



First Lutheran Church

Gospel of Matthew

Summer 2026 Reading Challenge



Week 1: Matthew chapters 1 and 2

Deep Dive: Who's the Author

Talking to the Kids

Matthew is the 1st Gospel in the New Testament.

Matthew is named for one of Jesus' closest friends, a disciple who was a tax collector before he was a disciple.

Matthew's job as a tax collector would have given him the title "traitor" from his own community. He would have been a Jewish person working for the Roman occupying forces. He collected money for Rome and would have been ostracized from his family and his synagogue, that is his faith community.

Jesus wasn't worried about Matthew being a traitor or not welcome in synagogue. Jesus wanted Matthew to know God loved him, too. Calling Matthew to follow him tells us that there is nothing we can do that would mean God would not love us.

The Author of Matthew's Gospel is technically anonymous. There are no manuscripts that are signed, and the text itself never identifies the author. This is the case for all four Gospels. The earliest naming conventions don't begin appearing until well into the 2nd century CE with the author Papias. Another author named Eusebius, from the late 3rd and early 4th centuries CE claimed the apostle Matthew had collected some sayings of Jesus in Hebrew, but this collection is still lost to history, and does not seem to correlate with the polished Greek writing found in the text of the Gospel we now call Matthew.

Matthew was tax collector who followed Jesus. In Mark's and Luke's Gospel, Matthew is named Levi. Some traditions claim Matthew, as Levi, being the son of Alphaeus is the brother of James, son of Alphaeus. But the Gospels do not make this connection clear. Nor do the Gospels tell us any biographical information about Matthew beyond his role as a tax collector in Capernaum when Jesus called him.

We need to be careful reading into what traditions claim for any of the Biblical characters, as there is so little to verify these claims, and many of the claims are contradictory with other claims. For instance, Matthew is claimed to have preached to a Jewish community before heading to other nations. Some of these sources claim Matthew preached in the nation of Ethiopia, though not the modern nation of Ethiopia, but a nation near the southern coast of the Caspian Sea. Some sources claim Matthew was martyred in Ethiopia, possibly after he made the King mad because he converted the king's daughter to Christianity.

Matthew's Gospel is written after Mark's Gospel (more on that next week). Matthew borrows heavily from Mark, cleaning up the Greek writing of the stories, adding doublets (repeated stories) of some of those borrowed stories. Matthew and Luke also have shared passages, which suggest they used a common source that has been lost, scholars called this lost source "Q" from a German word that translates as "Source". Matthew also has a number of passages unique to his own Gospel, most likely from another lost source that scholars have given the name "M" for Matthew.

Throughout this series, we will dive further into themes found in Matthew's Gospel, discovering the theological layers Matthew adds to the story of an itinerant preacher from Nazareth who was crucified and whose followers claimed he was the Messiah.

Gathered by God, we live our faith with: Compassion, Grace, Gratitude, and Joy

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