THE QUESTION

Was Mark or Matthew written first?

Asked by a THF member on May 19, 2026 · published November 9, 2026, updated November 11, 2026 · 5 numbered quotations · the 14 early Christian passages and 146 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/was-mark-or-matthew-written-first

The short answer *From the text: says what the passages say*

The early Christian writers in these passages say Matthew was written first and Mark second. Origen says he learned this order by tradition. Irenaeus says Mark wrote down Peter's preaching after Matthew had written. Tertullian also names Matthew among the apostles who come first, and Mark among their followers who come afterward.

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HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
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POINT 1 OF 4

Origen received Matthew first, Mark second

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Origen says he learned by tradition that Matthew's Gospel was written first, in Hebrew, for converts from Judaism. The second was Mark's, written by Peter's instruction. In another work he again begins with Matthew because tradition says Matthew published his Gospel before the others.

1 “About the four Gospels, which alone are undisputed in the Church of God under heaven, I learned by tradition that the Gospel according to Matthew was written first. Matthew had once been a tax collector and later became an apostle of Jesus Christ. He wrote it in the Hebrew language and published it for converts from Judaism. The second Gospel written was the one according to Mark. Mark wrote it according to Peter's instruction.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *Commentary on Matthew* 1 (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 12, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

2 “Let us try to see as clearly as we can what the meaning of each is, and how they differ from one another. And we will begin with Matthew, who by tradition is said to have published his Gospel before the others, to the Hebrews, namely, those of the circumcision who believed.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *Commentary on John* 6 (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 13, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 4

Irenaeus puts Mark after Matthew

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Irenaeus, writing in the second century, says Matthew wrote while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome. After their departure, Mark wrote down what Peter had preached. He then names Luke, and last of all John. In his account, Mark's Gospel comes after Matthew's.

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3 “Matthew also wrote a Gospel in the Hebrew language while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome and laying the foundations of the Church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, wrote down what Peter had preached. Luke, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him. Later on, John, the disciple of the Lord, who had leaned upon His chest, published a Gospel during his time in Ephesus in Asia.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book III* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 2, page 4** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 3 OF 4

Tertullian ranks apostles before their followers

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

Tertullian says the Gospel writers are apostles, and that apostolic men, their followers, come with and after the apostles. He names John and Matthew as the apostles who first build faith, and Luke and Mark as followers who renew it afterward. His main point is authority, not the date each was written.

4 “We lay down as our first position that the authors of the evangelical Testament are apostles, to whom the Lord Himself assigned this office of publishing the gospel. However, there are also apostolic men. Yet they are not alone, but appear with apostles and after apostles.”

later in the same passage

“Of the apostles, therefore, John and Matthew first instill faith into us. Of apostolic men, Luke and Mark renew it afterward.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *Against Marcion* 2 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 10, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 4

Mark wrote down Peter's preaching at Rome

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement of Alexandria says Mark, Peter's follower, wrote his Gospel while Peter was preaching in Rome, so that the hearers could remember what Peter said. Clement does not compare Mark with Matthew here, but he agrees that Mark's Gospel is Peter's preaching put in writing.

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5 “Mark, Peter's follower, wrote what is called the Gospel according to Mark while Peter was publicly preaching the Gospel at Rome before some of Caesar's equites and giving many testimonies about Christ. He did this so that they might be able to remember what had been spoken. Mark wrote down completely what Peter had spoken.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Fragments* 1 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 7, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- No passage from the Bible itself states which Gospel was written first.
- Clement says Mark wrote while Peter was still preaching, while Irenaeus says Mark wrote after Peter's departure, so these passages do not agree on exactly when Mark wrote.
- These passages give no exact dates for either Gospel.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 14 early Christian passages and 146 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–14, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 15–126, in Bible order), then 34 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF’s updated English unless marked “1885 English” (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). “… [continues online]” marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *14 passages from 6 writers*

Papias, *c. 95–130 AD · source 1*

1 *Fragments* (on point 4) “the extracts already made, we will add, as a matter of primary importance, a tradition regarding Mark, who wrote the Gospel, which Papias stated in these words: The presbyter said… [continues online] **read ›**

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 2–6*

2 *Against Heresies: Book III* **Quote 3, page 3** “the peace of heaven to people, all of whom have the Gospel of God equally and individually. Matthew also wrote a Gospel in the Hebrew language while Peter and Paul… [continues online] **read ›**

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3 *Against Heresies: Book III* royal power; the second living creature was like a calf, signifying His sacrificial and priestly order; the third had, as it were, the face of a man—clearly describing His… [continues online] **read ›**

4 *Against Heresies: Book III* (1885 English; on point 2) “Wherefore also Mark, the interpreter and follower of Peter, does thus commence his Gospel narrative: “The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God… [continues online] **read ›**

5 *Against Heresies: Book III* these points, all who distort the shape of the Gospel are vain, ignorant, and also bold; those, I mean, who portray the aspects of the Gospel as being either more… [continues online] **read ›**

6 *Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenæus* (1885 English) “Gospel according to Matthew was written to the Jews… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 7–8*

7 *Fragments* 1 (1885 English) **Quote 5, page 4** “my son, salutes you. Mark, the follower of Peter, while Peter publicly preached the Gospel at Rome before some of Cæsar's equites, and adduced many testimonies to Christ, in… [continues online] **read ›**

8 *Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?* 5 (on point 4) “These things are written in the Gospel according to Mark… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 9–11*

9 *Against Marcion* 5 (on point 3) “then, Marcion ought to be called to a strict account concerning these other Gospels also, for having omitted them, and insisted in preference on Luke… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *Against Marcion* 2 **Quote 4, page 3** “now have our answer to the Antitheses, briefly set out by us. I now pass on to give proof of the Gospel — not, to be sure, of Jewry, but of… [continues online] **read ›**

11 *On the Flesh of Christ* 22 (1885 English; on point 3) “is, first of all, Matthew, that most faithful chronicler of the Gospel, because the companion of the Lord… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · sources 12–13*

12 *Commentary on Matthew* 1 (1885 English) **Quote 1, page 2** “so does Mark my son. 1 Peter 5:13 And third, was that according to Luke, the Gospel commended by Paul, which he composed for the converts from the Gentiles… [continues online] **read ›**

13 *Commentary on John* 6 (1885 English) **Quote 2, page 2** “we will begin with Matthew, who is reported by tradition to have published his Gospel before the others, to the Hebrews, those, namely, of the circumcision who believed… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · source 14*

14 *Apostolic Constitutions* “our sacred books, that is, those of the New Covenant, are these: the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *112 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

15 **Genesis 33:2** He put the two maidservants and their sons first, Leah and her children behind them, and Rachel and Joseph last. **read ›**

16 **Genesis 41:12** There was a young man there with us, a Hebrew, a servant of the chief cook. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us. **read ›**

17 **Genesis 43:33** They sat before him, the firstborn according to his seniority and the youngest according to his youth, and the men were amazed, each looking at his brother. **read ›**

18 **Genesis 48:18** And Joseph said to his father, “Not so, father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.” **read ›**

19 **Numbers 1:19** as the Lord had commanded Moses; and they were numbered in the wilderness of Sinai. **read ›**

20 **Numbers 2:34** And the children of Israel did all that the Lord had commanded Moses. So they encamped by their divisions, and so they set out, each one next to the other, by their clans, by the houses of their families. **read ›**

21 **Numbers 10:13** They set out first by the voice of the Lord, by the hand of Moses. **read ›**

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22 **Deuteronomy 6:5** And you shall love the Lord your God with all your mind, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. **read ›**

23 **Deuteronomy 21:15** If a man has two wives, one loved and the other hated, and both the loved and the hated have borne him children, and the firstborn son is the hated wife's, **read ›**

24 **Deuteronomy 21:17** But he shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the hated wife, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his children; the birthright belongs to him. **read ›**

25 **Judges 5:9** My heart is toward the things ordained for Israel; you who offer yourselves willingly among the people, bless the Lord. **read ›**

26 **1 Chronicles 9:31** Mattithiah, of the Levites, the firstborn of Shallum the Korahite, was in a position of trust over the work of the high priest's griddle sacrifice. **read ›**

27 **1 Chronicles 12:11** Jethi the sixth, Eliab the seventh, (Septuagint 1 Chronicles 12:12) **read ›**

28 **1 Chronicles 25:16** the ninth, Mattaniah; his sons and his brothers, twelve; **read ›**

29 **1 Chronicles 25:21** the fourteenth, Mattithiah; his sons and his brothers, twelve; **read ›**

30 **Nehemiah 10:37** And the firstfruits of our grain, and the fruit of every tree, of wine and of oil, we will bring to the priests, to the treasury of the house of God; and the tithe of our land to the Levites; and the Levites themselves will take the tithes in all the cities of our labor. (Septuagint 2 Esdras 20:38) **read ›**

31 **Proverbs 2:1** Son, if you receive the saying of my commandment and hide it with you, **read ›**

32 **Proverbs 2:3** for if you call upon wisdom, and give your voice to understanding, **read ›**

33 **Proverbs 2:4** and if you seek her like silver, and search her out like treasures, **read ›**

34 **Proverbs 3:9** Honor the Lord from your righteous labors, and give him firstfruits from your fruits of righteousness, **read ›**

35 **Proverbs 5:14** I very nearly came into every kind of evil in the midst of the assembly and the congregation." **read ›**

36 **Proverbs 5:21** For the ways of a man are before the eyes of God, and he watches all his tracks. **read ›**

37 **Proverbs 8:27** When he prepared the heaven, I was present with him; and when he marked out his own throne upon the winds, **read ›**

38 **Proverbs 9:18** But he does not know that the earthborn perish beside her, and that he meets a trap of Hades. But spring away, do not linger in the place, nor fix your eye upon her; for so you will cross over another's water. But keep away from another's water, and do not drink from another's spring, that you may live a long time, and years of life may be added to you. **read ›**

39 **Proverbs 14:19** The evil will fall before the good, and the ungodly will wait at the doors of the righteous. **read ›**

40 **Proverbs 15:15** The eyes of the evil look for evil things all the time, but the good are at rest continually. **read ›**

41 **Proverbs 15:24** The thoughts of the man of understanding are ways of life, that he may turn aside from Hades and be saved. **read ›**

42 **Proverbs 16:21** The wise and understanding they call worthless, but those who are sweet in speech will hear more. **read ›**

43 **Ecclesiastes 2:23** for all his days are days of pains, and his distraction is one of anger; even at night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity. **read ›**

44 **Ecclesiastes 10:12** The words of a wise man's mouth are grace, but the lips of a fool will swallow him up. **read ›**

45 **Ecclesiastes 10:19** They make bread for laughter, and wine and oil to make the living glad; and all things will humbly obey silver. **read ›**

46 **Song of Solomon 1:3** and the fragrance of your ointments is better than all spices. Your name is ointment poured out; therefore the maidens have loved you. **read ›**

47 **Daniel 3:9** "O king, live forever! **read ›**

48 **1 Esdras 3:17** And they said to them, "Tell us about what is written." Then the first, who had spoken of the strength of wine, began, **read ›**

49 **1 Esdras 8:94** as has been decided by you and by all who obey the law of the Lord. **read ›**

50 **1 Esdras 9:38** And the whole multitude gathered together in the open square before the gate of the temple toward the east, **read ›**

51 **Tobit 12:20** And now give thanks to God, because I am going up to him who sent me; and write all that has been accomplished in a book." **read ›**

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52 **Wisdom of Sirach 16:14** He will make room for every act of mercy; each one will find according to his works. **read ›**

53 **Wisdom of Sirach 18:29** Those who were understanding in words became wise themselves, and poured out exact proverbs. Self-Control of the Soul **read ›**

54 **Wisdom of Sirach 32:5** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

55 **Wisdom of Sirach 38:22** Remember his judgment, for yours will be so too: “For me yesterday, and for you today.” **read ›**

56 **Bel and the Dragon 1:33** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

57 **1 Maccabees 2:1** In those days Mattathias son of John, son of Simeon, a priest of the sons of Joarib, arose from Jerusalem and settled in Modein. **read ›**

58 **1 Maccabees 2:3** Simon, called Thassi; **read ›**

59 **1 Maccabees 2:4** Judas, called Maccabeus; **read ›**

60 **1 Maccabees 2:24** And Mattathias saw it and was filled with zeal, and his inward parts trembled; and he let his anger rise up in accordance with the judgment, and ran and slaughtered him on the pagan altar. **read ›**

61 **1 Maccabees 3:9** His name became known to the end of the earth, and he gathered together those who were perishing. **read ›**

62 **1 Maccabees 5:14** While the letters were still being read, behold, other messengers came from Galilee with their garments torn, reporting in these words, **read ›**

63 **1 Maccabees 5:21** So Simon went into Galilee and fought many battles with the nations, and the nations were crushed before him. **read ›**

64 **1 Maccabees 5:55** Now in the days when Judas and Jonathan were in Gilead, and Simon his brother was in Galilee opposite Ptolemais, **read ›**

65 **1 Maccabees 8:27** In the same way, if war comes first upon the nation of the Jews, the Romans shall fight as allies wholeheartedly, as the occasion shall be prescribed for them. **read ›**

66 **1 Maccabees 9:18** And Judas fell, and the rest fled. **read ›**

67 **1 Maccabees 14:19** And these were read before the assembly in Jerusalem. **read ›**

68 **1 Maccabees 15:15** Then Numenius and those with him came from Rome, with letters to the kings and the countries, in which the following was written: **read ›**

69 **1 Maccabees 15:24** And they wrote a copy of these to Simon the high priest. **read ›**

70 **1 Maccabees 16:21** But someone ran ahead and reported to John at Gazara that his father and his brothers had perished, and that “he has sent to kill you also.” **read ›**

71 **2 Maccabees 2:23** all this, set forth by Jason of Cyrene in five books, we will attempt to condense into a single work. **read ›**

72 **2 Maccabees 10:12** For Ptolemy, who was called Macron, had taken the lead in showing justice to the Jews because of the wrong that had been done to them, and had tried to deal with them peacefully. **read ›**

73 **2 Maccabees 10:19** Maccabeus left Simon and Joseph, and also Zacchaeus and those with him, a force sufficient to besiege them, and he himself went off to places where he was more urgently needed. **read ›**

74 **2 Maccabees 12:32** After the feast called Pentecost, they hurried against Gorgias, the governor of Idumea. **read ›**

75 **2 Maccabees 14:12** He immediately summoned Nicanor, who had been commander of the elephants, appointed him governor of Judea, and sent him off, **read ›**

76 **2 Maccabees 14:19** So he sent Posidonius, Theodotus, and Mattathias to give and receive right hands. **read ›**

77 **3 Maccabees 1:3** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

78 **1 Enoch 2:2** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

79 **1 Enoch 40:9** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

80 **1 Enoch 41:6** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

81 **1 Enoch 62:5** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

82 **1 Enoch 62:7** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

83 **1 Enoch 68:1** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

84 **1 Enoch 77:1** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

85 **1 Enoch 89:68** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

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86 **1 Enoch 108:1** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

87 **Matthew 4:12** Now when Jesus heard that John had been handed over, he withdrew into Galilee. **read ›**

88 **Matthew 9:9** As Jesus passed by from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax collection office. He said to him, “Follow me.” He got up and followed him. **read ›**

89 **Matthew 10:3** Philip; Bartholomew; Thomas; Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus; Lebbaeus, who was also called Thaddaeus; **read ›**

90 **Matthew 12:16** and commanded them that they should not make him known, **read ›**

91 **Matthew 15:15** Peter answered him, “Explain this parable to us.” **read ›**

92 **Matthew 16:14** They said, “Some say John the Baptist, some, Elijah, and others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” **read ›**

93 **Matthew 19:30** But many will be last who are first, and first who are last. **read ›**

94 **Matthew 20:16** So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few are chosen.” **read ›**

95 **Matthew 23:6** and love the place of honor at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, **read ›**

96 **Matthew 24:14** This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end shall come. **read ›**

97 **Mark 1:1** The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. **read ›**

98 **Mark 1:14** Now after John was taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, **read ›**

99 **Mark 1:28** The report of him went out immediately throughout the surrounding region of Galilee. **read ›**

100 **Mark 1:29** Immediately, when they had come out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. **read ›**

101 **Mark 1:35** Early in the morning, while it was still dark, he rose up and went out, and departed into a deserted place, and prayed there. **read ›**

102 **Mark 1:36** Simon and those who were with him searched for him. **read ›**

103 **Mark 1:37** They found him and told him, “Everyone is looking for you.” **read ›**

104 **Mark 1:39** He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee and casting out demons. **read ›**

105 **Mark 3:12** He sternly warned them that they should not make him known. **read ›**

106 **Mark 3:14** He appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them out to preach **read ›**

107 **Mark 3:16** Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); **read ›**

108 **Mark 3:18** Andrew; Philip; Bartholomew; Matthew; Thomas; James, the son of Alphaeus; Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot; **read ›**

109 **Mark 6:15** Others said, “He is Elijah.” Others said, “He is a prophet, like one of the prophets.” **read ›**

110 **Mark 8:28** They answered, “John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.” **read ›**

111 **Mark 9:12** He said to them, “Elijah indeed comes first, and restores all things. How is it written about the Son of Man, that he should suffer many things and be despised? **read ›**

112 **Mark 10:31** But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” **read ›**

113 **Mark 12:39** and to get the best seats in the synagogues and the best places at feasts, **read ›**

114 **Mark 13:3** As he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, **read ›**

115 **Mark 13:10** The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. **read ›**

116 **Mark 14:13** He sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the city, and there a man carrying a pitcher of water will meet you. Follow him, **read ›**

117 **Mark 14:33** He took with him Peter, James, and John, and began to be greatly troubled and distressed. **read ›**

118 **Mark 16:7** But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He goes before you into Galilee. There you will see him, as he said to you.’” **read ›**

119 **Mark 16:9** Now when he had risen early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. **read ›**

120 **Acts 8:23** For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and the bond of unrighteousness.” **read ›**

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121 **Acts 12:12** Thinking about that, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. **read ›**

122 **Acts 12:25** Barnabas and Saul returned to Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their service, also taking with them John who was called Mark. **read ›**

123 **Acts 15:37** Barnabas planned to take John, who was called Mark, with them also. **read ›**

124 **Romans 7:2** For the woman that has a husband is bound by law to the husband while he lives, but if the husband dies, she is discharged from the law of the husband. **read ›**

125 **2 Timothy 4:11** Only Luke is with me. Take Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service. **read ›**

126 **1 Peter 5:13** She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, greets you. So does Mark, my son. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *34 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Ecclesiastes 5:2

Song of Solomon 3:6

Isaiah 65:5

Jeremiah 23:20 · 23:30

Daniel 10:16 · 10:18

Matthew 1:1 · 1:18 · 3:13 · 3:15 · 3:16 · 5:13 · 5:18 · 5:42 · 6:1 · 10:23 · 10:29 · 16:23 · 17:1

Mark 9:2

Luke 17:19 · 19:12

John 1:26 · 2:1 · 2:4 · 3:6

Acts 19:2

Romans 1:3

1 Corinthians 11:3

Galatians 2:2 · 3:8

Philippians 4:3

2 Timothy 2:8

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Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “Was Mark or Matthew written first?” on May 19, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

Library only. This study was written only from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed above, with a link to read it.

How it was made. Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY