Bruce (1962-1990), and is (hopefully) being brought to completion under Gordon Fee (1990 -). The series was launched with a team of international scholars sympathetic to the Reformed faith from the U.K., the U.S., South Africa, and the Netherlands. The commentary series has been around long enough for some of the original volumes to be replaced (e.g., Luke and Romans) and for revisions by the author of some of the originals (e.g., John and Acts). In light of the long history of the NICNT, one may wonder why it took so long for the Matthew volume to see the light of day. From an examination of old dust covers, one can see that the Gospel of Matthew was originally assigned to Stonehouse, but his untimely death caused it to be switched to Robert Guelich. For some reason, it was then assigned to Herman Ridderbos who for whatever reason did not complete it either. In his preface to this volume, editor Gordon Fee tells us that during his tenure since 1990 he had contracts for the Matthew volume returned to him by two "very capable" younger scholars. Finally, Fee says that one day he asked a fellow member of the Committee on Bible Translation (NIV/TNIV), Dick France, if he would take the commentary project, and what we have before us is the result. For those familiar with Gospel studies, France is no stranger, having written a smaller commentary on Matthew for the Tyndale NT series, a separate book on Matthew's teaching, and a commentary on Mark in the NICGT series.

As a pastor who works through books of the bible for exegetical sermons, I find this commentary is not a disappointment. He does deal with the Greek text (which I love), so if you don't read Greek, you will find transliterated Greek mixed into the comments. Actual Greek fonts are used in the footnotes. His summaries of views are succinct, with detail in some cases, but not too much information in trivial issues. I find this commentary gives a lot of exegetical insight to complement your own translation/exegetical efforts. For example, France gives insights into John the Baptist in his section on Matthew 3. Although his cultural background insights do not rival Craig Keener's (get his commentary on Matthew too), his handling of how to interpret phrases and words is a direct aid to exegesis. France gives insights from Qumran and Jewish inter-testamental literature as well as from pagan sources on the literary forms as well as structures within those forms. This commentary is very helpful, with a rapid fire of interesting ideas in condensed form for each section I have studied. It has quickly become my commentary of choice for Matthew. Let me illustrate: Matthew 5 is introduced with an overview on the Sermon on the Mount. He calls it a discourse on discipleship instead of the sermon on the mount. He says it reveals the Messiah's authority. As he gives a survey of the chapters, he then begins into chapter 5 little by little. As he starts into the Beatitudes, his little section on Makarios is indicative of the commentary so let me give a little of this for you to see what I mean. He titles it "The Meaning of Makarios". Makarios is the transliteration of the Greek word that is often translated 'Blessed' or 'Happy'.

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