

READING MATTHEW TOGETHER

FEBRUARY 2025

"Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
Matthew 28:20

INTRODUCING MATTHEW

Matthew is one of the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life. The four Gospels are more than just a biography, though. The word "Gospel" means "Good News": Matthew wants us to see who Jesus is and why this is good news for us today.

Matthew's account was probably written sometime in the decade or so before the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. The author is normally identified as Matthew the tax collector, who became one of Jesus' first followers and was an eyewitness to most of the events he wrote about.

The Gospel of Matthew is arranged around five blocks of teaching, with stories about Jesus' life in between. Each of the blocks of teaching ends with a statement like: "When Jesus had finished these sayings" (see 7:28, 11:1, 13:53, 19:1, 26:1).

FIVE KEY THEMES TO LOOK OUT FOR

- **Jesus is the special King that God promised in the Old Testament** (the Messiah or the Christ). As you read, notice how often Matthew quotes or refers to the Old Testament. You might like to look up some of these passages to understand more of the background.
- **Jesus is Immanuel, God with us.** We're told this at the beginning (1:22–23) and end (28:18–20) of the Gospel. You could think about other ways Matthew shows us what it means for Jesus to be "God with us".
- **Jesus came to save all kinds of people.** Matthew talks a lot about Israel and about the Jewish authorities. But he also shows us that Jesus has come for all nations – this is good news for us in Wales!
- **Jesus divides opinion.** Look out for the different responses to Jesus in Matthew's Gospel. We should expect these varied responses to continue today.
- **The kingdom of Jesus is countercultural.** Jesus teaches us what it looks like to follow him and live with him as King. His kingdom is one where humility, servanthood and forgiveness are key values.

SOME EXTRA RESOURCES

- **BibleProject** – this has an excellent short video introduction to each book, as well as other resources: bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-matthew
- **The Gospel Coalition** – this has some helpful background information, as well as links to dig deeper: thegospelcoalition.org/course/matthew

Helpful Bible apps:

- **YouVersion** – this allows you to read or listen to multiple translations, and add highlights and notes.
- **Dwell Bible** – an audio app, enabling you to meditate on the Bible by listening to sections on repeat.
- **Olive Tree** – a Bible app that offers study resources at an extra cost if you want to go deeper.

POSSIBLE READING PLANS

You can read or listen to the whole book across the month with one chapter a day (28 chapters, 28 days). Or you can make time once or twice a week to read a bigger section.

If you only have time to read part of the book, that's ok too! Every sentence of the Bible contains precious truth from God, so even a bit of Matthew will bless you and enable you to encourage others.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Here are seven questions, taken from the Bible, to guide us in our reading. You might like to jot down reflections on some or all of these as you read. These are designed as helpful prompts rather than exam questions! The aim is to encourage others and be encouraged ourselves.

1. What did you learn about Jesus? (Luke 24:44–47)
2. What did you learn about yourself, or about human nature? (James 1:23)
3. How were you corrected and rebuked? How do you need to change to be a servant of God thoroughly equipped for every good work? (2 Timothy 3:16–17)
4. What did you learn from the Scriptures that will help you endure and be encouraged? (Romans 15:4)
5. How were you equipped for works of service, to build up the church? (Ephesians 4:11–16)
6. What has helped you to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind? (Matthew 22:37–40)
7. What has helped you to love your neighbour as yourself? (Matthew 22:37–40)