Research: Call of the disciples - Matthew

**MARK:** “Only one man in the New Testament bears the name of Mark. Since the 2nd century the Gospel according to Mark has been attributed to him. This Mark who was properly called John (and 'surnamed' Mark) was the son of a certain Mary who owned a house in Jerusalem ([Acts 12:12](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Acts+12:12&t1=en_nas)). This is the house where Peter went to when he was freed from prison. John Mark was also a nephew (or cousin) of Barnabas, who at times was a companion of the Apostle Paul ([Colossians 4:10](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Colossians+4:10&t1=en_nas)).

Paul and Barnabas took John Mark with them as a servant during their first mission journey ([Acts 12:25](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Acts+12:25&t1=en_nas); [Acts 13:5](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Acts+13:5&t1=en_nas)). But Mark, probably still a young man, departed from them in Perga and returned to Jerusalem ([Acts 13:13](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Acts+13:13&t1=en_nas)). When Barnabas wanted to take his relative with him for the second journey, Paul did not want to take him. This caused a separation ([Acts 15:37-39](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Acts+15:37-39&t1=en_nas)).

Only about 12 years later Mark's name reappears in the letters to the Colossians and to Philemon ([Colossians 4:10](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Colossians+4:10&t1=en_nas); [Philemon 1:24](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Philemon+1:24&t1=en_nas)). We find him now in Rome - with the arrested Paul. In the Second Epistle to Timothy, shortly before his death, Paul asks Timothy to bring Mark with him who now was a useful servant ([2 Timothy 4:11](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=2%20Timothy+4:11&t1=en_nas)). Mark is also mentioned in [1 Peter 5:13](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=1%20Peter+5:13&t1=en_nas). Here Peter calls him his son. This is probably to indicate the close spiritual relationship with Mark.

It was not only Paul who was very close to Mark but also Peter. According to very old traditions Mark is supposed to have written his gospel based on sermons and communications which Peter gave in Rome for the believers there.

“It is not possible to determine precisely the time of writing of this gospel. Scholar’s views vary between 55 and 70 AC” (Dummelow’s Commentary).

Mark 2:14-17

14And as he passed by, he saw Levi the *son* of Alphæus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

Tax collectors were despised by the Jews because they were considered traitors and because they often were, in fact, extortioners. Jesus found Levi at the ‘tax collector’s booth.’ This was probably the toll booth on the rod that ran from Damascus through Capernaum to the Mediterranean coast. There was much at stake for Levi in accepting Jesus’ challenge. Fishermen could easily go back to fishing, but for Levi there would be little possibility of his returning to his occupation. Tax collector jobs were greatly sought after as a sure way to get rich quickly” (Expositor’s Bible).

“L*evi*. This was probably the name by which he was known to his Jewish brethren. He may have changed his name after and in memory of his call, so that he who had before been known by the name of Levi, was now known as Matthew, or Mattathias, a favorite name amongst the Jews after the Captivity, and = *Theodore*, the “Gift of God.”

“r*eceipt of custom*] Situated as Capernaum was at the nucleus of roads which diverged to Tyre, Damascus, Jerusalem, and Sepphoris, it was a busy centre of merchandise, and a natural place for the collection of tribute and taxes.  
  
*“and followed him*] We cannot doubt that the new disciple had already listened to some of the discourses and beheld some of the wondrous miracles of Christ, so that he was now in the eyes of Him, who read the heart, prepared for his call” (Cambridge Bible).

15And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.

“The phrase means "as he reclined at his meal," or "as he was eating." This feast was made by Matthew in honor of the Savior” (Barnes’ Notes).

“*sat at meat*] It is St Luke who tells us that St Matthew made, “great feast” in honor of his new Master ([Luke 5:29](https://biblehub.com/luke/5-29.htm)), and to it, perhaps by way of farewell, he invited many of his old associates. This shews that he had made large sacrifices in order to follow Christ;

“The Jews included them in the same category with harlots and sinners; see [Matthew 21:31-32](https://biblehub.com/context/matthew/21-31.htm); [Matthew 18:17](https://biblehub.com/matthew/18-17.htm). Observe that in his Gospel St Matthew alone styles *himself* in the list of the Apostles “the publican.” (Cambridge Bible).

“‘Sinners’ denotes those people who refuse to follow the Mosaic Law as interpreted by the Pharisees. That Jesus would include in his most intimate circle a man associated with so disreputable a profession and would sit at table which in the ancient world was a sign of intimacy, with tax collectors and ‘sinners’ was too much for the ‘teachers of the law’ to keep quiet about.” (Expositor’s Bible).

16And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

“The consorting of Jesus with people who openly refused to keep the requirements of the law prompted the question “Why does he [supposedly a ‘religious’ or observant Jew] eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?” (Expositor’s Bible).

The teachers of the law were appalled that Jesus would lower himself to eat with men like this.

17When Jesus heard *it,* he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

“No statement of Jesus in this Gospel is more profound than this one. A doctor ministers not to healthy persons but to the sick. So, Jesus came not to call the ‘rightous’ but ‘sinners’ to repentance. Jesus’ call is to salvation; and in order to share in it, there must be a recognition of need. It would true to say that this word of Jesus strikes the keynote of the Gospel” (Hunter, pp. 40)

“they that are whole, have no need of the physician, but they that are sick; which seems to be a proverbial expression, signifying that he was a physician; that these publicans and sinners were sick persons, and needed his company and assistance; but that they, the Scribes and Pharisees, were whole, and in good health, in their own esteem, and so wanted no relief; and therefore ought not to take it amiss, that he attended the one, and not the other” (Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible).