



## The Conflict Stories in the First Gospel

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Biblical scholars and exegetes have been grappling with a number of historical contexts of the Gospel of Matthew: Was Matthew himself a Jew, or was he a Gentile who drew on earlier traditions which had been shaped by tensions between Christians and Jews? Were the communities to whom he writes still facing hostility...from local Jewish leaders? Or was Jewish persecution of Christians a matter of past history? Why are apocalyptic motifs borrowed from Jewish writings and utilized so much more extensively in this Gospel than in other three? Did Matthew still hope that some Jews would accept Christian claims concerning Jesus? Or was missionary activity in the evangelist's day largely confined to the Gentiles? And finally and perhaps, the most puzzling question of all, why is this Gospel both profoundly Jewish and anti-Jewish? Several reasons justify such interest. Part of the reason for this focus on the Jewish background of Matthew is the renewed interest exhibited by scholars on the social setting of the New Testament. Another plausible reason is the growing body of historical information about first-century Judaism obtained through archeological research and other related sources. Since traditional interpretation of Matthew has often underscored the Gospel's negative and prejudicial view of Judaism this paper, employing the historical critical method and social theories on deviance will throw light on the context or the reasons behind the conflict between the followers of Judaism and the followers of Jesus as represented by the Mattean community.