

THE TWO BIG QUESTIONS OF BIBLE CANON RELIABILITY: COMPLETION & CORRUPTION

DEAD SEA SCROLLS – **DEUTEROCANONICALS** – **GNOSTIC GOSPELS**

by David L. Burris

Books	Protestant tradition	Roman Catholic tradition	Eastern Orthodox tradition	Armenian Apostolic tradition ^[N 1]	Coptic Orthodox tradition	Orthodox Tewahedo traditions	Syriac Christian traditions
<i>Canonical gospels^[N 2]</i>							
Matthew	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes ^[N 3]
Mark ^[N 4]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes ^[N 3]
Luke	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes ^[N 3]
John ^{[N 4][N 5]}	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes ^[N 3]
<i>Apostolic history</i>							
Acts ^[N 4]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Acts of Paul and Thecla ^{[N 6][50][51]}	No	No	No	No (early tradition)	No	No	No (early tradition)
<i>Pauline epistles</i>							
Romans	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1 Corinthians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 Corinthians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Corinthians to Paul and 3 Corinthians ^{[N 6][N 7]}	No	No	No	No – inc. in some mss.	No	No	No (early tradition)
Galatians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ephesians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Philippians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colossians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Laodiceans	No – inc. in some eds. ^[N 8]	No – inc. in some mss.	No	No	No	No	No
1 Thessalonians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 Thessalonians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1 Timothy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 Timothy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Titus	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Philemon	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>General epistles</i>							
Hebrews	Yes ^[N 9]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
James	Yes ^[N 10]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1 Peter	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 Peter	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes ^[N 10]
1 John ^[N 4]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 John	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes ^[N 10]
3 John	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes ^[N 10]
Jude	Yes ^[N 9]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes ^[N 10]
<i>Apocalypse^[N 11]</i>							
Revelation	Yes ^[N 9]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes ^[N 10]
<i>Apostolic Fathers^[N 12] and Church Orders^[N 13]</i>							
1 Clement ^[N 14]	No (Codices Alexandrinus and Hierosolymitanus)						
2 Clement ^[N 14]	No (Codices Alexandrinus and Hierosolymitanus)						
Shepherd of Hermas ^[N 14]	No (Codex Sinaiticus)						
Epistle of Barnabas ^[N 14]	No (Codices Hierosolymitanus and Sinaiticus)						
Didache ^[N 14]	No (Codex Hierosolymitanus)						
Ser'ata Seyon (Sinodos)	No	No	No	No	No	Yes (broader canon)	No
Te'ezaz (Sinodos)	No	No	No	No	No	Yes (broader canon)	No
Gessew (Sinodos)	No	No	No	No	No	Yes (broader canon)	No
Abtelis (Sinodos)	No	No	No	No	No	Yes (broader canon)	No
Book of the Covenant 1 (Mashafa Kidan)	No	No	No	No	No	Yes (broader canon)	No
Book of the Covenant 2 (Mashafa Kidan)	No	No	No	No	No	Yes (broader canon)	No
Ethiopic Clement (Qalēmentos) ^[N 15]	No	No	No	No	No	Yes (broader canon)	No
Ethiopic Didascalia (Didesqelya) ^[N 15]	No	No	No	No	No	Yes (broader canon)	No

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS TRANSLATIONS OF THE GENESIS CREATION ACCOUNT

The Text of Genesis 1:9

Masoretic Text & 4QGen

4QGen & 4QGen

Septuagint

ויאמר אלהים יקוו המים [אלהים יקוו המים] ויאמר אלהים יקוו המים
[אחד מתחת השמים אל מקוה] אחד מתחת השמים אל מקוה
ותראה היבשה ויהי כן [ותראה היבשה ויהי כן]
[ויקוו המים מתחת השמים אל] ויקוו המים מתחת השמים אל
[מקוהם] ותר א היב [שה] מקוהם
Και ειπεν ο Θεος συναχθητω το υδωρ το υποκατω του ουρανου
εις συναγωγην μιαν και οφθητω η ξηρα και εγενετο ουτως και
συναχθη το υδωρ το υποκατω του ουρανου εις τας συναγωγας
αυτων και ωφθη η ξηρα

Then God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so.

Then God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered beneath the heaven be gathered into one gathering, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so.
[Then the waters beneath the heavens were gathered into their gatherings] and the [dry heaven was collected into its land] appeared. gatherings, and the dry land appeared.¹

¹ Lyon, J. D. (2019). [The Genesis Creation Account in the Dead Sea Scrolls](#) (pp. 30–33). Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications.

4Q265, frag 7, lines 11–17

11. *vacat* In the firs[t] week [Adam was created,8. but there was nothing holy to him until]
12. he was brought to the Garden of Eden. And a bone [of his bones was taken for the woman, but nothing holy]
13. [w]as to her until she was brought to [his]g. side [in the second week ...]
14. [for] the Garden of Eden is holy and every young shoot which is in the midst of it is holy. [Therefore, a woman who begets a male]
15. shall be impure seven days, as in the days of her menstruation shall she be impure, and th[irty-three days shall she remain in the blood]
16. of her purity. *vacat* And if she begets a female, she shall be impure [two weeks as in her menstruation, and sixty-six days]
17. [shall she rem]ain in the blood of her purity. [No] holy thing [shall she touch, and she shall not enter into the sanctuary until the completion of]

Jubilees 3:8–14

- In the first week Adam was created and also the rib, his wife. And in the second week He showed her to him. And therefore the commandment was given to observe seven days for a male, but for a female twice seven days in their impurity.
- And after forty days were completed for Adam in the land where he was created, we brought him into the Garden of Eden so that he might work it and guard it. And on the 80th day his wife was also brought in. And after this she entered the Garden of Eden.
10. And therefore the command was written in the heavenly tablets for one who bears, "If she bears a male, she shall remain seven days in her impurity like the first seven days. And thirty-three days she shall remain in the blood of her purity. And she shall not touch anything holy. And she shall not enter the sanctuary until she has completed these days which are in accord with (the rule for) a male (child).
 11. And that which is in accord with (the rule for) a female is two weeks—like the first two weeks—in her impurity. And sixty-six days she shall remain in the blood of her purity. And their total will be eighty days."
 12. And when she finished those eighty days, we brought her into the Garden of Eden because it is more holy than any land. And every tree which is planted in it is holy.
 13. Therefore, the ordinances of these days were ordained for anyone who bears a male or female that she might not touch anything holy and she might not enter the sanctuary until these days are completed for a male or female.
 14. This is the law and testimony which is written for Israel so that they might keep it always.

An Outline of the Book of *Jubilees*

1:1–29	Introduction: Israel’s rebellion and future restoration
2:1–4:32	Narratives about Creation and Adam
4:33–10:26	Narratives about Noah, the Flood, and Babel
11:1–23:8	Narratives about Abraham
23:9–32	Thoughts on Abraham’s death and Israel’s future restoration
24:1–45:16	Narratives about Jacob and his sons
46:1–49:23	Narratives about bondage in Egypt, Moses, and the Exodus
50:1–13	Conclusion: Israel’s future restoration, observance of laws, the Sabbath

The Retelling of the Creation Account in *Jub 2:1–24*

Introduction

2:1

a) *“... in six days the LORD God completed all His works and everything that He created.*

b) *And He observed a Sabbath on the seventh day and He sanctified it for all ages. And He gave it as a sign for all His works.’ ”*

First Six Days of Creation Week

2:2–3

“For on the first day ...” ... “He made seven great works”

2:4

“And on the second day ...” ... “This was the only work He made”

2:5–7

“And on the third day ...” ... “These four great kinds He made”

2:8–10

“And on the fourth day ...” ... “These three kinds He made”

2:11–12

“And on the fifth day ...” ... “These three great kinds He made”

2:13–16

“And on the sixth day ...” ... “These four kinds He made”

“And in all there were twenty-two kinds”

Conclusion to Day Six

2:16

a) *“And He finished all His works on the sixth day—all that is in the heavens, and on the earth, and in the seas, and in the depths, and in the light, and in the darkness, and in every (place).”*

Introduction to the Sabbath 2:17

b) *“And He gave us a great sign, the Sabbath day, so that we might work six days and observe a Sabbath from all work on the seventh day.”*

Israel and the Sabbath 2:18–24

“... And He said to us, ‘Behold I shall separate for Myself a people from among all the nations. And they will also keep the Sabbath. And I will sanctify them for Myself, and I will bless them. Just as I have sanctified and shall sanctify the Sabbath day for Myself thus shall I bless them. And they will be My people and I will be their God. And I have chosen the seed of Jacob ... and I have recorded him as My firstborn son ...’

“There were twenty-two chief men from Adam until Jacob, and twenty-two kinds of works were made before the seventh day. The former is blessed and sanctified, and the latter is also blessed and sanctified. One was like the other with respect to sanctification and blessing. And it was granted to the former that they should always be the blessed and sanctified ones of the testimony and the first law just as He had sanctified and blessed Sabbath day on the seventh day.”²

² Lyon, J. D. (2019). [*The Genesis Creation Account in the Dead Sea Scrolls*](#) (pp. 133–154). Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications.

The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible

by [Justin Rogers, Ph.D.](#)

Article In Brief..

With the discovery and publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls during the last 70+ years, the world has been permitted access to a variety of non-canonical religious books. More importantly, access has been given to manuscripts of various Old Testament books that are over 1,000 years older than those previously known. The Scrolls verify the fact that the Old Testament has been copied and transmitted with remarkable accuracy.

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The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls is widely regarded as the greatest archaeological discovery of the 20th century. From 1947 to 1956 about 930 scrolls were found in 11 desert caves near Qumran, a site about 12½ miles southeast of Jerusalem. Other discoveries were made in about 11 other sites in the vicinity of the Dead Sea, but no place yielded the number of manuscripts as Qumran. The Qumran scrolls span four centuries, from the third century B.C. to the first century A.D., and are written in four languages, Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Nabatean, in addition to discovered coins having Latin inscriptions. The Dead Sea Scrolls are important for the Old Testament in at least two major ways: (1) they allow us access to Old Testament manuscripts over 1,000 years older than we previously knew; and (2) they provide information about the formation of the Old Testament canon of Scripture.

DISCOVERY AND PUBLICATION OF THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

The story has been told often.¹ A Bedouin shepherd threw a rock into a cave, heard a crash, and discovered the Dead Sea Scrolls. This story is not entirely true. First, the broken jar and discovery of the cave took place two days before the first scrolls were found. There was not one Bedouin shepherd, but three. One threw the rock, and another entered the cave two days later without the prior knowledge of his partners. The shepherds took only a few scrolls, and they had no idea what they were and how much they were worth. The scrolls removed from what became known as Cave 1 were the “Great Isaiah Scroll” (1QIsa^a), Habakkuk commentary (1QpHab), and the Community Rule (1QS).² These were slightly damaged in transportation before they could be sold to a dealer of antiquities, and to a Syrian Orthodox monastery.

When the number and value of the scrolls were determined, other caves continued to be looted & their contents sold by the Ta’amireh tribe to which the shepherds belonged. Once the importance of the scrolls was determined, both scholars & governmental organizations (initially, of Jordan, and later, of Israel) became involved in discovering additional caves and conducting formal excavations. The Qumran site was excavated in five consecutive seasons under the leadership of Roland De Vaux of the Jerusalem-based École Biblique (1951-1956). Eventually, 10 more caves were discovered in the area of Qumran, Cave 4 alone yielding fragments of nearly 600 manuscripts.³

The laborious task of deciphering, editing, and publishing the Dead Sea Scrolls is a drama unto itself. The original scholars entrusted with the task of publishing the Scrolls were exclusively Christian, and thus the interests of early researchers tended toward Christian backgrounds and the relationship of the Scrolls to the New Testament. This fact irked many non-Christian scholars, especially the Israelis. With the additions of Israeli scholars Elisha Qimron and Emanuel Tov to the publication team in the 1980s, this problem was rectified, and now scholars from all backgrounds work on the Dead Sea Scrolls.

In addition to the ethnic issues, the early publishing team was small and very slow to do their work. Between 1950 and 1990 only seven of the eventual forty volumes in Oxford University Press’s *Discoveries in the Judean Desert* series had been completed. In the 1990’s alone, however, 20 additional volumes in this series appeared. There are two reasons for the proliferation in publication: First, Emanuel Tov of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem became the general editor of the series in late 1990. His appointment followed an anti-Semitism scandal that resulted in then-director John Strugnell of Harvard University being removed from the post. The scandal was provoked by Director Strugnell’s comments in the Israeli newspaper, *Ha-aretz*.⁴

Second, Ben Zion Wacholder of Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio, with the help of his student, Martin Abegg, produced a nearly complete text of the Scrolls from a previously published concordance.⁵ With the early use of computer databasing, Abegg was able to reverse-engineer the text of many Scrolls from the concordance. Although their publication was unauthorized both by the Israel Antiquities Authority and Oxford University, all agree their publication broke the hold on the Dead Sea Scrolls & encouraged scholars to complete the work of official publication.⁶ Today all of the discovered, decipherable Scrolls have been published, and photographs of many of the Scrolls are available on the Internet.

This article provides two examples. Figure 1 is a photograph of two columns of the Great Isaiah Scroll, featuring Isaiah 53. This scroll is among the best preserved, and is not typical of the discovered manuscripts. Figure 2 is a more typical collection of fragments pieced together by specialists. Most Dead Sea Scrolls are, indeed, not so much scrolls as scraps.

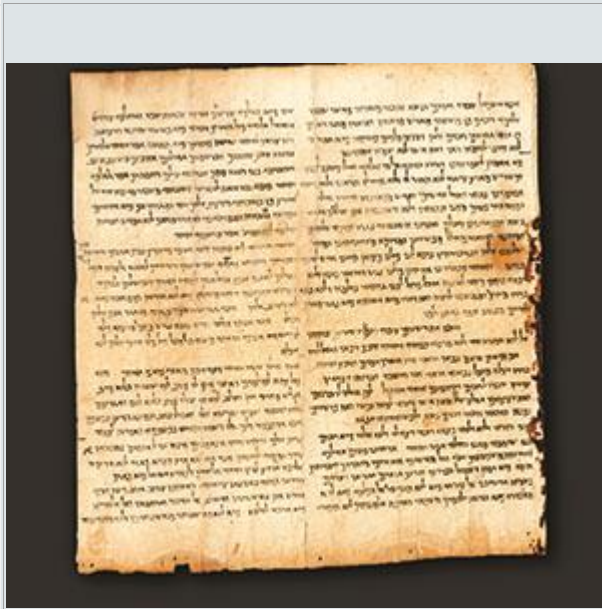


Figure 1: The Great Isaiah Scroll (Isaiah 53)



Figure 2: A Portion of the Temple Scroll

NON-BIBLICAL MANUSCRIPTS OF THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

It surprises many people to hear the majority of the Dead Sea Scrolls are non-biblical. Of the approximately 930 scrolls discovered in the Judean desert, only 222 are biblical (i.e., less than 25%). The percentage of biblical scrolls is much higher at Judean desert sites other than Qumran. The biblical texts of Masada, for example, represent forty-seven % of the total number of scrolls discovered.² We may conclude Jews living in desert communities read many different books & weren't readers of the Bible alone. This doesn't necessarily mean, however, that secular books were read more than the Bible. In my personal library I have hundreds of books, but my Bibles take up only about a shelf and a half. Most of these books I do not read regularly, but my Bibles are in constant use. A similar situation might have existed for the Dead Sea communities. Still, the non-biblical Scrolls have relevance for how the Old Testament was understood and interpreted by some Jews prior to the time of the New Testament.

In order to better examine the non-biblical Scrolls, further classification is needed. So, we shall first discuss works certainly not written by members of the Qumran community, what Protestants might term "Apocrypha" as well as the so-called "Pseudepigrapha." Then we shall turn to the "sectarian texts" that were either written by members of the Qumran sect or were formative for their development as a community.

Part_Two - The Apocrypha Versus The Pseudepigrapha

The term “apocrypha” is a Greek plural substantive meaning “things hidden.” The term is borrowed from the Church Fathers who used it frequently to refer to books outside of the canon of Scripture recognized by the church. The term “pseudepigrapha,” by contrast, refers to writings “falsely ascribed.” Based on this meaning, the term pseudepigrapha ought to be applied to books such as 1 Enoch (which was not written by the real Enoch), the Wisdom of Solomon (not written by Solomon), and so on. But the collection called Pseudepigrapha now stands for almost any non-canonical book that does not belong to the Old Testament or to the Protestant “Apocrypha.”

Of the Catholic Church’s “deuterocanonicals” (Protestant “Apocrypha”), the Dead Sea Scrolls preserve five copies of Tobit, three of the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirah (Ecclesiasticus) & one of the so-called Epistle of Jeremiah (not written by Jeremiah). The position of Pseudepigrapha is much better. The mysterious book of 1st Enoch is represented in 12 copies from Qumran, and the book of Jubilees in no less than 13 & as many as 16 copies (depending on whether fragments represent additional manuscripts). There are at least five additional compositions related to Jubilees, further attesting its importance. By manuscript count alone, Jubilees is better represented than all but four of canonical O.T. books (Psalms, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Genesis). Some scholars have suggested that both 1 Enoch and Jubilees were accepted as canonical Scripture in Qumran. This is certainly possible, although perhaps it is best to leave the question open. Popularity does not require canonicity (see more below).

Sectarian Texts

The Dead Sea Scrolls discovery unveiled many works that were previously unknown. Since they are associated exclusively with the Qumran sect, they are normally called “sectarian.” Indeed, some of these works relate specifically to life in the sectarian community. The most important are the Damascus Document (CD) and the Rule of the Community (1QS), which best inform us about life in the community. Other texts are legal in nature, such as the Temple Scroll (11QT) and *miksat ma’asei ha-Torah* (4QMMT), roughly translated “some matters of the Law.” This latter text lists grievances the Qumran community had with the Temple and its officials in Jerusalem.

It will surprise many readers to know that some of the Qumran scrolls were written in “cryptic scripts.” Scholars believe these scripts are, in fact, based on the Hebrew language, but have never deciphered them.⁸ The original editor of these texts distinguished three different cryptic scripts: “Cryptic A,” “Cryptic B,” and “Cryptic C,” respectively. As far as we know, these cryptic scripts are used nowhere else. But were in prominent use at Qumran. The leader of the Qumran community (*maskil* or “understanding one”) likely communicated in Cryptic A himself, which represents no less than 55 manuscripts. Cryptic B is found in two manuscripts, and the text of origin remains undeciphered. Cryptic C is found in only one manuscript. It utilizes the paleo-Hebrew alphabet and five additional letters that cannot be identified. The individual who manages to decipher these cryptic scripts will earn lasting fame in the pantheon of scholarship!

More relevant for the text of the Old Testament and how we got the Bible are two categories of writings: the works of rewritten Bible & the commentaries (*pesharim*, or “interpretations”). Geza Vermes coined the term “rewritten Bible” to refer to the Jewish works written in either Hebrew or Aramaic that paraphrase the Scriptures, and insert their own expansions and interpretations.⁹

Vermes primarily had in mind the book of Jubilees, the Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen), and Pseudo-Philo's "Book of Biblical Antiquities." The former two works were found among the Qumran scrolls. These "rewritten Bible" works are interpretive expansions of the biblical literature. We learn many details, such as the name of Noah's wife ("Emzara," according to Jubilees 4:33), the reason why God chose Abram (he refused to participate in the building of the Tower of Babel, Pseudo-Philo chapter 6), and how Abram convinced Sarai to mislead about being his wife (he dreamt prophetically she would save him, 1QapGen column 19). There's no indication that any of these expansions are to be accepted as legitimate, but they do teach us the ancient Hebrews were careful and inquisitive readers of the Bible. More importantly for us, the close following of the biblical text confirms that their Scriptures followed the exact storyline as ours. There is no evidence that the Bible has undergone massive changes over time, as some wish to allege. **We read essentially the same Bible as they did.**

OLD TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS OF THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

The most celebrated of the Scrolls have been the Old Testament manuscripts. Although some scholars have asserted that fragments of certain New Testament verses can be located, most scholars agree that no New Testament copies, quotations, or fragments exist among Dead Sea Scrolls. While the Qumran community did, in fact, exist at the time of Jesus & Apostles, there is no evidence that any of the Dead Sea Jewish communities were aware of the early Christian movement. This means our discussion of biblical evidence must focus on the Old Testament. We shall begin by discussing the numbers of manuscripts we possess before moving to consider issues relating to the canonicity of the Old Testament.

Biblical Manuscripts by the Numbers

All Judean desert sites show a special respect for the Law of Moses. The Pentateuch represents 87 of the some 200 biblical Qumran scrolls & 15 of the additional 25 texts that were discovered outside Qumran belong to the Pentateuch.¹⁰ In other words, 45 percent of the total number of texts from the Judean desert are Pentateuchal. The Major Prophets represent 46 more manuscripts, and the Minor Prophets 10 additional. So the Prophetic books account for nearly one-quarter of the whole. This leaves 25-30% for the rest of the Old Testament.

The Historical Books did not fare as well, with only 18 copies. To illustrate, just one small fragment about the size of human hand represents all of 1st and 2nd Chronicles, and no copies were identified of the Nehemiah section of Ezra-Nehemiah (which is a single book in Hebrew) or of the book of Esther. The Poetic Books, excluding the Psalms, represent 14 manuscripts. But 39 manuscripts of Psalms alone were discovered, 36 of which are from Qumran. Broadly speaking, the popularity & dispersion of biblical scrolls in the Judean Desert matches very closely what we observe among the books quoted in the New Testament. Among stand-alone books at Qumran, the Psalms takes the crown (39 manuscripts), followed by Deuteronomy (33), Genesis (24), Isaiah (22), and Exodus (18). Interestingly, four of these were in the "top five list" of books quoted by Jesus: Psalms, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Exodus (7). In fact,

Table 1 compares the number of Qumran manuscripts with the frequency of explicit quotation in the New Testament. While books can be used without necessarily being quoted, Table 1 provides an interesting point of comparison.

Biblical Book	Judean Desert Manuscripts	New Testament Quotations
Psalms	39	69
Deuteronomy	33	32
Genesis	24	24
Isaiah	22	51
Exodus	18	31
Leviticus	17	12
Numbers	11	1
Minor Prophets	10	25
Daniel	8	0
Jeremiah	6	4
Ezekiel	6	0
Job	6	1
1-2 Samuel	4	3
Ruth	4	0
Song of Songs	4	0
Lamentations	4	0
Judges	3	0
1-2 Kings	3	3
Joshua	2	1
Proverbs	2	5
Ecclesiastes	2	0
Ezra	1	0
1-2 Chronicles	1	0
Nehemiah	0	1
Ester	0	0

Table 1: Number of Dead Sea Scrolls by biblical book compared with New Testament quotations by biblical book¹¹

BIBLICAL MANUSCRIPTS AND THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON

So far, we've discussed mostly facts. But what do these facts mean? It's prudent to remember that absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence. In other words, if books are missing (such as Esther or Nehemiah) or are poorly represented (such as Chronicles or Ezra) among the Dead Sea Scrolls, we cannot on that basis alone conclude the Qumran community rejected them from their biblical canon. And the opposite is true: if certain books are well represented among the Dead Sea Scrolls (such as Jubilees or 1st Enoch), we cannot on that basis alone conclude that the Qumran community accepted them into their biblical canon. What books people like to read and what books people consider inspired may, in fact, be different. We know from modern experience certain Bible books are underappreciated and undertaught among Christians. Do we wish to exclude these books from the canon? Of course not. Again, popularity is not the same thing as canonicity. The truth is the Dead Sea Scrolls are of limited value answering Old Testament questions of canonicity. Apparently – they didn't think in those terms, and never addressed the question of which books were in and which ones were out. The better question is to ask what Qumran sectarians considered authoritative. And in order to answer this question, we must move beyond simply counting manuscripts. We must attempt to understand how the biblical literature was used.

We shall start with the name of "Moses," which occurs over one hundred fifty times in the sectarian manuscripts. All sections of the Pentateuch are quoted and interpreted as inspired literature. This should not surprise us, for the Pentateuch was the most popular portion of the Bible among all Jewish groups at the time of Jesus. But we can go further. The text of the Prophets is equally authoritative. The Peshar Habakkuk is a commentary that takes the book of Habakkuk as an inspired prophecy of the experiences of the Qumran community, and is interpreted clearly in this fashion. Other prophets, such as Isaiah & Ezekiel, are also quoted as authorities. While we cannot regard all of the prophets as equally authoritative based on the way they are quoted (Obadiah, for instance, is never quoted in this way), most of them can be regarded as both inspired and authoritative.

"David," too, appears frequently as a sacred figure. The Qumran sectarians know the details of his life from Samuel and Chronicles. For example, "David's actions ascended as the smoke of a sacrifice [before God] except for the blood of Uriah, but God forgave him" (CD 5.5-6). Such high estimation of David's character explains how the Psalms verses he wrote would be considered authoritative. And the Psalms are frequently quoted as inspired in the Dead Sea Scrolls. In fact, the Old Testament as a whole can be characterized as "the Law, the Prophets, and David" (4QMMT fr. 14). Since the Hebrew Bible is generally divided into three parts—the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings—this threefold division is extremely important. Jesus' own division of the Old Testament into "the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms" is very similar (Luke 24:44).

Interestingly, although many books & parts of the Old Testament are quoted as authoritative, to my knowledge Jubilees, 1st Enoch, and none of the other Apocryphal or Pseudepigraphical books found among the Dead Sea Scrolls are quoted in this way. The sectarians may have borrowed language and ideas from these books, and may have been heavily influenced by their teachings, but they did not consider them on par with the books of the Old Testament. If these secondary books were considered in any sense authoritative, they appear never to be quoted as such and thus used as the basis for doctrine. This is telling. We can compare the situation to the role of a preacher in a church. Generations of congregants may know the preacher's retelling of the Bible better than they know the Bible itself! Yet, when asked if they consider their preacher as a voice on par with authority of Scripture, they would likely reply with an indignant, "Of course not!" Acknowledged authority may well be different from unrealized influence.

The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Reliability of the Biblical Text

There is no doubt that the Bible has been transmitted faithfully to us through the centuries, and the Dead Sea Scrolls further help to substantiate that truth. Some biblical apologists, however, have often exaggerated the “confirmation” the Dead Sea Scrolls offer the text of the Old Testament. Such comments are often made on the basis of the Great Isaiah Scroll alone, and are sometimes unwisely connected to a percentage evaluation. For example, I’ve heard several times, “the Dead Sea Scrolls confirm the text of the Old Testament in 99% of the cases.” Not only is such a figure untrue, this whole line of assertion paints an unrealistic picture of the evidence. First, most biblical Scrolls, as we’ve seen, are extremely fragmentary, & therefore cannot offer us a clear basis of comparison for the Bible as a whole. In fact, the only Bible book to be preserved among the Dead Sea Scrolls intact is the Great Isaiah Scroll. Even in the Pentateuch and the Psalms, where the evidence is good, whole sections of the biblical text are completely missing or extremely lacunose. In these cases, the Scrolls can’t confirm anything. And we’re speaking here of best-preserved books. The situation’s worse for the other biblical books.

Second, many apologists exaggerate the similarities and ignore the differences between the texts that **can** be compared. For example, the traditional Hebrew Bible preserved in the two major Medieval manuscripts, the Aleppo and Leningrad Codices, respectively (the so-called Masoretic Text), fixes the height of Goliath as “six cubits and a span” (1 Samuel 17:4). But 4QSam^a, a Dead Sea Scrolls manuscript dating to the first century B.C., reads in this passage “four cubits and a span.” This means Goliath is about six feet, four inches tall instead of the Masoretic text’s gigantic nine feet, four inches tall. Further, the reading of 4QSam^a agrees with translation of the Greek Old Testament, which read “four cubits and a span” well before the time of the Medieval manuscripts. Should we revise the height of Goliath in our Bibles? Most modern translations have chosen to ignore our oldest Hebrew copy of this portion of Samuel, or to relegate the information to a footnote. Why?

Another example from Samuel is located in a mysterious passage. The traditional Masoretic text has it as follows: “Then Nahash the Ammonite came up and encamped against Jabesh Gilead & all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, ‘Make a covenant with us, and we will serve you.’ And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, ‘On this condition I will make a covenant with you, that I may put out all your right eyes, and bring reproach on all Israel’” (1 Samuel 11:1-2, NKJV). Nowhere else in the Bible or ancient Near Eastern literature do we read eye-gouging as a covenantal condition. This passage is exceedingly strange and impossible to explain. But if we look at the oldest Hebrew copy of Samuel, we gain a bit more clarity.

The NRSV is one of the few modern versions to use the text of 4QSam^a in their translation of this passage. As a prelude to 1st Samuel 11:1, the NRSV includes the words,

Now Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had been grievously oppressing the Gadites and the Reubenites. He would gouge out the right eye of each of them and would not grant Israel a deliverer. No one was left of the Israelites across the Jordan whose right eye Nahash, King of the Ammonites, had not gouged out. But there were 7,000 men who had escaped from the Ammonites and had entered Jabesh-gilead.

This note, found in the oldest Hebrew manuscript of Samuel, explains two important details. First, it explains demand for the right eyes of the Reubenites & Gadites. Second, it explains why the men fled to Jabesh-Gilead & why Nahash besieged it. Not only is this reading in the oldest Hebrew copy of Samuel, it actually aids our understanding of the Scripture. Yet most modern English translations reject it.

One more example shall suffice. Hebrew poetry is intricately designed in ways that English readers simply can't appreciate. One of their most complex of poetic forms is the acrostic poem. The author will compose a coherent poem beginning each line, verse, or stanza with subsequent letters of the Hebrew alphabet from 'aleph totav. Psalm 119 is one of the most famous and indeed one of the most beautiful pieces of literature in world history. Psalm 145 is an acrostic as well. But there is one problem: a verse is missing. Psalm 145 walks through every letter of Hebrew alphabet with exception of the letter nun. The Greek O.T. Testament always had this missing line, but later Masoretic manuscripts had lost it somewhere along the way. Alas, due to discovery of 11QPs³, the verse can now be restored: "God is faithful in his words and gracious in all his works."

Let us pause here to make an important observation: these cases we have been discussing are most unusual. In fact, **there are relatively few examples of passages that are totally different in the Dead Sea Scrolls than they appear in the Medieval Hebrew manuscripts.** And the majority of the passages that are different match some other known version of the Old Testament (usually Greek translation). **This means that the Old Testament has been copied & transmitted with remarkable accuracy.** It's not a stretch to say the Hebrew Bible known to Jesus is essentially **the same as the one known to us.** All of this then leads to the conclusion the Dead Sea Scrolls sometimes complicate, but generally confirm, our knowledge of the Old Testament text.

CONCLUSION

The Dead Sea Scrolls are important for a number of reasons. First, they shed light on an otherwise known Jewish group. Actually, the people who wrote the Scrolls never refer to themselves as Jews. They are intriguingly vague about their identity. Second, the Scrolls indicate that certain books of the Bible were more popular than others, a conclusion we could draw similarly from the New Testament quotations of the Old Testament.

Third, the use of the Old Testament as an authoritative source for biblical interpretation and personal and community life matches material from the New Testament as well. Finally, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls allows us to access Old Testament manuscripts more than 1,000 years older than we previously possessed. Before discovery of the Scrolls, the oldest complete manuscript of any Old Testament book dated to the 10th century A.D. To be clear, if Moses wrote the Pentateuch *circa* 1400 BC, then our earliest copy of his complete work in Hebrew dated 2,400 years after it was written! It's with justification that the Dead Sea Scrolls are considered by many the most important biblical archaeological discovery of all time.

ENDNOTES

¹ The scholar who was involved in and who investigated most carefully the discovery of the early scrolls is John C. Trever. His investigation is recorded in his 1965 book, *The Untold Story of Qumran* (Westwood, N.J.: Revell).

² A digital interactive copy of these scrolls can be viewed at the following address: <http://dss.collections.imj.org.il>.

³ A twelfth cave was discovered in 2016, but this cave yielded no manuscripts. The geology of the region has changed greatly over the past 2,000 years, and it is probable that future caves will be discovered.

⁴ An English language version of the Israeli reporter's interview of Strugnell was printed in the January/February, 1991 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review*, (17[1]).

⁵ The work of Wachholder and Abegg was published in two volumes by the editor of the *Biblical Archaeology Review* in Hershel Shanks, ed. (1992), *A Facsimile Edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society).

⁶ A detailed account of the role of Hebrew Union College may be found in Jason Kalman (2013), *Hebrew Union College and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Cincinnati: HUC Press).

⁷ See Emanuel Tov (2002), "The Biblical Texts from the Judean Desert," in *The Hebrew Bible as Book: The Hebrew Bible and the Judean Desert Discoveries*, ed. Edward Herbert and Emanuel Tov (London: The British Library), p. 141.

⁸ The most recent editor of these texts presents much of his work in Stephen Pfann (2000), *Discovery in the Judean Desert* (Oxford: Clarendon), 36:515-574.

⁹ Geza Vermes (1973), *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, second edition).

¹⁰ See Emanuel Tov, "The Biblical Texts from the Judean Desert," p. 141.

¹¹ For the Dead Sea Scrolls, I use the table published in Flint and VanderKam (2002), *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (San Francisco: Harper), p. 150, on whom I depend for much information in this section. For the New Testament quotations, I use the list compiled by Crossway (<https://www.crossway.org/blog/2006/03/nt-citations-of-ot/>).



What are the Nag Hammadi Documents?

- **Accidentally discovered in 1945 near the Egyptian village of Nag Hammadi.**
- **Six bedouin camel drivers were digging for fertilizer when one of them uncovered a human skeleton buried next to an earthenware jar.**
- **Inside the jar, they found thirteen leather-bound volumes containing fifty-two treatises.**



What's the Evidence?



- *“The Nag Hammadi scrolls . . . tell . . . an alternative history of the time of Jesus and Mary Magdalene” (Dan Brown)*
- Teabing calls these texts *“the earliest Christian records”* (245) and the *“unaltered gospels”* (248).

What are the Nag Hammadi Documents?

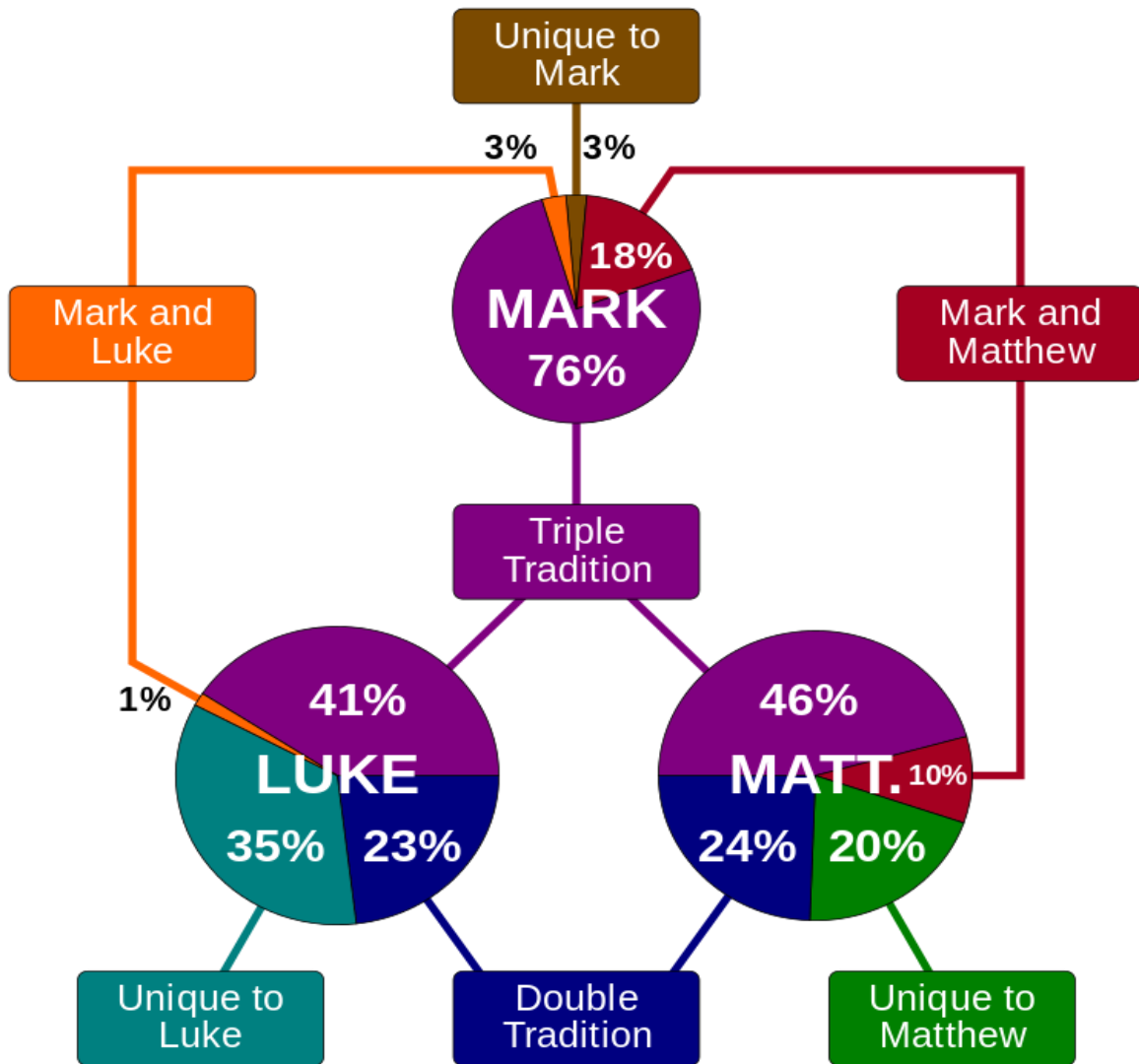
- The books included Gospels (e.g. *Thomas, Philip*), Acts (e.g. *Peter and the Twelve Apostles*), letters (e.g. *Peter to Philip*) and Apocalypses (e.g. *Paul, Peter*).
- Why aren't these books in the Bible?

When were the Nag Hammadi texts written?



- All the books in the NT were written in the first century A.D.
- The Nag Hammadi texts were written in the second and third centuries A.D.

Relationships between the Synoptic Gospels



Truth about the New Testament Gospels

Why?
Why did only four Gospels make it into the New Testament if so many Gospels were available to early Christians?

- **Papias of Hierapolis** was a church leader in the geographic area known today as Turkey.
- He was born about the time the Gospels were being written and was a friend of Philip's four daughters mentioned in [Acts 21:9](#).⁶



Truth about the New Testament Gospels

Why?
Why did only four Gospels make it into the New Testament if so many Gospels were available to early Christians?

- **Papias of Hierapolis** received his information about the first two New Testament Gospels from the first generation of Christians.
- According to Papias, the primary source for Matthew's Gospel was the testimony of the Matthew, a follower of Jesus and former tax collector ([Matthew 9:9](#)).



Truth about the New Testament Gospels

Why?
Why did only four Gospels make it into the New Testament if so many Gospels were available to early Christians?

- **Papias** also wrote that the author of Mark's Gospel had served as Peter's translator when Peter preached in the early churches.
- As such, what Mark recorded in his Gospel was the witness of Peter himself.



Truth about the New Testament Gospels

Why?
Why did only four Gospels make it into the New Testament if so many Gospels were available to early Christians?

- About the same time as Papias recorded these recollections, a pastor named **Polycarp of Smyrna** referred to the words of the apostle Paul as "Scripture."



The first chapter of Mark's Gospel

(Courtesy of CSNTM.org)



Truth about the “Lost Gospels”

Who wrote the “lost Gospels”?

No one knows for sure. Even though the names of Jesus’ apostles and other companions are attached to several lost Gospels, no evidence exists to suggest that the authors of these texts even *could* have been eyewitnesses of the ministry of Jesus. In many cases, names such as “Mary” or “Philip” have been attached to these Gospels simply because these individuals are such prominent characters in the book. In a few cases—such as *Gospel of Thomas*, for example—the Gospel does actually claim to come from a prominent apostle or church leader, though it is clear from the language used in the book that the document was written long after the death of its namesake.

How are these writings different from the New Testament writings?

The “lost Gospels” were primarily fanciful accounts of Jesus’ life, or they were written to promote a theology that contradicts the eyewitness testimony found in the New Testament. A few lost Gospels—for example, *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, *Infancy Gospel of James*, and perhaps *Gospel of Peter*—seem to have been penned by well-meaning Christians who felt compelled to expand stories in the New Testament. Many parts of these writings don’t directly contradict anything in the New Testament, but they tend to expand the New Testament accounts in fanciful and theologically problematic ways. For example, according to these writings, Jesus used his divine powers for his own benefit throughout his childhood. A couple of lost Gospels—such as *Gospel of the Lord* and *Gospel of the Ebionites*—were variations of the New Testament Gospels, edited to fit the theology of certain sects.



(Courtesy of the Schøyen Collection, Oslo and London)

Inkwell discovered near the site where the Dead Sea Scrolls were copied.

The distinct theology of most of the “lost Gospels” was, however, *Gnostic*. From the perspective of most Gnostics, the deity who created the universe was not the true or supreme God; the creator of the physical world was an evil deity, a rebel against a higher and greater deity. Since they understood the cosmos to be the product of an evil deity, most Gnostics viewed everything physical—especially the role of women in reproduction—as evil; they also claimed that Jesus Christ only *seemed* human. According to Gnostics, Christ came to deliver humanity from the limitations of the physical world. As such, Gnostics were not typically interested in the actual, historical events of the life of Jesus; the Gnostics focused most of their attention on other-worldly sayings and myths, many of which depicted biblical villains as heroes and vice-versa.

How many lost Gospels are there?

If a Gospel is defined as an ancient retelling of the events and teachings of Jesus’ life, there are fewer than thirty known Gospels. Most texts survive only in incomplete fragments. Here’s a summary of many of the lost Gospels, most of which could not have been written by eyewitnesses:

- *Gospel of Basilides* (*Gnostic writing, mid-second century AD*) Gnostic writing, now lost, mentioned by several early Christians.
- *Gospel of the Ebionites* (*Ebionite writing, second century AD*) Surviving only in fragmented quotations in the writings of early Christians, *Gospel of the Ebionites* appears to have been a variation of *Gospel of the Hebrews*, edited to fit the theology of a sect known as “Ebionites.” The Ebionites believed Jesus was a human being, adopted by God at his baptism.

“**Matthew** composed his Gospel among the Hebrews in their language, while Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel in Rome and building up the church there. After their deaths, Mark—Peter’s follower and interpreter—handed down to us Peter’s proclamation in written form. Luke, the companion of Paul, wrote in a book the Gospel proclaimed by Paul. Finally, John—the Lord’s own follower, the one who leaned against his chest—composed the Gospel while living in Ephesus, in Asia.”

—Irenaeus of Lyons, mid- to late second century AD¹³

- *Gospel, Egerton* (*Fragments from an ancient document, second century AD*) Not actually a Gospel but a few fragments from an unknown source, the “Egerton Gospel” includes four stories about Jesus. Three of these stories appear, in varying forms, in the New Testament Gospels (Mk. 1:40–45; 12:13–17; Jn. 5:39–47; 10:33–39).
- *Gospel of the Egyptians* (*Ancient writing, perhaps Gnostic, second century AD*) Presented as a dialogue between Jesus and a female disciple named Salome, *Gospel of the Egyptians* encourages all believers to practice celibacy.
- *Coptic Gospel of the Egyptians* (*Gnostic writing, late third century AD*) *Coptic Gospel of the Egyptians* recounts a Gnostic myth in which Jesus is presented as a reincarnation of Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve.

- *Gospel of Eve* (Gnostic writing, probably third century AD) Lost Gnostic writing, quoted by Epiphanius of Salamis. *Gospel of Eve* was written at least a century after the time of Jesus. Seemingly also known as *Gospel of Perfection*.
- *Gospel of the Hebrews* (Christian writing, first century AD) Gospel of the Hebrews is truly a “lost Gospel”; it survives only in quotations found in the writings of early Christians. Many scholars believe *Gospel of the Hebrews* represents an early, Aramaic summary of Jesus’ life from the apostle Matthew—a summary that eventually became part of the document that now known as the Gospel According to Matthew. Also known as *Gospel of the Nazoreans*.
- *Infancy Gospel of James* (Christian writing, late second century AD) An account, supposedly written by James, of the life of Mary. According to this document, Mary the mother of Jesus remained a virgin throughout her life.
- *Acts of John* (Docetic writing, late second century AD) Supposed retelling of events from the life of the apostle John. Some copies of this text include comments that are *Docetic*—that is, they imply that Jesus Christ was not fully human—but these comments are not present in every version. It is possible that they were added later.
- *Gospel of Judas* (Gnostic writing, late second century AD) Supposed account of the life of Jesus in which Judas Iscariot is portrayed as a heroic figure, commanded by Jesus to act as the betrayer.
- *Gospel of the Lord* (Marcionite writing, mid-second century AD) Alteration of the Gospel According to Luke, edited to fit Marcion’s theology.
- *Gospel of Mary* (Gnostic writing, late second or early third century AD) Although frequently called *Gospel of Mary Magdalene*, the text of this document never indicates which biblical Mary is the story’s central character.
- *Gospel of Matthias* (Ancient writing, perhaps Gnostic, second century AD) Lost document, known to many early Christians. This writing seems to have passed out of usage among Christians because (1) no clear evidence was available to suggest that the apostle Matthias actually wrote the book and (2) the book was used by heretical sects including the Gnostics.
- *Gospel of Nicodemus* (Forgery, fourth century AD) Forgery that claimed to include Pontius Pilate’s report to the emperor about Jesus. Also known as *Acts of Pilate*.
- *Gospel, Oxyrhynchus* (Christian writing, third century AD or earlier) Not actually a Gospel but a tiny papyrus fragment from an unknown source, the “Oxyrhynchus Gospel” describes a confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees. The events described in this fragment do not contradict any New Testament Gospels and seem to represent an expansion of the events described in Mark 7:1–23.
- *Gospel of Peter* (Christian writing, second century AD) Although familiar to many early Christians, this text was rejected as an authoritative account of the life of Jesus because (1) it could not be clearly connected to the apostle Peter and (2) some passages in the book could be misconstrued to suggest that Jesus wasn’t fully human.
- *Apocalypse of Peter* (Christian writing, second century AD) An apocalyptic text that circulated with *Gospel of Peter*, *Apocalypse of Peter* doesn’t directly contradict any New Testament writings, but the book seems to have been written around AD 135, seventy years or so after the death of the apostle Peter.

- *Coptic Apocalypse of Peter* (Gnostic writing, late third century AD) The *Coptic Apocalypse of Peter* clearly denied that Jesus had a physical body, declaring that “the one whose hands and feet they nailed to the cross [was] only a fleshly substitute.”
- *Gospel of Philip* (Gnostic writing, third century AD) Not actually a gospel but a collection of brief excerpts from other Gnostic writings, *Gospel of Philip* summarizes the views of the followers of the Gnostic leader Valentinus.
- *Gospel of the Savior* (Gnostic writing, early third century AD) Not actually a Gospel but a few fragments from an ancient document known as Papyrus Berlin 22220, *Gospel of the Savior* seems to have been a Gnostic adaptation of *Gospel of Peter*. Also known as *Vision of the Savior*.
- *Gospel of Thomas* (Gnostic writing, mid-second century AD) Not actually a Gospel, but a collection of sayings attributed to Jesus. Most sayings in *Gospel of Thomas* are similar to statements found in the New Testament Gospels. A few, however, seem to represent an early form of Gnosticism. Although some sayings in the book can be traced to the first century AD, the book did not emerge in its final form until the middle of the second century.
- *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (Christian writing, mid-second century AD) An account of the childhood of Jesus, supposedly written by the apostle Thomas. In this text, the boy Jesus uses his miraculous powers for his own benefit. The author’s style of writing and his lack of knowledge about Jewish traditions suggest that the book was written in the mid-second century AD, long after the death of the apostle Thomas.
- *Gospel of Truth* (Gnostic writing, late second century AD) Unearthed at Nag Hammadi in the 1940s, *Gospel of Truth* is a Gnostic retelling of the creation story and of the life of Jesus. According to Irenaeus of Lyons, a disciple of a Gnostic teacher named Valentinus wrote *Gospel of Truth*, also known as *Gospel of Valentinus*.³



³ Jones, T. P. (2007). [*The gospels: "lost" and found*](#). Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing.

True or False?

What if the version of the life of Jesus that's found in the Bible isn't the right one? What if there were other accounts of his life and ministry? And what if none of these versions actually represents eyewitness testimony about Jesus? That's precisely what some scholars are teaching, not just on college campuses but in popular literature and on television.

Popular scholars such as Bart Ehrman and Elaine Pagels, whose books boast titles such as *The Gnostic Gospels*, *Lost Scriptures*, and *Lost Christianities*, make claims such as this one: "Many years passed before Christians agreed concerning which books should comprise their sacred scriptures. . . . In part this was because other books were available, also written by Christians, many of their authors claiming to be the original apostles of Jesus, yet advocating points of view quite different from those later embodied in the canon."¹

Indeed, the viewpoints found in these writings, many of which are called "Gospels," do differ from the New Testament Gospels. In fact, many include descriptions of Jesus that directly contradict the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Most significantly, the "lost Gospels" consistently depict the *nature of Jesus* in ways that disagree with the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. For example, the New Testament writings describe Jesus as fully divine and yet fully human (see, for example, Philippians 2:5-11). But, according to other writings, Jesus Christ was a spirit who merely *seemed* human. In others, such as *Gospel of Philip*, Jesus of Nazareth—a human being—was possessed by a Christ-spirit; then on the cross, this Christ-spirit abandoned the human Jesus.

So what's at stake when it comes to the lost Gospels? Nothing less than the nature of Jesus Christ, the essence of Christian faith! Simply put, if the authors of the lost Gospels were telling the truth, the perspective on Jesus that's found in the New Testament Gospels is false. Let's look together at the historical evidence, though, and see what we actually find.

■ What are the "lost Gospels"?

The term "lost Gospels" usually refers to ancient writings that were excluded from the New Testament, even though they included *supposed* recollections of events and teachings from the life of Jesus. A few of these "lost Gospels" have lasted throughout the centuries. Others survive only in tiny fragments of papyrus or in brief quotations found in the writings of early Christian scholars. Several "lost Gospels" were discovered anew in the past 100 years. Copies of some texts—such as *Gospel of Philip*, *Gospel of Thomas*, *Gospel of Truth*, and *Coptic Gospel of the Egyptians*—were unearthed in 1945 in Egypt, near a village known as Nag Hammadi.



(Courtesy of the Schøyen Collection, Oslo and London)

Earliest known fragment of Acts of Paul. When it was discovered that Acts of Paul was a fictional text, Christians rejected its authority.

What about the "Gospel of Judas" and appeal of Gnosticism?

by [Ron J. Bigalke](#)

6/28/11

Is the "Gospel of Judas" an accurate depiction of Judas Iscariot? Has the church wrongly accused Judas as the betrayer of the Lord [Jesus](#) Christ? There has been much media attention that proposes a new manner to think with regard to Judas, with significant implications for the [Christian](#) faith.

After being lost for 1700 years in a cave in Egypt, the "Gospel of Judas" has resurfaced. Supposedly the document resurfaced in Geneva in 1983, but only recently has it been translated. The papyrus document is 13-pages and written in Coptic (an ancient Egyptian language). According to the Coptic "Gospel of Judas," Jesus privately instructed Judas to betray Him; therefore, Judas was actually a *good* disciple. The document quoted Jesus as saying: "You will be greater than all the others, Judas. You will sacrifice the man that clothes me."

Although the document is being presented as a newly translated ancient document, it is not a new discovery. Church leaders in 180 AD (particularly Bishop Irenaeus of Lyons in his work "Against the Heresies") denounced this "new gospel" as fiction. The church also denounced the [heresy](#) of Gnosticism, which it espouses.

[Gnosticism](#) is the attempt to present an Eastern worldview with Christian language. A syncretistic sect that blended many different religions, including Christianity, wrote the Gnostic gospels. From the very moment that they appeared, Christian leaders and the church (in general) rejected the Gnostic gospels as uninspired and incompatible with the historic doctrines of the Christian faith. Gnosticism was popular in the Roman world, and many duped minds were enchanted with Gnostic writings and their endless mysteries (even the gruesome and sensational initiation ceremonies).

Pre-publicity suggestions for the "Gospel of Judas" claimed it would "shake Christianity to its foundations." Of course, such ridiculous thinking that the church has hid this text and others is a myth propagated in works like Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* and other conspiracy theorists. Documents such as the "Gospel of Judas" give the unregenerate mind of the unbeliever an excuse for not believing the claims of Christ, and, of course, it caters to the sensational and generates lots of money in books.

One reason the "Gospel of Judas" is no rival to the four Gospels, is that Gnosticism arose in the middle of the second century. If the document was authentic, it should probably be dated to the middle or latter part of the second century. By contrast, The New Testament Gospels were all written within the first century. What this means is the "Gospel of Judas" was not written by eyewitnesses. The "Gospel of Judas," though, is entirely compatible with the Gnostic teaching that blamed God for evil in the world because it rejected His sovereignty. Furthermore, Gnostics frequently championed the rehabilitation of Old Testament figures, such as Cain and Esau.

Why is Gnosticism so appealing today?

The reason is that it is compatible with the postmodern spirit of the age that rejects historical truth. The spirit of the age is “god, as you understand him.” Satan’s greatest lie is that fallen humanity may approach God on his own terms and through his own works. It is believed that God can be found however one may so desire. Of course, such belief denies the authority and necessity of divine revelation.

Just as the “Gospel of Judas” is not new, so are theories regarding Judas not new. For example, the 1973 play “Jesus Christ Superstar” had Judas singing, “I have no thought at all about my own reward. I really didn’t come here of my own accord. Just don’t say I’m . . . damned for all time.” There is also Taylor Caldwell’s 1977 novel *I, Judas*, which offered an explanation for Judas’ betrayal of Jesus. The worldwide sales of more than 40 million copies of *The Da Vinci Code* have no doubt excited postmodernists and provided the foundation for many more conspiracy works.

Even Michael Baignet, co-author of the 1982 conspiracy work *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (perhaps the inspiration for *The Da Vinci Code*), has a new book entitled *The Jesus Papers*, which recycles the supposed “cover-up” that Jesus survived the crucifixion. Now some professor of oceanography from Florida State University has released a new “scientific” study that rare meteorological conditions allowed Jesus to walk on a floating patch of ice, in contrast to the Gospels stating He walked on water. One is not surprised by the outlandish claims against the Bible by unbelievers; for those who reject miracles will accept any theory (no matter how ridiculous) as long as they can continue to suppress the truth of God in unrighteousness.

Unfortunately, the world today is grossly illiterate (as if the “Gospel of Judas” would “shake Christianity to its foundations”) regarding the Bible. On the other side, the fact is that many today simply do not care whether the “Gospel of Judas” differs from the true Gospels, as long as God can be found as they so desire. The concern of the canonical councils to only recognize the books of the Bible (and consistently reject the Gnostic gospels) that have *always been* God’s Word is foreign to most people. It is no wonder then that people can be so easily deceived about obviously fraudulent material.

What can Christians do?

Recognize the tremendous opportunity before the church. Christians should be laboring to remove objections against Christianity and seeking evidence of Christianity. Due to the success of *The Da Vinci Code*, there is tremendous opportunity to attack and rebut false claims. How exciting! . . . the unbelieving world is talking about the Bible (of course, it is not positive, but at least the door is open to defend *the* faith). The church should desire to do whatever is possible to help people understand the folly of their unbiblical beliefs. When that happens, the opportunity is there to present not solely the arguments whether Christianity is true (although that is important), but that in this postmodern world the Christian faith can be known to be true.

Gospel of Judas

The Gospel of Judas was developed by a Gnostic sect in the second century A.D. and was originally written in Greek around 130-170. This fact alone tells us that it was not authored by Judas himself. The oldest extant copy is a Coptic manuscript written in Sahidic (last phase of ancient Egyptian) in the fourth or fifth century.

The gospel of Judas is included in a 62-page papyrus¹ manuscript that was uncovered in Egypt during the 1950's or 1960's.² The translator of the Gospel of Judas is Rodolphe Kasser of the University of Geneva, a leading Coptic Scholar, and the contents are due to be released in April, 2006. At the date of writing this article (April 7th, 2006), the complete translated text of this pseudepigraphal writing is unavailable. However, at CNN.com we have the following excerpts:

- "The newly translated document's text begins: 'The secret account of the revelation that Jesus spoke in conversation with Judas Iscariot.'
- "In a key passage Jesus tells Judas, 'You will exceed all of them. For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me.'
- "'This indicates that Judas would help liberate the spiritual self by helping Jesus get rid of his physical flesh,' the scholars said."
- "'Step away from the others and I shall tell you the mysteries of the kingdom,'" Jesus says to Judas, singling him out for special status. 'Look, you have been told everything. Lift up your eyes and look at the cloud and the light within it and the stars surrounding it. The star that leads the way is your star.'"
- "The text ends with Judas turning Jesus over to the high priests and does not include any mention of the crucifixion or resurrection."³

According to the National Geographic website on the Gospel of Judas page, it says that the newly discovered gospel is "One of the most significant biblical finds of the last century's lost gospel that could challenge what is believed about the story of Judas and his betrayal of Jesus."⁴ In fact, National Geographic has invested a lot of money in its presentation.

"Retired Claremont Graduate University professor James Robinson said that 'early in November he learned that Kasser and several European, Canadian and U.S. scholars had signed agreements with the National Geographic Society to assist with a documentary film and a *National Geographic* article for an Easter 2006 release and a succession of three books.'"⁵

Is the Gospel of Judas authentic?

The Gospel of Judas apparently depicts Judas in favorable terms and commends him as doing God's work when he betrayed Christ to the Jewish religious leaders. This, of course, contradicts what was written by the apostles in their gospels of Matthew and John, as well as those gospels written by Mark and Luke who are under the direction of Peter and Paul.

The Gospel of Judas falls into the category of pseudepigraphal writings. This means that the gospel is not authentic, it is a false writing. In fact, the gospel was not written by Judas, but by a later Gnostic sect in support of Judas. Gnosticism was an ancient heresy that taught salvation through esoteric knowledge. Gnosticism was known at the time of the writing of the later epistles in the New Testament and was rejected by the apostle John.⁶

The ancient writer Irenaeus (130 - 202 AD), in his work called Refutation of All Heresies, said that the gospel of Judas was a fictitious history:

"Others again declare that Cain derived his being from the Power above, and acknowledge that Esau, Korah, the Sodomites, and all such persons, are related to themselves. On this account, they add, they have been assailed by the Creator, yet no one of them has suffered injury. For Sophia was in the habit of carrying off that which belonged to her from them to herself. They declare that Judas the traitor was thoroughly acquainted with these things, and that he alone, knowing the truth as no others did, accomplished the mystery of the betrayal; by him all things, both earthly and heavenly, were thus thrown into confusion. They produce a fictitious history of this kind, which they style the Gospel of Judas."⁷

We can conclude that the Gospel of Judas is not authentic, is not inspired, and was properly rejected by the early church as an unreliable and inaccurate depiction of what really happened concerning Judas.

Of course, the complaint is often raised that this opinion, like that of the early church, simply rejected anything that opposed a preconceived idea. But, this complaint falls by the wayside when we understand that the early church knew which documents were authored by the apostles and which were not. God did not make a mistake when he led the Christian Church to recognize what is and is not inspired. The Gospel of Judas was never recognized by the church as being inspired.

Addendum

On April 9, National Geographic aired the special on the Gospel of Judas. Unfortunately, the special was below standard in its scholarly representation of both sides of the argument--on the validity of the New Testament Gospels as well as the Gospel of Judas. It did not give competent counter evidences against its liberal and inaccurate suggestions regarding the formation of the New Testament Cannon. The special failed miserably to adequately deal with the formation of the New Testament Cannon, how the gospels were arrived at, how we know who wrote them, and when they were written, etc. I was extremely disappointed. Here is a quick example of one of the many problems.

The National Geographic show had a "scholar" who stated that most experts agree that the earliest gospels weren't written until around 60 A.D. The problem here is that no substantiation was offered for this opinion. Second, internal evidence in the Gospels and the book of Acts contradicts the statement. The book of Acts was written by Luke well after he wrote the Gospel of Luke. Acts is a history of the early Christian church and it does not include the accounts of "Nero's persecution of the Christians in A.D. 64 or the deaths of James (A.D. 62), Paul (A.D. 64), and Peter (A.D. 65)."⁸

The book of Acts is a compilation of the early church's history. One would think that it would naturally include the death of such important figures as James, Paul, and Peter if it were written any time after their deaths. Since this book does not include such information, it appears that it was written before, at least, the death of James (A.D. 62). Let's offer a conservative number of three years prior to the death of James, which would mean Acts could have been written around A.D. 59. This would mean that the Gospel of Luke was written years before that, let's pick a low number of five years before Acts which puts Luke at around A.D. 54.

Additionally, it is generally agreed upon that Mark was the first Gospel written. Therefore, Mark was before Luke. Let's pick another low number of five years by which Mark preceded Luke. This would reasonably put the Gospel of Mark at 49 A.D. This is a conservative estimate, and it could be that Mark was written much earlier. Therefore, very quickly we see that the statement made in the program that the gospels weren't really written until after 60 A.D. can be easily countered. The question is, why is it that National Geographic did not produce competent counter arguments?

Another issue is regarding Gnosticism, which was not properly represented. Gnosticism basically states that God cannot become incarnate. The show suggested that gnostics were Christians, but this cannot be since they contradict one of the essential doctrines of the Christian faith -- which was also taught in the Old Testament ([Zechariah 12:10](#)). John the apostle, who wrote 1st John, addressed the early formation of Gnostic thought in Chapter Four when he denounced those as antichrists who denied that Jesus had "come in the flesh." National Geographic failed miserably to represent Christian theology, and instead misrepresented Gnosticism, trying to make it appear that the present Christian theological system was merely the result of political happenstance.

CARM concludes that the National Geographic program was very biased and insufficiently researched.

Is the “Gospel of Judas” True?

By **Gary Young**

In April 2006, the [National Geographic Society](#) of Washington D.C. held a press conference in which they announced the coming publication of a document called the *Gospel of Judas*. This document, they stated, would be published in English translation, as well as being the subject of the Easter edition of *National Geographic* magazine, and a television documentary to be produced by the National Geographic Society.

In both the press conference itself and in resulting press coverage, the *Gospel of Judas* is presented as a dramatic and important discovery which, like the (equally fictitious) *Da Vinci Code* threatened the “official” church doctrine by presenting an alternative account of the Gospel story. In this one, we’re told, Judas Iscariot, betrayer of Jesus in the canonical Gospels, is seen as the hero and one who was given more revelation and played a more significant part than any other apostles. In this account, Judas hands Jesus Christ over to the Jewish authorities only because Jesus Himself had actually instructed him to, rather than because of his greed as portrayed in the canonical Gospel accounts (Luke 22:1-6; John 12:4-6; Acts 1:16-18).

In the media press release reports this is described as “giving new insights into the relationship between Jesus & the disciple who betrayed him,” and being “deeply troubling for some believers” (Wilford & Goodstein). It has also been described as a “more positive portrayal of Judas” (Gugliotta and Cooperman, p. A10).

Is this in fact the case? Does the *Gospel of Judas* really undermine and invalidate the traditional Gospel account of the betrayal & crucifixion of Christ? Should this document cause Christians to re-evaluate their faith, and does this document indeed give valuable insight into the relationship between Christ and Judas Iscariot? This preliminary article is intended to provide some answers to these questions, and determine whether the *Gospel of Judas* does indeed provide Christians with any cause for concern.

The History of the *Gospel of Judas*

In actual fact, knowledge that there was a document called the *Gospel of Judas* and of its basic content has always been known. The early Christian writer Irenaeus mentioned it in his work *Against Heresies*, in which he attacked the various unbiblical doctrines which were being taught by various groups in his time. Writing in about A.D. 180, Irenaeus describes a group called the Cainites who revered various characters in the Bible including Cain, Esau, Korah and Judas, whom the Biblical text described as evil. This Gnostic sect, Irenaeus tells us, taught that these were all actually doing God's will, and in reference to Judas he informs us that:

"They claim that the betrayer Judas was well informed of all these things, and that he, knowing the truth as none other, brought about the mystery of the betrayal. . . they produced a spurious account of this sort, which they call the *Gospel of Judas*" (Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* I.31.1).

When this statement is compared to the text which has recently been published (see below) there is little doubt that the two "Gospels" of Judas are indeed one and the same document.

The manuscript now under discussion was uncovered in cave near El-Minya in Egypt in the late 1970s, in an area in which Gnostic groups such as the Cainites are known to have been particularly strong in the second & third centuries A.D. Numerous collections of Gnostic texts dating from this period, including the famous Nag Hammadi library, have been uncovered in Egypt. These contain numerous false Gospels and other "pseudepigraphal" &> literature produced by these various Gnostic groups, many of which are known to Irenaeus and other writers of the period.

After many vicissitudes and languishing for many years in a safety deposit box in the United States, the codex was finally purchased for preservation & publication in 2004. The codex consists of 62 papyrus pages, and contains numerous other Gnostic texts & other writings from the period on its pages, in addition to the *Gospel of Judas*. The text itself is in the Coptic language, almost certainly translated from Greek originals. The codex has been dated by Carbon 14 dating & by paleographic techniques, and found to date from approximately A.D. 300. The *Gospel of Judas* itself of course must have been written well before this to have been mentioned by Irenaeus in A.D. 180.

New Testament scholars H.C. Puech & B. Blatz, writing without knowledge of the new codex, believed that the *Gospel of Judas* would have been written at some time between A.D. 130-170 (p. 387).

The National Geographic Society has announced that at the completion of their studies the codex will be donated to and housed at the Coptic Museum in Cairo, Egypt.

The Nature and Significance of the *Gospel of Judas*

The opening words of the *Gospel of Judas* instantly confirm Irenaeus' identification of it as a Gnostic document. The opening words are "The secret account of the revelation Jesus spoke. . . to Judas Iscariot." These words, and like terms, are extremely common among Gnostic literature.

The Gnostics taught that there was a special secret knowledge ("Gnostic" comes from the Greek *gnosis*, "knowledge") that was communicated over and above the revelation that was communicated in the Bible. The nature of that knowledge varied greatly amongst the different Gnostic sects, but was almost invariably characterized as "secret" and/or "hidden," which the Gnostic text or sect now purported to reveal.

These Gnostic documents come from at least the second century A.D., at the time the Gnostic sects were rapidly expanding. There is no evidence that any of these texts was in existence before about A.D. 130 & therefore they were all written well after the writing of the canonical Gospels.

While they are certainly useful for determining the doctrines and practices of these sects, they reveal to us nothing about the origins of Christianity & the doctrines of the first century A.D. church (McKechnie, Ch. 1). There is, therefore, no reason to assert that the *Gospel of Judas* can tell us anything about the belief or practice of the mainstream church of the first century or indeed of the historical reality of Judas and his relationship with the Lord. Irenaeus is indeed frequently derided for the suppressing of "alternative" accounts of the beginnings of Christianity while promoting the Gospel accounts that were later accepted as canonical. This idea is related to the concept that the church determined the canon of Scripture, accepting some books while rejecting other equally important books.

While the theory might sound good, the fact is that Irenaeus and others defended and promoted the canonical Gospels and rejected other books (including the *Gospel of Judas*), not because of doctrinal preference but because of the evident superiority of the canonical books.

While the canonical Gospels are attested from a very early stage and are cited and attested in early Christian writings in the late-first and early-second centuries A.D., the Gnostic writings are unattested in this period. While the canonical Gospels enjoyed widespread acceptance among all the early churches, the Gnostic documents generally did not receive acceptance from any but the Gnostic sect that originated them. Certainly there is no evidence whatever that the *Gospel of Judas* ever received any acceptance beyond the narrow and rather strange Cainite sect.

Besides its contradiction of the canonical Gospels' accounts of the betrayal of Christ and its lack of attestation & acceptance among the early Christian community, there are several other pertinent points to ask about the *Gospel of Judas*. As it purports to be a secret account of a conversation between Jesus and Judas (but is written in the third person, indicating it was written by neither), we might pertinently ask who did write it? If indeed it were an historical account, how would details of this secret conversation be known to anyone but Jesus & Judas, neither of whom could have written the book? This brief account is difficult to regard as a remotely historical work; it is quite evident that it can teach us nothing about the actual betrayal and crucifixion of Christ.

Essentially, Irenaeus rejected the *Gospel of Judas* for very good reasons; it's a late and unhistorical production of a fringe sect that was characterized by some very unbiblical beliefs. We can certainly learn a good deal about the beliefs of some Egyptian Gnostics in the second century A.D., but we cannot regard it as a legitimate viewpoint of what was believed about Judas in the churches of Christ in the early Christian period, let alone an account of the truth about Judas Iscariot and his role in betrayal & crucifixion of the Lord.

Conclusion

Evidently, then, the *Gospel of Judas*, while being an interesting document which tells us much about the Cainite and other Gnostic sects in Egypt, tells us nothing about the relationship between Christ and Judas, and in no way overturns, or even threatens, what some are pleased to call the “official” or “traditional” view of the betrayal of Christ as portrayed in the canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Sadly, the desire for an attention-grabbing headline sometimes tends to overshadow the cold hard facts in matters of religion and history. Such ideas, as presented in fantasy-like *The Da Vinci Code*, encourage people to imagine a secret and concealed truth which was suppressed by the early church.

There is much of this type media hype surrounding the publication of the *Gospel of Judas*. While it may appeal to conspiracy theorists to imagine that the church has suppressed an equally valid alternative history, the fact is that the *Gospel of Judas* was rejected by the early church because it was just what Irenaeus said it was: an unhistorical, late, and entirely imagined document which was produced by, and served the interests of, a small and highly unusual heretical sect of the second century A.D. In no way should it cause any Christian to reject the Biblical account, because it is evidently inferior in every way to the historical accounts of the canonical Gospels.

Note: We appreciate very much Gary Young’s permission to use this most informative article that puts the so-called “Gospel of Judas” into its proper historical perspective. Dr. Young is an Australian Christian scholar (Ph.D. in Roman history) whose web site we encourage our readers to visit.

The Judas Make-Over

By **Wayne Jackson**

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“Was Judas Iscariot a ‘hero,’ who secretly worked together with Jesus Christ to bring about the Messianic mission? Or was he a villain who betrayed his Lord and Master?”

Ever since the second century A.D. there have been efforts to cast Judas Iscariot (the traitor who delivered Jesus over to the Roman authorities) into a redesigned mold of historical revisionism. From the so-called “Gospel of Judas,” exposed by Irenaeus (c. A.D. 130-200) as a “fictitious history” (*Against Heresies* 1.31.1), to the era of modern musicals, fantasy novels & National Geographic specials, radical journalists have attempted to rehabilitate Christ’s betrayer, transforming him from the rogue he was, into a character deserving of adulation.

One delusional journalist characterizes Judas as possibly “the indispensable and most-favored disciple, ordered by Jesus to betray him so his mission could be fulfilled” (Jay Tolson, “Was This Villain Really a Hero?”, *U.S. News & World Report*, April 17, 2006, p. 52).

The so-called “Gospel of Judas” has Christ saying to the traitor, “But you will exceed all of them [the other disciples]. For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me” (*The Gospel of Judas*, Translators, R. Kasser, M. Meyer, G. Wurst, in collaboration with Francois Goudard, Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2006).

Unanswered Questions

No serious student of the New Testament denies that there are mysteries the Gospel records do not fully explain regarding this sinister person. And that is perfectly understandable. Such matters **are not germane to our salvation**, and it has never been the will of God that every whimsical curiosity of man be satisfied.

Why did the traitor sell Jesus for the paltry sum of only 30 pieces of silver when, supposedly, he could have obtained a larger sum (yet see Zechariah 11:12-13)? Why was he allowed to be the treasurer of the apostolic band? Why did the Lord identify Judas as a traitor to certain disciples as they ate the Passover meal? Why did the betrayer return the money, and then commit suicide? Why did the Savior choose a man of this character? More than a century ago (1871), noted scholar A.B. Bruce penned an essay on Judas that contains the most probing analysis of that rebel this writer has ever read. For those who may be interested, see chapter xxiii in Bruce's book, *The Training of the Twelve*.

These questions, though, will never be plumbed satisfactorily. But that does not deter hucksters from attempting to answer them for us, all the while raking in money with their contrived scenarios. There is none so disgusting as he who attempts to achieve fame and fortune by "hitching a ride" on the back of the crucified Son of God. See "Judas' Deal, 2,000 Years Later."

Oddly, Judas increasingly is becoming a sympathetic figure in the minds of the rabble. He has been transformed into a romantic character who was closer to the Lord than the other disciples, and in fact, is being portrayed as "the most loyal of all the disciples." Amazing! There is not a shred of evidence for this bizarre theory. Let us consider the "Judas" issue.

Prophecy

First of all one should reflect upon the fact that Judas' works were known long before his birth, and his character is subtly etched in Old Testament prophecy.

(1) David declared: "Yes, my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted; who did eat of my bread, has lifted up his heel against me" (Psalm 41:9). In this song the king speaks of a time of hardship in his life, and the villainy of a false friend who compounded his pain. Interestingly, Christ quotes a portion of this text and makes application to Judas.

However, the Lord omits the section about "trusting" this friend, for he "knew from the beginning" that Judas was the one who would betray him (John 6:64). He does declare, though, that the treachery of this apostle lay

within the prophetic structure of David's declaration of a thousand years earlier, and that ultimately it was "fulfilled" by the action of the traitor (see John 13:18).

(2) In Acts 1, in connection with the selection of a replacement apostle to fill the vacancy left by Judas' apostasy and death, Peter quotes first from Psalm 69:25 (a free rendition of the Greek version): "Let his habitation be made desolate & let no man dwell therein" (Acts 1:20a). Then, subsequent, from Psalm 109:8, "His office let another take" (1:20b).

Peter "fleshes out" the matter by calling attention to the reasons why Judas had to be replaced. He functioned as a "guide" to those who took Christ (v. 16). He was unfaithful in the "ministry" granted him (v. 17). He was guilty of gross "iniquity" (v. 18). He "fell away" and went to "his own place," i.e., the sorry destiny he made for himself (v. 25).

(3) Then there is this prophecy from the pen of Zechariah.

"And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my hire; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my hire thirty pieces of silver. And Jehovah said unto me, Cast it unto the potter, the goodly price that I was prized at by them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them unto the potter, in the house of Jehovah" (Zechariah 11:12-13).

That this prophecy envisions the diabolical maneuvers of Judas in selling out Christ is hardly to be disputed by anyone with a smattering of respect for the authority of scripture (cf. Matthew 27:9-10). [Note: For a discussion of Matthew's use of "Jeremiah," instead of "Zechariah," see the following article on this web site: *"Did Matthew Blunder?"* See also: *"Zechariah's Amazing Prophecy of the Betrayal of Christ"*.

New Testament Evidence

Let us now briefly reflect upon the evidence of the Gospel accounts regarding the character of Judas Iscariot.

(1) Consider, for instance, the Greek term *paradidomi*. The word literally means to "give up," "deliver up," or "betray" — depending upon the context. It is found 122 times in the New Testament.

It can be used in a good sense (e.g., of the gospel that has been “delivered” to us — Romans 6:17). By way of contrast, the word may carry an evil connotation (as when Herod “delivered” John the Baptizer to prison — Matt. 4:12). As noted already, the **context** must determine the character of the action at a given point in time. In a wonderfully thrilling sense, God “delivered up [his Son] for us all” (Romans 8:32; cf. 4:25). And then there also is Paul’s sweet affirmation that Jesus “gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20; cf. Ephesians 5:2,25).

In the case of Judas, however, *paradidomi* (to betray, deliver up) is used 44 times. **Never** in the New Testament record is Judas portrayed in **any** light other than that of a wretched traitor who, perhaps for a variety of base motives, negotiated the deliverance of Christ to his enemies (Matthew 26:14-16,47-50; Mark 14:10-11,43-46; Luke 22:3-6,47-48; John 18:3-5). He is always mentioned last in the lists of the apostles — a hint of the infamy that forever was to be associated with his name.

(2) If Judas Iscariot was really the “hero” of the crucifixion plot, it is uncommonly strange **he was unaware of it!** Rather, he “repented himself” of the foul deed (Matthew 27:3). “Repented” derives from *metamelomai*, to “regret,” but, in this instance, with no inclination of change. In addition he confessed “I have sinned, in that I betrayed innocent blood” (27:4). He then “hanged himself” (v. 5). In legal circles, a “death-bed” confession is of the strongest caliber.

This is hardly the way one acts if he imagines he has just performed one of the more noble deeds of all history!

(3) If the foregoing evidence were not sufficient (and it is overwhelmingly compelling), the testimony of Christ himself ought to be decisive.

Jesus declared Judas to be devilish (*diabolos*) in his character (John 6:70; see J.H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 135). The Savior characterized him as being “not clean” (John 13:10-11). As a result, Judas “perished,” being described as the “son of perdition” (John 17:12). Luke later adds that Judas “fell away that he might go to his own place” (Acts 1:25). A.T. Robertson contended there was no doubt in Peter’s mind as to Judas’ guilt and destiny (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. II, 18).

Conclusion

Neither the ancient Gnostics (with their “Gospel of Judas”), nor Hollywood with its perversion of history, nor the National Geographic Society with its anti-Christian agenda, can alter facts of antiquity. History **is** what it **was**, and nothing can change that. And of that traitor, Christ hauntingly said: “The Son of man goes, even as it is written of him: but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born” (Matthew 26:24).

Frequently Asked Questions about the Gospel of Thomas

by [Ryan Turner](#)
edited by [Matt Slick](#)

The following are some common questions that people often have about the Gospel of Thomas. I will add and expand on these questions as new ones come up in discussion.

What is the Gospel of Thomas?

The Gospel of Thomas is supposedly a collection of 114 sayings of Jesus that was discovered in 1945 at the village of Nag Hammadi in Egypt. Before the Nag Hammadi discovery, very little was known about the Gospel of Thomas other than three small fragments from Oxyrynchus that date to A.D. 200 and roughly a half dozen allusions from Church Fathers. The manuscripts discovered at Nag Hammadi dates to around A.D. 340 though the original composition of the Gospel of Thomas was definitely before that time probably sometime around A.D. 140 to 180.

Who wrote the Gospel of Thomas?

The Gospel of Thomas was probably written by someone in the second century who had an admiration of James (see saying 12), the brother of Jesus, who died in 62 A.D.¹ It also probably was a person who group who admired the apostle Thomas and had some sort of Gnostic or Syrian Christian influence.

How is the Gospel of Thomas different from the New Testament Gospels?

Differences between the Gospel of Thomas and the New Testament Gospels

Theme	Thomas	NT Gospels
Jesus	A wise teacher: divine, but not necessarily human	Divine and Human (Mt. 14:33 ; Mk. 2:5-10 ; Lk. 22:67-71 ; Jn. 1:1, 14).
Messiah	Jesus is not the Messiah predicted by the Jewish prophets (52).	Jesus is the Messiah of the Old Testament prophets.
Salvation	By learning secret knowledge (39) and looking inward (70).	By looking outward in faith to Jesus (Mark 5:34 ; Luke 7:51 ; John 6:47).
The Kingdom of God	Internal only	Internal aspect (Lk. 17:21), but also a clearly imminent, literal, future expectation (Lk. 9:27 ; 10:9).
The Nature of God	Many gods (30); possibly even some form of pantheism (77).	One God (Mk. 12:29)
Man	Capable of saving himself by learning secret knowledge and looking inward (3, 70).	Incapable of saving himself; must look outward to Jesus (Jn. 6:47).
Physical Body	The physical body is bad, but the spiritual is good (114).	The physical body is not inherently evil since it will be resurrected (Lk. 24:39 ; Jn. 2:19-21).
Historical Context	Gnostic and/or Syrian Christianity of 2nd Century	1st Century Jewish Palestine
Church or Community	No clear mention of a community context.	Mention of community context and order (Mt. 18:15-20).
Death and Resurrection	Not central to message.	Central to message (Mt. 12:39-40 ; John 2:19-21);).
View of Women	Strongly anti-feminine (114)	Pro-feminine (Gospel of Mark).
Old Testament	No references; Jesus does not fulfill Scripture (52).	Many references (Mt. 4:4 ; Mk. 14:27 ; Lk. 4:8 ; Jn. 10:35). Jesus fulfills Scripture.
Thomas	Receives a special place amongst the disciples by learning secret knowledge.	No evidence of Thomas receiving special knowledge compared to the other disciples: Peter, James, and John part of the inner circle (Mt. 17:1 ; Mk. 13:3 ; Lk. 8:51).

Note: It is difficult to figure out the Gospel of Thomas's exact views on all of these subjects, but the above list is a general overview.

Is the Gospel of Thomas a Gnostic Gospel?

There is debate within the scholarly community regarding whether the Gospel of Thomas is a Gnostic document. In fact, the reputable Gnostic scholar, Elaine Pagels, changed her views after years of studying the Gospel of Thomas. She now thinks that it is not a Gnostic document. However, in line with many other scholars, it seems best to conclude that it at least contains some Gnostic-like ideas such as salvation by secret knowledge, the extreme asceticism or disdain for the bodily appetites, polytheism, the reference to the bridal chamber, the idea of a heavenly teaching Christ who may not necessarily be human, etc. The Thomas Gospel also places little emphasis on the value of the Old Testament Scriptures. This was certainly in line with Gnostic thinking. Even if Thomas is not Gnostic, it appears to have vast similarities with “Gnosticism” as broadly defined.

Should the Gospel of Thomas be in the New Testament?

The short answer is “No.” The Gospels in the New Testament were either written by apostles (Matthew and John) or associates of the apostles (Mark and Luke). The Gospel of Thomas, however, is a second century work that was written well after the apostles lived. The reasons scholars argue for this late date is because Thomas depends and/or makes allusions to New Testament books including even late ones like the Gospel of John which was written around 90 A.D. Thomas also shows likely evidence of having been influenced by second century Syrian Christianity even such Syrian works as the Diatessaron which dates from 175 A.D.² If this is the case, Thomas would be dated in the late second century. (For more information, see the article: [Does the Gospel of Thomas belong in the New Testament?](#)) For these reasons among others, the Gospel of Thomas was rightfully rejected by the church for inclusion in the New Testament canon.

When was the Gospel of Thomas written?

It is difficult to know the exact date of the Gospel of Thomas, but one should probably date it to A.D. 140-180 since it references second century Gnostic ideas, references the New Testament texts, and possibly has late second century Syrian Christianity influence. Our earliest manuscript fragment from part of the Thomas Gospel dates to around A.D. 200. So, the Gospel of Thomas definitely was written before that time.

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- 1. Ben Witherington, *What have they done with Jesus?*, San Francisco, HarperCollins, 2006, p. 32.
 - 2. Craig A. Evans, “The Apocryphal Jesus: Assessing the Possibilities and Problems,” Craig A. Evans and Emanuel Tov, eds., *Exploring the Origins of the Bible: Canon Formation in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008, pp. 147-72.
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Is the Gospel of Thomas Real or Fake?

By **Wayne Jackson**

The e-mail I received was from Dr. Paterson Brown, who is affiliated with the Ecumenical Coptic Project in Athens, Greece. He forwarded to me copies of the so-called “Coptic Gospels” of Thomas and Phillip. With reference to the “Gospel of Thomas,” Dr. Brown wrote:

Significantly, Professor Helmut Koester of Harvard University, speaking as President of the Society of Biblical Literature (U.S.A.), has declared that “nearly all biblical scholars in the United States agree that Thomas is as authentic as the New Testament Gospels.”

Authentic? In **what sense**? Certainly not authentic in the sense that the Gospel of Thomas carries the same credibility as the four canonical Gospel records: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

There is considerable evidence that the document that’s called the “Gospel of Thomas” was not actually authored by the apostle who bore that name.

What are the facts relative to this ancient text that has caused such a sensation in recent years?

Compiled in the Second Century

In 1945, an archaeological excavation at Nag Hammadi in Central Egypt yielded a collection of 13 papyrus codices (books) totaling over 1,100 pages. One of these contained the “Gospel of Thomas” in the Coptic language. In this form, it dates from about A.D. 350.

However, the original work apparently is older since three Greek papyri from the Oxyrhynchus collection (c. A.D. 150) contain fragments of the narrative. It is thus believed that the original “Gospel of Thomas” was compiled about A.D. 140, probably in Edessa, Syria. Some scholars push the date a little later (A.D. 150-200).

There is **no evidence** that this work existed in the first century, even though those associated with the bogus Jesus Seminar so allege.

Beware of “secret sayings”

“Thomas” consists of a collection of 114 “sayings of Jesus,” that are supposed to be a **secret** revelation the Lord gave to the apostle Thomas. That secret business itself ought to be a red flag!

Some of these sayings repeat the words of Christ from the canonical Gospel accounts. About forty of them are entirely new. Most scholars believe that the Gospel of Thomas is significantly contaminated with the ancient heretical philosophy known as Gnosticism (Cameron, p. 539).

Absurdities

Occasionally, some very absurd language is put into the Lord’s mouth by means of this document. Here is an example:

Simon Peter said to them: “Let Mary (Magdalene) go out from among us, because women are not worthy of the Life.”

Jesus said: “See I shall lead her, so that I will make her male, that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” (Saying 114, Funk, p. 532; see also Yamauchi, p. 186).

Does that even remotely resemble the dignified status that women are afforded in the New Testament?

The Gospel of Thomas: An Apparent Fraud

R. K. Harrison has well noted that this apocryphal work “cannot in any sense be called a ‘fifth gospel’” (Blaklock & Harrison, p. 450). It is readily apparent that the so-called Gospel of Thomas has no place in the inspired canon, and history has been correct in rejecting it—some modern “scholars” to the contrary notwithstanding.

There are, however, two important points to be made in this connection.

1. The dependence of the "Thomas" upon the canonical Gospel records clearly indicates that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were recognized as **the authoritative sources** of information regarding Jesus of Nazareth.
2. The fact that the narratives of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were available to a writer in **Syria** in the mid-second century A.D. is dramatic evidence of the widespread distribution of the sacred documents in the early years of Christian history.

Conclusion

The twenty-seven New Testament books are the only inspired records of the Christian age that have come down to us. Obviously, in the providential operations of God, they represent what we were intended to have to completely qualify us for Christian identity and service (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The Gospel of Thomas Contradicts the Bible

1. The kingdom of God is inside you (3)
2. "Lucky is the lion that the human will eat, so that the lion becomes human." (7)
3. Heaven and earth came into being for the sake of James the just (12.2)
4. Jesus is not the teacher of his disciples (13.5)
5. There are five trees in Paradise for you (19.3)
6. Jesus is one of the many deities (30)
7. Jesus is not the Messiah (52)
8. Salvation is from knowledge and looking inward (70)
9. Everyone can become Jesus (108)
10. Women must become men in order to enter heaven (114)

"Split a piece
of wood, and
I am there.
Lift up the
stone, and there
you will
find me."

Gospel of Thomas 77

ANSWERS TO THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS

GOSE GOSPEL OF JUDAS

What is the *Gospel of Judas*?

- ✘ *Gospel of Judas* is a Gnostic gospel that presents Judas positively.
- ✘ Gnosticism taught that one's spirit needs to escape from the prison of the human body.
- ✘ The book suggests that the betrayal of Jesus was done out of obedience to Jesus' specific instructions; Judas helped Jesus' spirit escape.

GOSE GOSPEL OF JUDAS

What is the *Gospel of Judas*?

- ✘ **Where it was found:** El Minya, Egypt
- ✘ **Date it was written:** AD 160 to AD 180, over 130 years after Judas died.
- ✘ **Who is the author:** Unknown
- ✘ **What is the style:** Gnostic
- ✘ **What is the theme:** The loyalty of Judas

GOSPEL OF JUDAS

When was *Gospel of Judas* written?

- ✦ Historians have known about *Gospel of Judas* since AD 180.
- ✦ Rejected by church father Irenaeus of Lyons in AD 180.

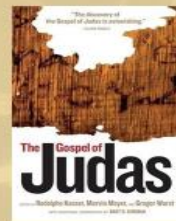


Irenaeus

GOSPEL OF JUDAS

When was *Gospel of Judas* written?

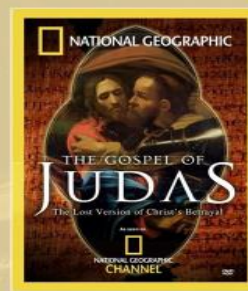
- ✦ In 2006, scholars reconstructed most of the text from recently-published fragments.
- ✦ The book was originally written in Greek, but the available fragments come from a third-century Coptic translation.



GOSPEL OF JUDAS

When was *Gospel of Judas* written?

- ✦ Many Coptic words in the book stem from Greek terms that were current from AD 150 to AD 200.
- ✦ This is more than a century after Judas's death!



(National Geographic Society)

GOSPEL OF JUDAS

When was *Gospel of Judas* written?

- ✦ *Gospel of Judas* seems to have been written after the Gnostic teachings of Valentinus had spread through many Christian communities.
- ✦ Valentinus died around AD 160.
- ✦ Therefore, the book was most likely written between AD 160 and 180.

GOSPEL OF JUDAS

Who wrote *Gospel of Judas*?

- ✦ Although the text presents Judas in a positive light, *Gospel of Judas* never claims to have been written by Judas.

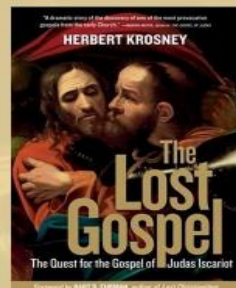


The Passion (detail) Hans the Younger Holbein (1524-25)

GOSPEL OF JUDAS

Who wrote *Gospel of Judas*?

- ✦ Even if the book *had* claimed Judas as its author, the book could not have been written by Judas.
- ✦ In fact, *Gospel of Judas* could not have been written by any eyewitness of the life and ministry of Jesus.



GOSPEL OF JUDAS

Who wrote *Gospel of Judas*?

- ✦ The actual author of the *Gospel of Judas* was anonymous and is still unknown today.
- ✦ It is evident, however, that the author was influenced greatly by Gnostic teachings of the second century.

GOSPEL OF JUDAS

What does *Gospel of Judas* suggest?

According to *Gospel of Judas*, Jesus supposedly told Judas, “You will be cursed for generations, ... but you will eventually rule over all of them. ... For what you are sacrificing is merely the man in whom I am clothed.”



Suicide of Judas
Gislebertus
(1120-30)

GOSPEL OF JUDAS

What does *Gospel of Judas* suggest?

- ✦ Like many Gnostic texts of the mid-second century AD, *Gospel of Judas* claims that Jesus only *seemed* to be human.
- ✦ Where *The Da Vinci Code* claims that Jesus was not God, but just a “mortal prophet”, *Gospel of Judas* claims that Jesus was not mortal at all, but God “clothed” in human form.

Gospel of Peter

[1] But of the Jews none washed his hands, neither Herod nor one of his judges. And since they did not desire to wash, Pilate stood up. [2] And then Herod the king orders the Lord to be taken away, having said to them, 'What I ordered you to do, do.' [3] But Joseph, the friend of Pilate and of the Lord, had been standing there; and knowing they were about to crucify him, he came before Pilate and requested the body of the Lord for burial. [4] And Pilate, having sent to Herod, requested his body. [5] And Herod said: 'Brother Pilate, even if no one had requested him, we would have buried him, since indeed Sabbath is dawning. For in the Law it has been written: The sun is not to set on one put to death.' And he gave him over to the people before the first day of their feast of the Unleavened Bread. [6] But having taken the Lord, running, they were pushing him and saying, 'Let us drag along the Son of God now that we have power over him.' [7] And they clothed him with purple and sat him on a chair of judgment, saying: 'Judge justly, King of Israel.' [8] And a certain one of them, having brought a thorny crown, put it on the head of the Lord. [9] And others who were standing there were spitting in his face, and others slapped his cheeks. Others were jabbing him with a reed; and some scourged him, saying, 'With such honor let us honor the Son of God.' [10] And they brought two wrongdoers and crucified the Lord in the middle of them. But he was silent as having no pain. [11] And when they had set the cross upright, they inscribed that THIS IS THE KING OF ISRAEL.

[12] And having put his garments before him, they divided them up and threw as a gamble for them. [13] But a certain one of those wrongdoers reviled them, saying: 'We have been made suffer thus because of the wrong that we have done; but this one, having become Savior of men, what injustice had he done to you?' [14] And having become irritated at him, they ordered that there be no leg-breaking, so that he might die tormented. [15] But it was midday, and darkness held fast all Judea; and they were distressed and anxious lest the sun had set, since he was still living. [For] it is written for them: Let not the sun set on one put to death. [16] And someone of them said: 'Give him to drink gail with vinegary wine.' And having made a mixture, they gave to drink. [17] And they fulfilled all things and completed the sins on their own head. [18] But many went around with lamps, thinking that it was night, and they fell. [19] And the Lord screamed out, saying: 'My power, O power, you have forsaken me.' And having said this, he was taken up. [20] And at the same hour the veil of the Jerusalem sanctuary was torn into two. [21] And they drew out the nails from the hands of the Lord and placed him on the earth; and all the earth was shaken, and a great fear came about. [22] Then the sun shone, and it was found to be the ninth hour. [23] And the Jews rejoiced and gave his body to Joseph that he might bury it, since he was one who had seen the many good things he did. [24] And having taken the Lord, he washed and tied him with a linen cloth and brought him into his own sepulcher, called the Garden of Joseph. [25] Then the Jews and the elders and the priests, having come to know how much wrong they had done themselves, began to beat themselves and say: 'Woe to our sins. The judgment has approached and the end of Jerusalem.' [26] But I with the companions was sorrowful; and having been wounded in spirit, we were in hiding, for we were sought after by them as wrongdoers and as wishing to set fire to the sanctuary. [27] In addition to all these things we were fasting; and we were sitting mourning and weeping night and day until the Sabbath. [28] But the scribes and Pharisees and elders, having gathered together with one another, having heard that all the people were mourning and beating their breasts, saying that 'If at his death these very great signs happened, behold how just he was,' [29] feared (especially the elders) and came before Pilate, begging him and saying, [30] 'Give over soldiers to us in order that we may safeguard his burial place for three days, lest, having come, his disciples steal him, and the people accept that he is risen from the death, and they do us wrong.' [31] But Pilate gave over to them Petronius the centurion with soldiers to safeguard the sepulcher. And with these the elders and scribes came to the burial place. [32] And having rolled a large stone, all who were there, together with the centurion and the soldiers, placed it against the door of the burial place. [33] And they marked it with seven wax seals; and having pitched a tent there, they safeguarded it.

[34] But early when the Sabbath was dawning, a crowd came from Jerusalem and the surrounding area in order that they might see the sealed tomb. [35] But in the night in which the Lord's day dawned, when the soldiers were safeguarding it two by two in every watch, there was a loud voice in heaven; [36] and they saw that the heavens were opened and that two males who had much radiance had come down from there and come near the sepulcher. [37] But that stone which had been thrust against the door, having rolled by itself, went a distance off the side; and the sepulcher opened, and both the young men entered. [38] And so those soldiers, having seen, awakened the centurion and the elders (for they too were present, safeguarding). [39] **And while they were relating what they had seen, again they see three males who have come out from their sepulcher, with the two supporting the other one, and a cross following them, [40] and the head of the two reaching unto heaven, but that of the one being led out by a hand by them going beyond the heavens. [41] And they were hearing a voice from the heavens saying, 'Have you made proclamation to the fallen-asleep?' [42] And an obeisance was heard from the cross, 'Yes.'**

[43] And so those people were seeking a common perspective to go off and make these things clear to Pilate; [44] and while they were still considering it through, there appear again the opened heavens and a certain man having come down and entered into the burial place. [45] Having seen these things, those around the centurion hastened at night before Pilate (having left the sepulcher which they were safeguarding) and described all the things that they indeed had seen, agonizing greatly and saying: 'Truly he was God's Son.' [46] In answer Pilate said: 'I am clean of the blood of the Son of God, but it was to you that this seemed [the thing to do].' [47] Then all, having come forward, were begging and exhorting him to command the centurion and the soldiers to say to no one what they had seen. [48] 'For,' they said, 'it is better for us to owe the debt of the greatest sin in the sight of God than to fall into the hands of the Jewish people and be stoned.' [49] And so Pilate ordered the centurion and the soldiers to say nothing. [50] Now at the dawn of the Lord's Day Mary Magdalene, a female disciple of the Lord (who, afraid because of the Jews since they were inflamed with anger, had not done at the tomb of the Lord what women were accustomed to do for the dead beloved by them), [51] having taken with her women friends, came to the tomb where he had been placed. [52] And they were afraid lest the Jews should see them and were saying, 'If indeed on that day on which he was crucified we could not weep and beat ourselves, yet now at his tomb we may do these things. [53] But who will roll away for us even the stone placed against the door of the tomb in order that, having entered, we may sit beside him and do the expected things? [54] For the stone was large, and we were afraid lest anyone see us. And if we are unable, let us throw against the door what we bring in memory of him; let us weep and beat ourselves until we come to our homes.' [55] And having gone off, they found the sepulcher opened. And having come forward, they bent down there and saw there a certain young man seated in the middle of the sepulcher, comely and clothed with a splendid robe, who said to them: [56] 'Why have you come? Whom do you seek? Not that one who was crucified? He is risen and gone away. But if you do not believe, bend down and see the place where he lay, because he is not here. For he is risen and gone away to there whence he was sent.' [57] Then the women fled frightened. [58] Now it was the final day of the Unleavened Bread; and many went out returning to their home since the feast was over. [59] But we twelve disciples of the Lord were weeping and sorrowful; and each one, sorrowful because of what had come to pass, departed to his home. [60] But I, Simon Peter, and my brother Andrew, having taken our nets, went off to the sea. And there was with us Levi of Alphaeus whom the Lord ...

Does the Gospel of Peter belong in the New Testament?

by Ryan Turner

The canon of the New Testament was reserved only for those writings that were either written by an apostle or an associate of an apostle. Since the Gospel of Peter was written in the mid second century, it is not a candidate for inclusion in the New Testament. The numerous embellishments in the Gospel of Peter clearly indicate that it was composed in the second century and was not written by the apostle Peter. This second-century date of authorship is in conformity with modern New Testament scholarship's appraisal of the Gospel of Peter. Therefore, the early church rightfully rejected this Gospel which was falsely attributed to Peter.

Background Information about the Gospel of Peter

What is the Gospel of Peter?

Though incorrectly ascribed to the apostle Peter, the Gospel of Peter is comprised of fourteen paragraphs (or 60 verses), written around 150 A.D., which describes the events surrounding the end of Jesus' life including his trial, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.¹ This Gospel is only partially preserved in one 8th- 9th century manuscript, beginning and ending in mid-sentence (Harris, 245).² The Gospel of Peter contains many similarities with New Testament Gospels including the basic outline of the end of Jesus' life with his trial, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, but it also contains a number of additions including, most notably, a description of the actual resurrection event with two giant angels, a super-sized Jesus, and a talking cross emerging from the empty tomb.

When was the Gospel of Peter discovered?

The Gospel of Peter was allegedly discovered in 1886-1887 during excavations in Akhmîm, upper Egypt. A ninth century manuscript was found in the coffin of a monk which is now known as the Akhmîm fragment. Interestingly, this book fragment contains no name or title. However, since the manuscript had (1) alleged docetic³ overtones & was (2) found in the midst of other works attributed to the apostle Peter, such as the Apocalypse of Peter, scholars think that the Akhmîm fragment belonged to the Gospel of Peter.⁴

Do any ancient writers talk about the Gospel of Peter?

Prior to the discovery of the Akhmîm fragment in 1886-87, scholars knew very little about the Gospel of Peter. Their first main source was Eusebius of Caesarea (c. A.D. 260-340), the well-known early church historian, who noted that the Gospel of Peter was among the church's rejected writings and had heretical roots.⁵ The second main source for the Gospel of Peter is a letter by Serapion, a bishop in Antioch (in office A.D. 199-211), titled "Concerning What is Known as the Gospel of Peter."⁶

Bishop Serapion notes that the Gospel of Peter had docetic overtones and advised that church leaders not read it to their congregations. From Bishop Serapion's statements we know that the Gospel of Peter was written sometime in the second century, but we are left with little knowledge of its actual contents from Serapion's statements alone.⁷

Is the Gospel of Peter a Gnostic Gospel?

There is some debate among scholars regarding whether the Akhmîm fragment actually is a Gnostic document. There are two possible Gnostic examples in 4:10 [paragraph 4] and 5:19 [paragraph 5]. Paragraph 4 describes the crucifixion of Jesus and states, "But he held his peace, as though having no pain." This may reflect the Gnostic view of Docetism which viewed Jesus Christ as not possessing a real physical body. *This would explain Jesus' lack of pain on the cross.* Furthermore, paragraph 5 describes Jesus' death cry on the cross as, "My power, my power, thou hast forsaken me." Some scholars see this as a reference to "a docetic version of the cry of dereliction which results from the departure of the divine power from Jesus' bodily shell."⁸ However, some scholars dispute these references as referring to full blown Gnosticism or Gnostic teachings at all.

When was the Gospel of Peter written?

Though this work was attributed to the apostle Peter (Par. 14), contemporary New Testament scholars rightfully note that the Gospel of Peter is a second century A.D. work. Most scholars would not date this Gospel before 130-150 A.D because of: (1) the numerous historical errors including a preponderance of legendary embellishments and the lack of first century historical knowledge, and (2) the likely dependence which the Gospel of Peter has on the New Testament Gospels. For these reasons among many, most scholars today reject the Gospel of Peter as (not) giving us as accurate of a portrait of Jesus as the standard New Testament Gospels and regard it as a late composition from the second century A.D.

Historical Errors

Error #1: The Guilt of Jews

The confession of the Jewish authorities guilt (par. 7; 11) lacks historical credibility.⁹ The confession of the Jewish authorities makes more sense in a context after 70 A.D. where the Jews were blamed for the destruction of Jerusalem as a result of not accepting Jesus as the Messiah. Furthermore, the reference of the Jewish scribes and elders saying, "For it is better, say they, for us to be guilty of the greatest sin before God, and not to fall into the hands of the people of the Jews and to be stoned," likewise reflects a period after 70 A.D. and is definitely not earlier than the Synoptic material.

Error #2: The High Priest Spending the Night in the Cemetery

Furthermore, the author of the Gospel of Peter (or Akhmîm fragment) possessed very little knowledge of Jewish customs. According to paragraphs 8 and 10, Jewish elders and scribes actually camp out in the cemetery as part of the guard keeping watch over the tomb of Jesus. Craig Evans wisely notes, "Given Jewish views of corpse impurity, not to mention fear of cemeteries at night, the author of our fragment is unbelievably ignorant (Evans, *Fabricating Jesus*, 83)."

The ruling priest spending the night in the cemetery; no ruling priest would actually do that. Due to these serious blunders, it is highly unlikely that this Gospel reflects earlier material than the New Testament gospels. Instead, the author is most likely far removed from the historical events surrounding Jesus' death and burial.

Error #3: Embellishment of the New Testament Resurrection Accounts

There are a number of apparent embellishments in the Gospel of Peter, especially surrounding the guarding of the tomb and the resurrection. Regarding the guarding of the tomb, there are seven even seals over the tomb (8), and a great multitude from the surrounding area comes to see the sealing of the tomb. Though these are certainly historical possibilities, it appears to indicate that these are embellishments compared to the more simple accounts in the New Testament Gospels.

The New Testament writers never describe exactly how the resurrection took place, since presumably no one was there to witness it other than the guards. Perhaps the most fascinating part of the Gospel of Peter's account is that it actually describes the resurrection of Jesus (9-10)!

“9 And in the night in which the Lord's day was drawing on, as the soldiers kept guard two by two in a watch, there was a great voice in the heaven; and they saw the heavens opened, and two men descend from thence with great light and approach the tomb. And that stone which was put at the door rolled of itself and made way in part; and the tomb was opened, and both the young men entered in. 10 When therefore those soldiers saw it, they awakened the centurion and the elders; for they too were hard by keeping guard. And as they declared what things they had seen, again they see three men come forth from the tomb, and two of them supporting one, and a cross following them: and of the two the head reached unto the heaven, but the head of him who was lead by them overpassed the heavens. And they heard a voice from the heavens, saying, Thou hast preached to them that sleep. And a response was heard from the cross, Yea.”¹⁰

This resurrection account does not retain anything of the historical soberness that is in the New Testament resurrection accounts. Instead, this description of the resurrection of Jesus has a large angel whose head “reached unto the heaven,” and a giant Jesus whose head “overpassed the heavens!” Finally, the best example is the talking cross. The voice from heaven says, “Thou has preached to them that sleep.” The cross responds by saying, “Yea.” While it is possible that there was a giant Jesus whose head surpassed the heavens and a talking cross, it is more likely this story is probably an embellishment of the simpler empty tomb and resurrection accounts in the New Testament Gospels. It is probably just another attempt like some other Gnostic Gospels to “fill in the gaps” in the events surrounding Jesus' life.

How anyone could think of this resurrection account as more primitive than the Gospels seems quite unreasonable. Evans wisely states, “...can it be seriously maintained that the Akhmîm fragment's [Gospel of Peter's] resurrection account, complete with a talking cross and angels whose heads reach heaven, constitutes the most primitive account?” (Evans, 84).

Dependence on the New Testament Gospels

It is difficult to prove exact literary dependence by the Gospel of Peter on the New Testament Gospel; however, there are at least a couple instances in Peter which are best explained by the author having familiarity with the canonical New Testament Gospels. The Gospel of Matthew

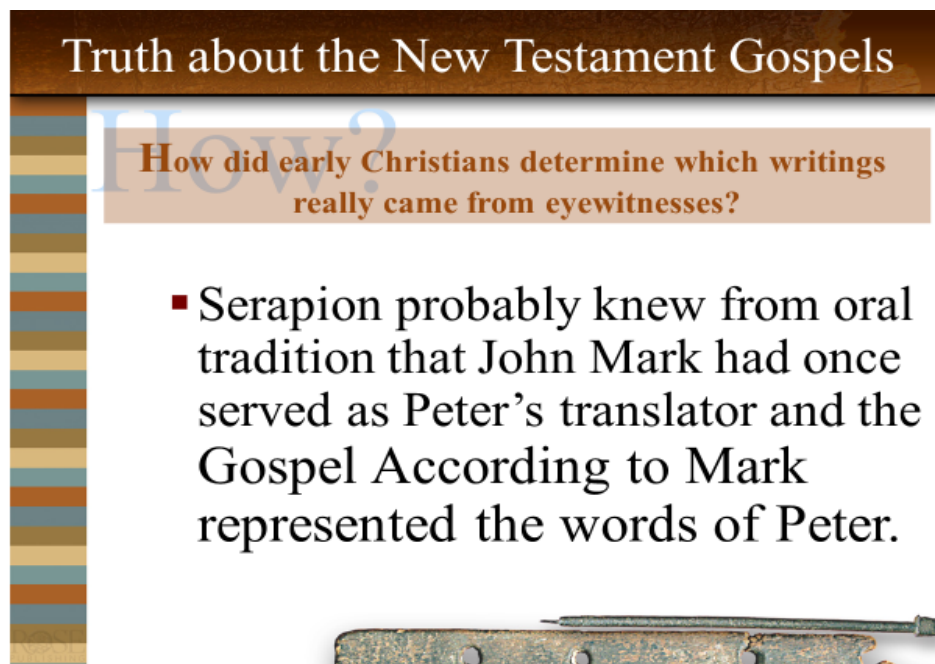
is a prime example, with its guard at the tomb of Jesus. The Gospel of Peter author likely took this account & embellished it by having Jewish leaders come and camp out at the tomb overnight. This may have served the apologetic purposes of the author of The Gospel of Peter which reflected Jerusalem conditions after destruction of temple. Furthermore, the centurion's confession (par. 11) appears to also reflect the Gospel of Matthew ([Matthew 27:54](#); cf. [Mark 15:39](#); [Luke 23:47](#)).

Finally, the Gospel of Peter's reference of the thief uses the same Greek words to reference the thief in paragraph 4 (4.10, 13), which likely reflects the Gospel of Luke (23:33, 39).

Since the Gospel of Peter is likely a 2nd century work due to the historical errors listed above, it is likely that the Gospel of Peter at least used similar traditions that are found in the New Testament Gospels, if not the Gospels themselves. This is a more sober conclusion rather than basing our argument on source criticism alone, which is often bound with mere speculation of hypothetical sources & layers of editing & redaction. Given the numerous embellishments and historical errors, it is likely that the author had some familiarity with the canonical Gospels and combined it with his own speculations. However, to what extent the author had knowledge of the New Testament Gospels, we may never know.

Conclusion


Despite the claims of some, the Gospel of Peter does not belong in the New Testament due to its serious embellishments and likely dependence on the New Testament Gospels. For these reasons among many, most scholars today reject the Gospel of Peter as giving us as accurate of a portrait of Jesus as the standard New Testament Gospels, and regard it as a late composition from the second century A.D.



Truth about the New Testament Gospels

How?
How did early Christians determine which writings really came from eyewitnesses?

- Serapion probably knew from oral tradition that John Mark had once served as Peter's translator and the Gospel According to Mark represented the words of Peter.



A Summary of the Evidence for a Second Century Date of the Gospel of Peter

Historical Errors and Embellishments

- Seven seals are used to seal the tomb of Jesus (Paragraph 8).
- A crowd from Jerusalem comes to see the sealed tomb of Jesus (Par. 9).
- The Jewish leaders camp out at the tomb of Jesus overnight.
- The Jewish leaders fear the harm of the Jewish people (Par. 8). This does not describe the historical situation of the Jews before the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 A.D.
- The Resurrection story actually describes how Jesus exited the tomb with two giant angels, a super-sized Jesus, and a talking cross.

Late References

- Transfer of responsibility of Jesus' death away from Pilate to Herod and the Jews.
- "The Lord's Day" reference (Par. 9) indicates a later time period (cf. [Rev. 1:10](#); Ignatius's *Epistle to the Magnesians* 9:1).

Possible Gnostic Overtones

- Silence during the crucifixion "as if he felt no pain." This could be consistent with a docetic view of Jesus which was common in Gnostic circles.
- Crucifixion cry is "my Power!" "my Power!" which likely indicates a supernatural being departed from him.
- Jesus' death is described as being "taken up," implying that he was rescued without dying. This would be consistent with some Gnostic views that thought since Jesus was not fully a man, he could not actually die on the cross.

Possible New Testament Parallels

- The centurion's confession (Par. 11) appears to reflect the Gospel of Matthew ([Mt. 27:54](#); cf. [Mk. 15:39](#); [Lk. 23:47](#)).
- The posting of the guard at the tomb appears to reflect the Gospel of Matthew.

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- 1. To read a copy of the Gospel of Peter, please visit: <http://sacred-texts.com/bib/lbob/lbob30.htm>. I also consulted "The Gospel of Peter" in *The Ante Nicene Fathers*, volume 9, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, pp. 7-8.
 - 2. Interestingly, we do not know if the Gospel has a report on Jesus' public ministry and miracles since the copy of the Gospel of Peter that we have is just a fragment. The Akhmim fragment ends abruptly with probably an appearance of Jesus about to take place at the Sea of Galilee. Some scholars state that the Gospel of Peter fragment may date to the 7th century. See P. M. Head, "On the Christology of the Gospel of Peter," *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992), 209.
 - 3. Docetism was a belief in the early centuries of Christianity which held that Jesus was fully divine, but not fully human. In other words, Jesus was God, but not man since physical reality is evil.
 - 4. A few scholars debate whether the Akhmim fragment actually is the Gospel of Peter, but for the sake of argument, we will just assume that the Akhmim fragment actually is the Gospel of Peter especially since this is the consensus view of scholarship today.
 - 5. *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.3.1-4; 3.25.6; and 6.12.3-6
 - 6. Bishop Serapion's letter is actually preserved by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* 6.12.3-6
 - 7. Some scholars have attempted to find parallels or quotations of the Gospel of Peter in other early church fathers including Origen, but these parallels are questionable.
 - 8. Head, 214. Head does not actually ascribe to this viewpoint.
 - 9. It is possibly based on Jesus' statements about Jerusalem ([Lk. 21:20-24](#); [23:48](#)) and perhaps to Caiaphas's counsel ([Jn. 11:49-50](#)).
 - 10. <http://sacred-texts.com/bib/lbob/lbob30.htm>





The Gospels: "Lost" & Found

The New Testament begins with four accounts of the life of Jesus Christ commonly known as "Gospels," a word that means "good news" or "victorious tidings." The Gospels According to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have been familiar to Christians for so many centuries that many believers have assumed these Gospels are the only retellings of the life of Jesus that ever existed. But there are more than a dozen other "Gospels," plus several supposed accounts of episodes from Jesus' life that aren't known by the name of "Gospel."

Some of these alternative "Gospels" have been familiar among scholars for centuries. Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* popularized several "lost Gospels," including *Gospel of Philip*, *Gospel of Mary Magdalene*, and *Gospel of Thomas*. A couple of years later the *Gospel of Judas* was reconstructed and translated anew. The media implied that *Gospel of Judas* and other lost Gospels provide information about the historical Jesus that isn't included in the New Testament Gospels. Several writers and entertainment corporations were quick to turn a profit by sensationalizing the news of this reconstructed "Gospel." Indeed, the viewpoints found in the "lost Gospels" do differ from the New Testament Gospels.

ACCORDING TO NEW TESTAMENT GOSPELS	ACCORDING TO "LOST GOSPELS"
Jesus was fully human and fully divine	Jesus was a spirit who seemed human or a mere human uniquely inhabited by a divine spirit (Gnostic gospels)
Judas Iscariot willingly chose to betray Jesus	Jesus told Judas to betray him (<i>Gospel of Judas</i>)
The first miraculous sign that Jesus performed was turning water to wine at Cana	Jesus performed self-serving miracles throughout his childhood ("infancy Gospels")

How likely is it that the lost Gospels really tell us the truth about Jesus Christ? An open-minded look at the historical record quickly reveals that there is little reason to doubt the New Testament Gospels and great reason to reject the so-called "lost Gospels."

The Truth about *The Da Vinci Code*

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

The Da Vinci Code theory (both the book & a subsequent movie of the same name), has generated significant publicity over the past several years. Of course the crackpot journalists, TV talk-show hosts, and liberal theologians are vigorously promoting these productions as “truth” about Christianity. Even some naive folks, who ostensibly are associated with “Christendom,” are encouraging their friends and associates to read the book and see the movie, and to use the information as a “tool” for evangelism.

As a “tool,” these productions have the value of a one-handle pair of pliers! Most nominal “Christians” do not have two-cents worth of discernment in being able to separate biblical truth from error.

The author of *The Da Vinci Code* is Dan Brown, a former schoolteacher, songwriter, and mediocre novelist. His *Da Vinci* book, which finds its place on the fiction shelves of Barnes & Noble, etc., made Brown a millionaire. It is reported that by 2006 Brown’s book had sold over 60.5 million copies and had produced more than \$200 million in revenue.

The volume is a combination of a fractional element of truth, a galaxy of heretical error and a money-driven scheme to capitalize commercially off of the New Testament gospel. This latter ploy is so vile as to defy attempt at any appropriate characterization.

In an excellent article entitled, “*The Da Vinci Code* vs. The Facts,” Dr. Steve Morrison has catalogued some of the egregious errors that characterize this literary monstrosity (n.d., 4.2). I have surveyed these points and added my own observations.

(1) It is alleged that up until the Council of Nice (about A.D. 325), Christ was viewed merely as a human prophet and not “the Son of God” (Brown 2004, 233). Anyone who has even a nodding acquaintance with the New Testament knows this is an outrageous lie. God acknowledged Christ as his Son (Matthew 3:17; 17:5), as did the Lord’s disciples (Matthew 16:16).

Even those involved in the crucifixion were forced to concede that “truly this was the Son of God” (Matthew 27:54), as did that vicious persecutor, Saul of Tarsus, who was so overwhelmed with the evidence of Jesus’ divine nature (Acts 9:20), that he traveled some 12,000 miles proclaiming the facts about Jesus Christ, and died as a martyr on behalf of his Savior.

(2) It is contended that there are many “Gospels” beyond Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—more than eighty is claimed. And these must be granted credibility equivalent to that of the New Testament documents (Ibid., 231). It is true that there were documents circulating in the second century and onward that were called “gospels,” e.g., the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Judas, the Gospel of the Nativity of Mary, etc., but these fanciful works were rejected as spurious by contemporary scholars. The article on “Gospels,” in McClintock & Strong’s *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, demonstrates the vast difference between real & bogus records.

(3) Supposedly, the books of the New Testament were not collected into one volume until the time of Constantine, in the fourth century (Ibid., 231). It doesn’t really matter when New Testament books were finally gathered together. The important point is this: the documents were wide circulated from the 2nd century onward. Every passage of the entire New Testament (with the exception of about a dozen verses) can be found in the writings of the early “church fathers”—long before the days of Constantine.

(4) According to the Da Vinci theory, the “original” Christianity had a feminine “goddess” (Ibid., 237-239). The textual New Testament writings are the testimony of the “original” Christianity & there is nothing remotely resembling a Christian goddess in these narratives. However, there were many “goddesses” in the Graeco-Roman world, and eventually some quasi-Christian cults did attempt to elevate Mary to the status of virtual goddess, the “Queen of heaven” — a myth that continues to be perpetuated even today by Roman Catholicism. The theory is false.

The *Da Vinci Code* is but another of those crass efforts to cash in on the world-wide influence of Jesus Christ, without the appropriate honor that acknowledges his true identity & yields in submission to him as Lord. *The Da Vinci Code* is a cheap and disgusting manifestation of greed.

CHART: “Gnosticism Unmasked”

The label “Gnosticism” is of fuzzy logic, describing diverse sects and ideas in the ancient world. This chart summarizes those elements within various Gnostic groups that the majority of Christians found especially troublesome. A particular Gnostic sect would not necessarily have held all of the following beliefs.

DOCTRINE	GNOSTIC VIEW	ORTHODOX VIEW (as expressed by Irenaeus of Lyons)
GOD	There are two opposing Gods: the supreme, spiritual, unknown Father who is distant from the world and revealed only by Christ; and the subordinate, ignorant, and evil creator of the world (Demiurge).	There is only one true God who is the Creator of the world and the Father of Jesus Christ.
WORLD	The material world crafted by the Demiurge is evil and keeps the spiritual ones from perfection. It must perish and be escaped.	The material world was created good by God. It will someday be renewed and made into a fit home for the redeemed.
HUMANITY	The Gnostics are by nature the elite, spiritual ones, for they have the “seed” of the spiritual realm inside them. This divine spark (the spirit) is trapped within the material, fleshly body and yearns for release from this evil dungeon.	God created all human beings as a union of body and spirit. We are not spiritual by nature—this is a gift available to all by faith through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

SALVATION

Only the immortal spirit of the Gnostic is saved as it gains release from material captivity and returns to the Father's spiritual realm. Salvation is by knowledge (*gnosis*)—by knowing that the true God is the Father, not the Demiurge, and that the true home of the spirit is its place of origin, the Father's realm, not the material world with its bodies of flesh.

Both the immaterial and material aspects of God's creation are saved. By faith in Jesus Christ, a person receives the Holy Spirit who provides spiritual life, resurrects their flesh to eternal life, and redeems the created world.

CHRIST

Christ is a spiritual, divine being from the Father's realm who comes to the world to reveal the Father and the true identity of the spiritual ones, the Gnostics. Christ did not become incarnate or suffer on the cross. Instead, he either merely seemed to be human or temporarily inhabited a human being named "Jesus."

Jesus Christ is the one and only Savior, the eternal Son of God made flesh, who truly suffered for the sins of humanity and was truly raised in immortal resurrection to eternal life.

CANON and HISTORY

There are gospels and testimonies of the apostles that convey the perfect revelation of Christ in addition to (and in some ways superior to) the church's four gospels. This revelation brought by Christ manifests the true knowledge of the Father and the Gnostics, while the Law and the Prophets manifest the Demiurge.

The church recognizes only four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and believes that these four, along with the rest of the New Testament, are in harmony with the Law and the Prophets. All witness to the one true Creator and Father, his Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.⁴

⁴ [Gnosticism Unmasked](#). (2007). *Christian History Magazine-Issue 96: The Gnostic Hunger for Secret Knowledge*.

Recurrent Resurgent Gnosticism

- ✚ The term “Gnosticism” is taken from the Greek word for knowledge (gnosis).
- ✚ Whereas the Apologists utilized philosophy to defend Christianity, Gnosticism used philosophy to reinterpret Christianity.
- ✚ Gnosticism refers to a blended religious philosophy that invaded Paganism, Judaism, and Christianity.
- ✚ A beginning form of Gnosticism, mixed with Judaism, existed in the Apostolic Period.
- ✚ In the second century, a more developed Gnosticism threatened the church.
- ✚ Fighting the Gnostic heresy was a major preoccupation of church leaders and authors in the early church.

**There were certain different Gnostic systems,
but they all had certain common features:**

- ✚ *Radical dualism of spirit and matter.*

Matter is totally independent of God and irremediably evil. God could not have created the evil world of matter; its origin is accounted for by a series of divine emanations (called aeons) by which the nature of Deity is progressively weakened to the point where it could endure contact with matter. “Pleroma” (fullness) was the term for the higher aeons. What they call evil comes from this fall of Pleroma.

**There were certain different Gnostic systems,
but they all had certain common features:**

+ *Concern for a personal salvation.*

Salvation is the release of man's spirit from the bondage and prison of the flesh (there is not any resurrection). The means of salvation is "gnosis," or intuitive knowledge of one's true self. Salvation is sometimes mediated by certain rites and special ceremonies.

**There were certain different Gnostic systems,
but they all had certain common features:**

+ *Conduct of the "saved."*

Gnostic principles involved a denial of the flesh and a living of the life of the spirit. To some this meant extreme asceticism, to others the opposite – the libertinism of the Carpocrates !

Gnosticism: Perplexing Questions

How can the
existence of creation
be explained?

What is the
origin of evil?

*How can a holy God
create a universe
with sin?*

Essential Components of Gnosticism

Dualism
Emanations
Knowledge

God
(Pure Spirit)

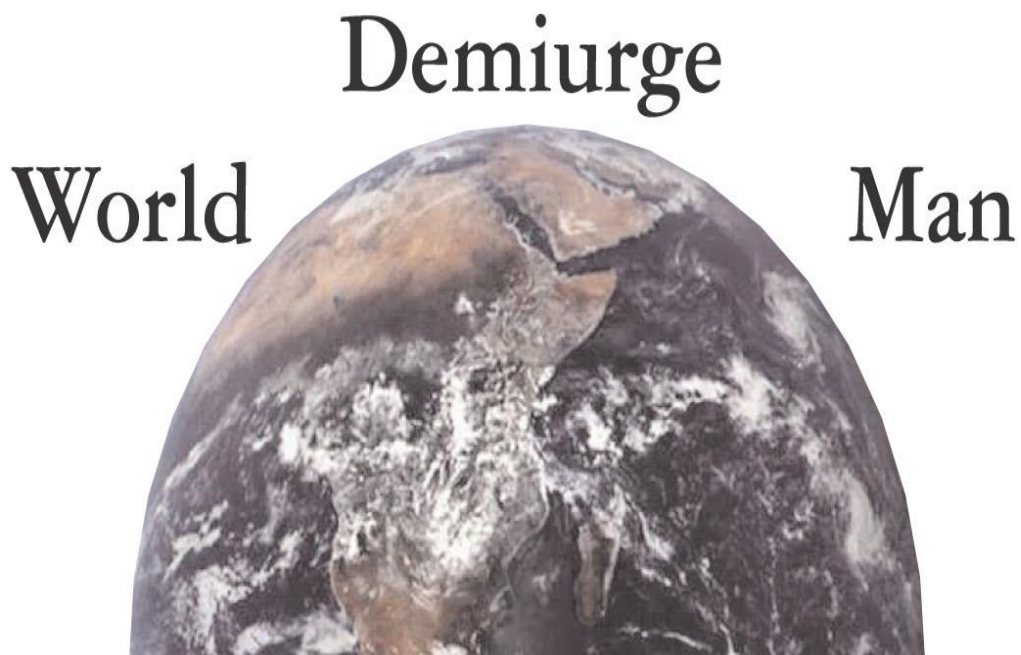


Chart 44

Gnosticism's Concept of Salvation

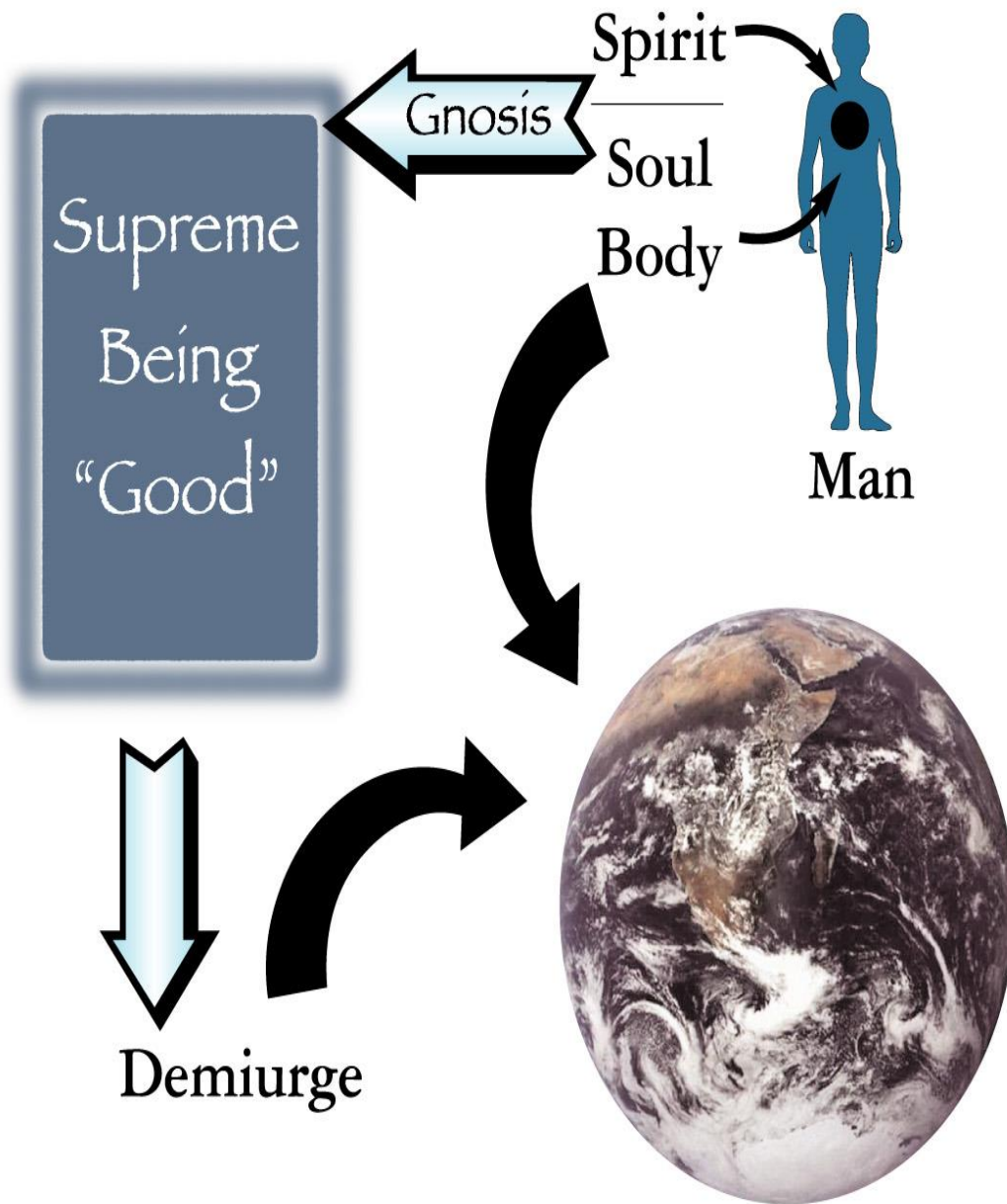


Chart 45

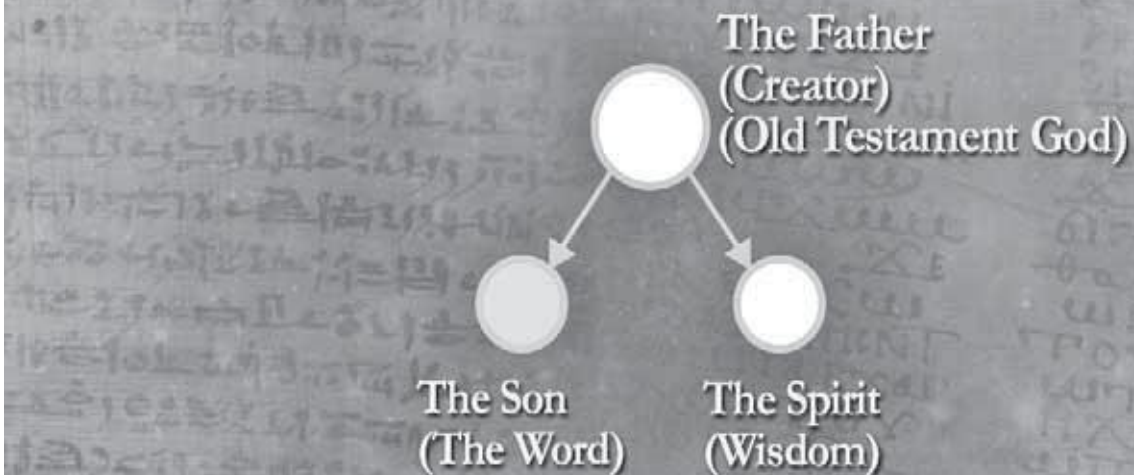
Irenaeus's View of God

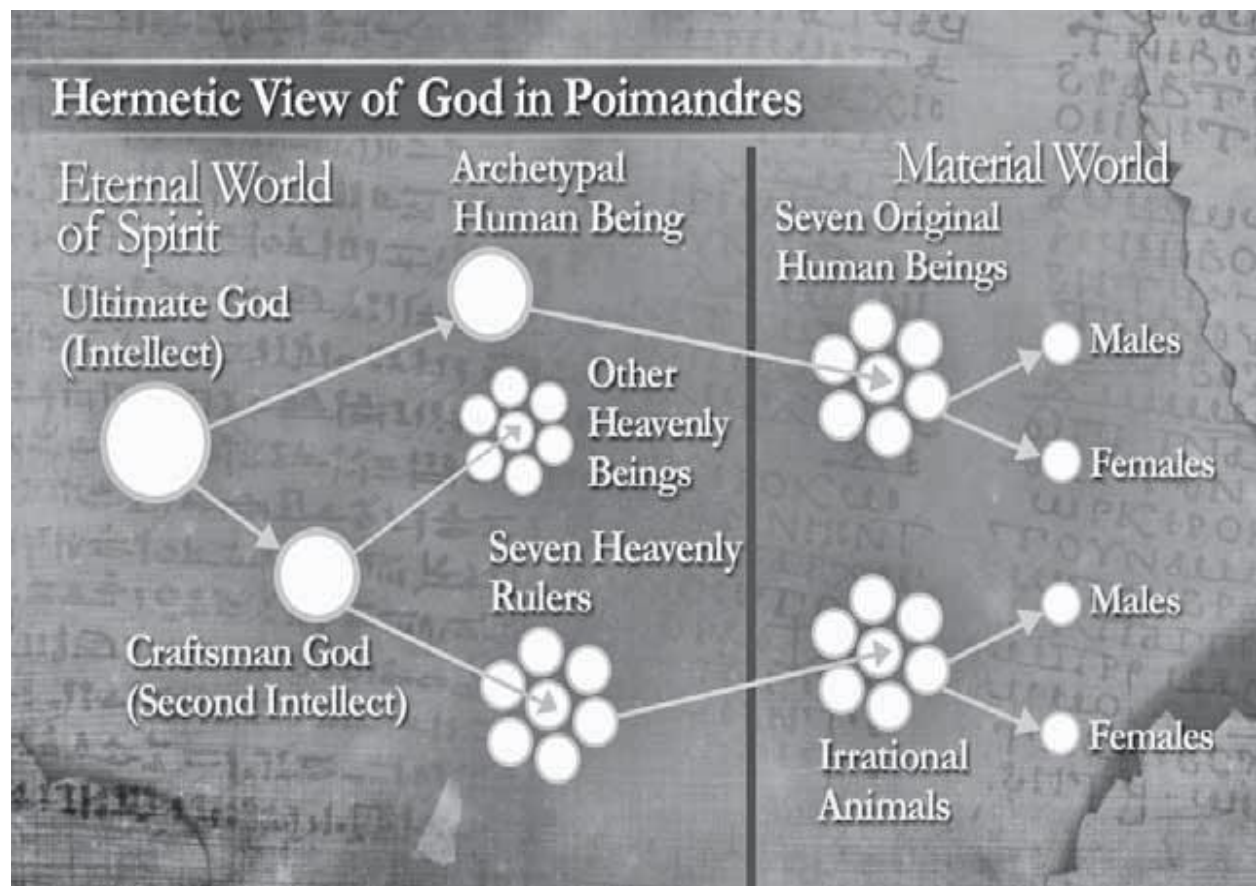
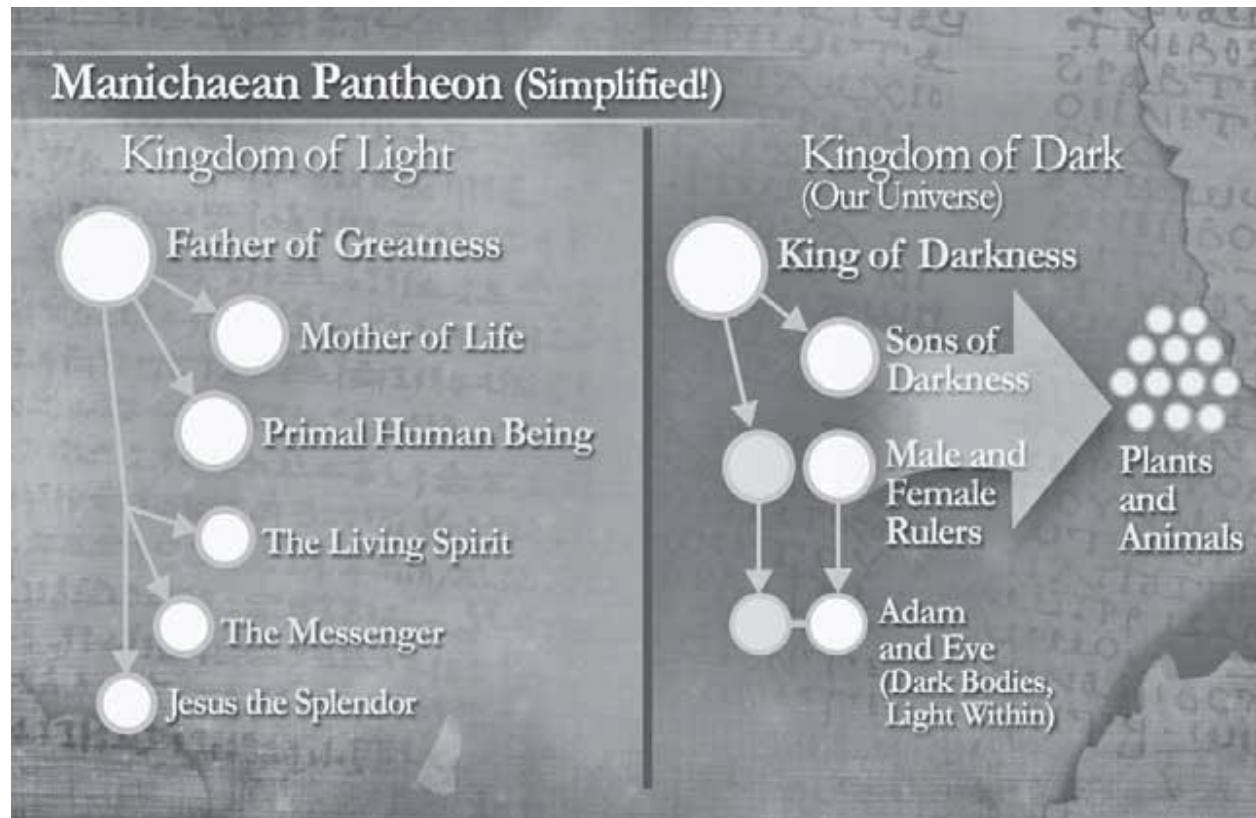
Seven Heavens with "Powers, Angels, and Archangels"

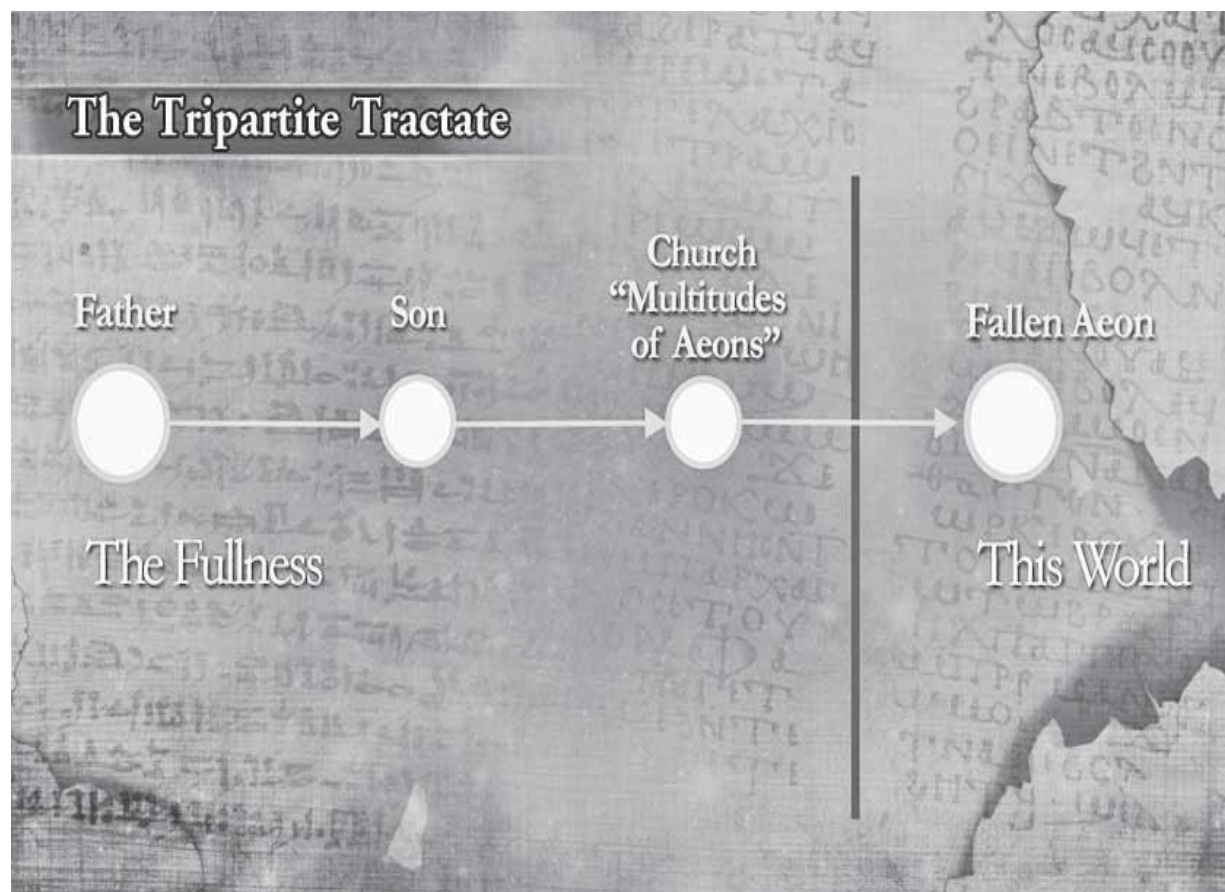
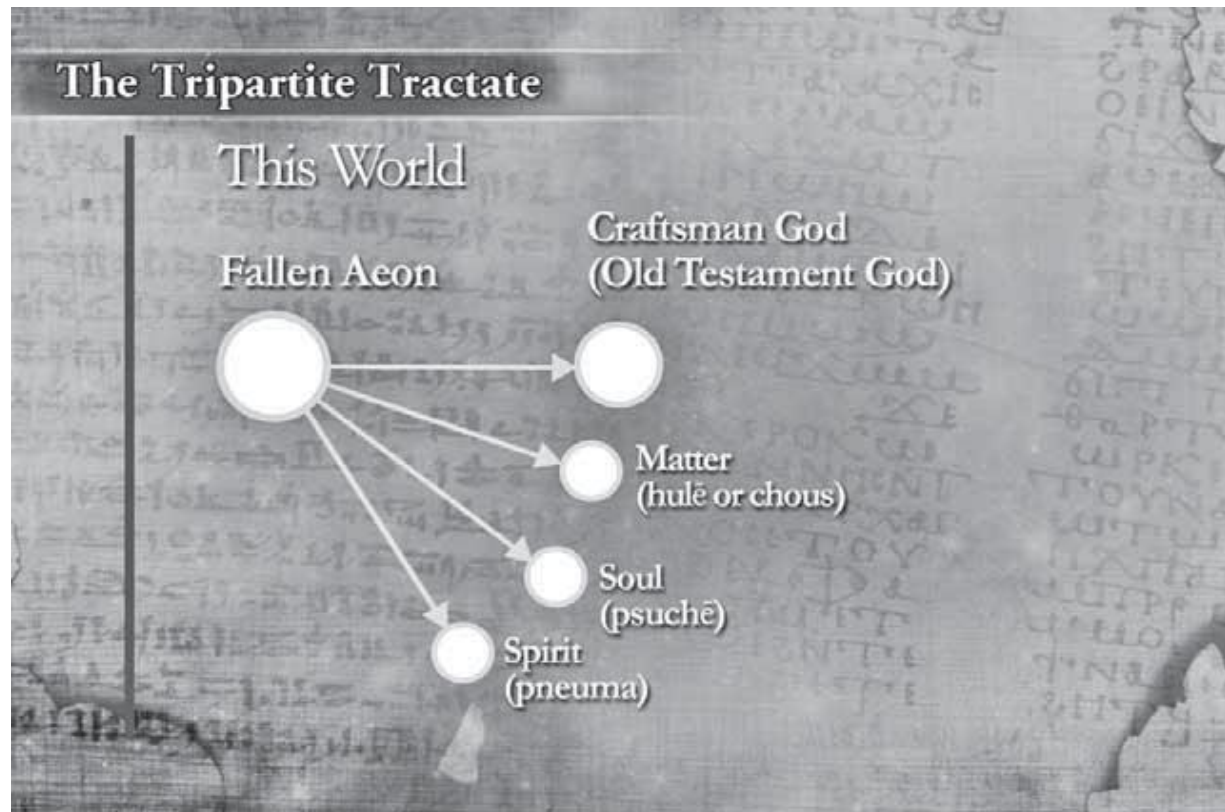
Leader of Each Heaven:



Irenaeus's View of God







- ✚ “Even his detractors had a hard time criticizing Valentinus’s intellect. Following in the footsteps of his older contemporary, Basilides, Valentinus pursued the goal of creating a truly Hellenistic form of Christianity, reimagined through the lens of Plato’s philosophy.
 - ✚ What made Valentinian gnosticism so powerful was its subtlety. Valentinus & his followers were able to remain within the larger Christian community long after other gnostic groups had either voluntarily split or been forced out. Valentinus taught from the same sacred texts as mainstream Christians and utilized many of the same worship practices; only in private gatherings were Valentinians instructed in the hidden or secret meanings to all of these practices.”
-
- ✚ “Because of this circumspect behavior, Valentinus was able not only to remain in the larger Christian community, but to aspire to leadership. Apparently, when elections were held to determine the next bishop of Rome after the death of Hyginus around 143, Valentinus was nominated to take his place and reportedly lost by only a handful of votes. Later, it seems, he either broke with the Roman church or was expelled. There is evidence that he (both) left Rome & died around 160. With him, the golden age of Christian gnosticism came to a close.
 - ✚ While their teachings would continue to have influence for centuries to come, Christian gnostics were never again as creative or as productive as they were during the middle years of the second century.”

Male and Female Selves in Valentinian Thought



Symbolized in Genesis



Ultimate Salvation

“The Fullness”
= Bridal Chamber

Bridegrooms

Jesus

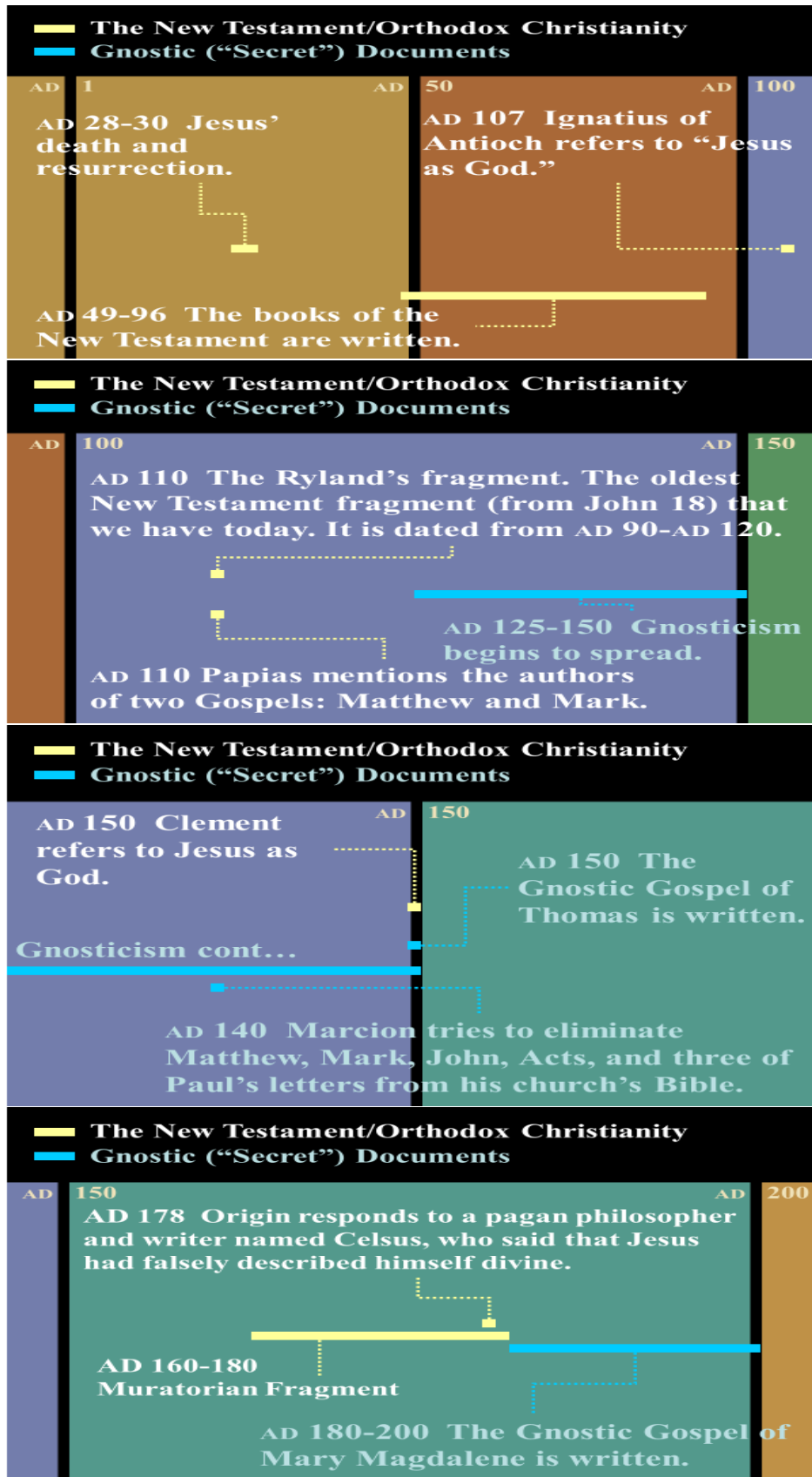
Angelic Selves

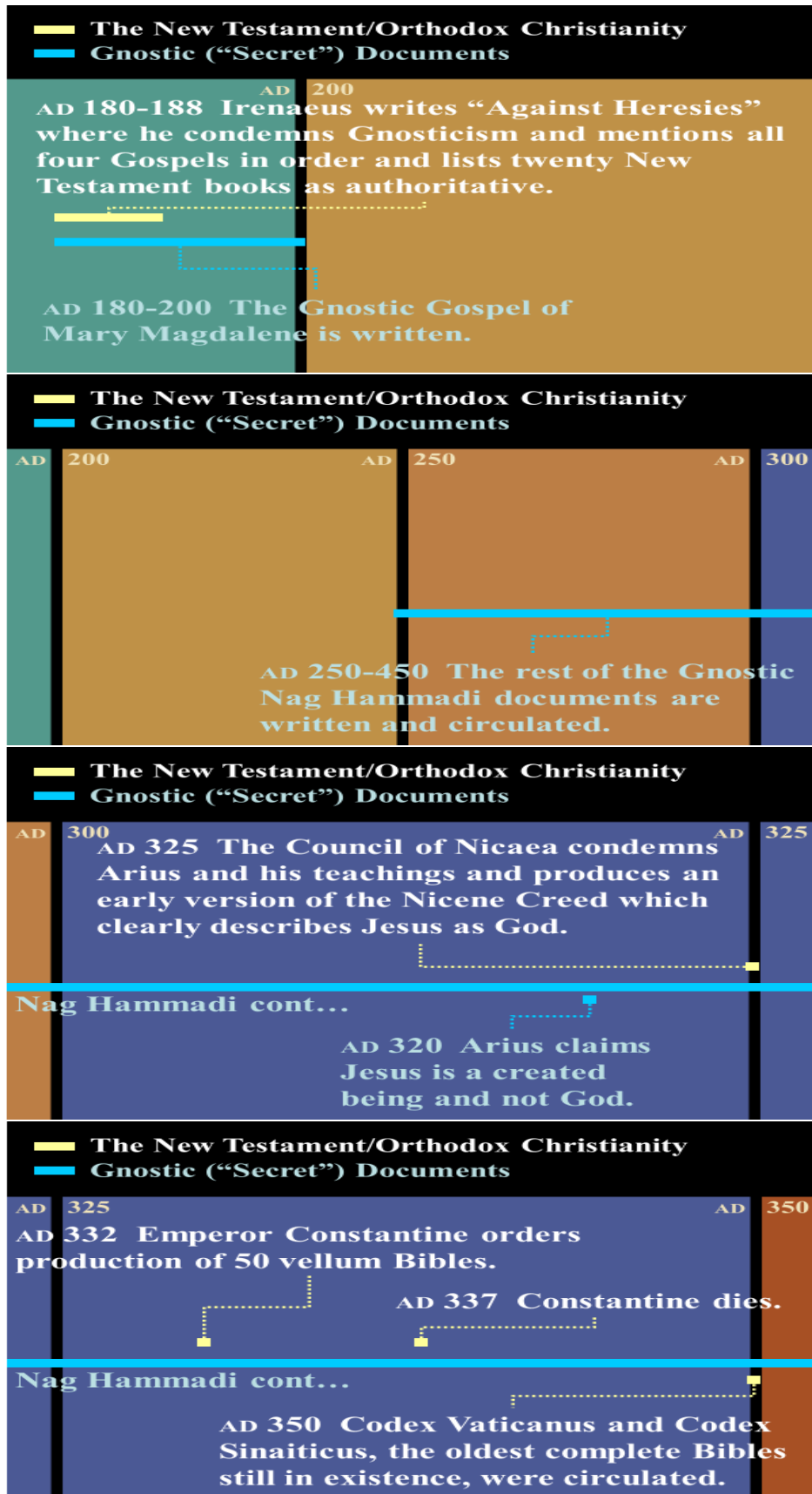
+

Brides

Wisdom

Human Spirits



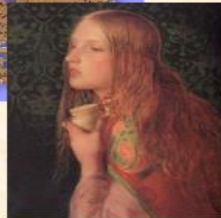


The Gnostic “Gospels” of Philip and Mary Magdalene



- Leigh Teabing says that these gospels either teach or imply the following:
- Mary was the wife of Jesus.
- The mother of His child.
- She was to lead the church after Jesus’ death (244-48).

The “Gospel” of Mary



- After an appearance of Christ to his disciples, Peter asks Mary to tell them the words of the Savior that she knows, but that they do not.
- She describes a vision of the ascent of the soul past four ruling powers to its rest.

The “Gospel” of Mary



- Andrew rejects the revelation, not believing it came from Christ.
- *“And Peter said, ‘Did the Saviour really speak with a woman without our knowledge? Are we to turn about and all listen to her? Did he prefer her to us?’”*

The “Gospel” of Mary



- “And Levi answered, ‘Peter, you have always been hot-tempered. Now I see you contending against the woman like an adversary. If the Saviour made her worthy, who are you indeed to reject her? Surely the Saviour knows her very well. That is why he loved her more than us’ (247).”

The “Gospel” of Mary

What does this text teach?



- Mary received a special revelation from Jesus that the male disciples did not.
- Levi implies that Jesus (*who knows her very well*) considered her worthy.
- Jesus loved Mary more than his male disciples.

The “Gospel” of Mary

What does this text mean?



- It’s possibly symbolic. Peter may represent “Orthodoxy”; Mary “Gnosticism”.
- If this is so, then “Mary” (*Gnostics*) are claiming special revelation even if “Peter” (*Orthodox*) can’t believe it.

The “Gospel” of Mary



- Composed in the late second century - one hundred years after NT gospels.
- It’s almost certainly not historically reliable.
- But doesn’t *The Gospel of Philip* indicate that Mary and Jesus were married?

The “Gospel” of Philip



- “*And the companion of the Saviour is Mary Magdalene. Christ loved her more than all the disciples and used to kiss her often on her mouth. The rest of the disciples were offended by it and expressed disapproval. They said to him, ‘Why do you love her more than all of us?’*” (246).

The “Gospel” of Philip



- “As any Aramaic scholar will tell you, the word *companion*, in those days, literally meant *spouse*” (246).
- This gospel was originally written in Greek.

The “Gospel” of Philip



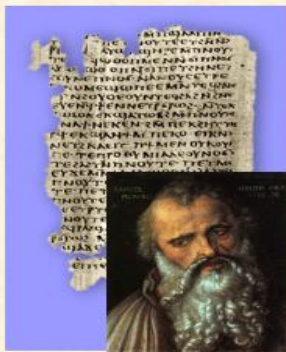
- Even the Coptic translation, found at Nag Hammadi, uses a Greek loan word for “companion” - *koinonos*.
- This term can mean “wife” in a spiritual sense, but it’s not the common Greek term for wife.

The “Gospel” of Philip



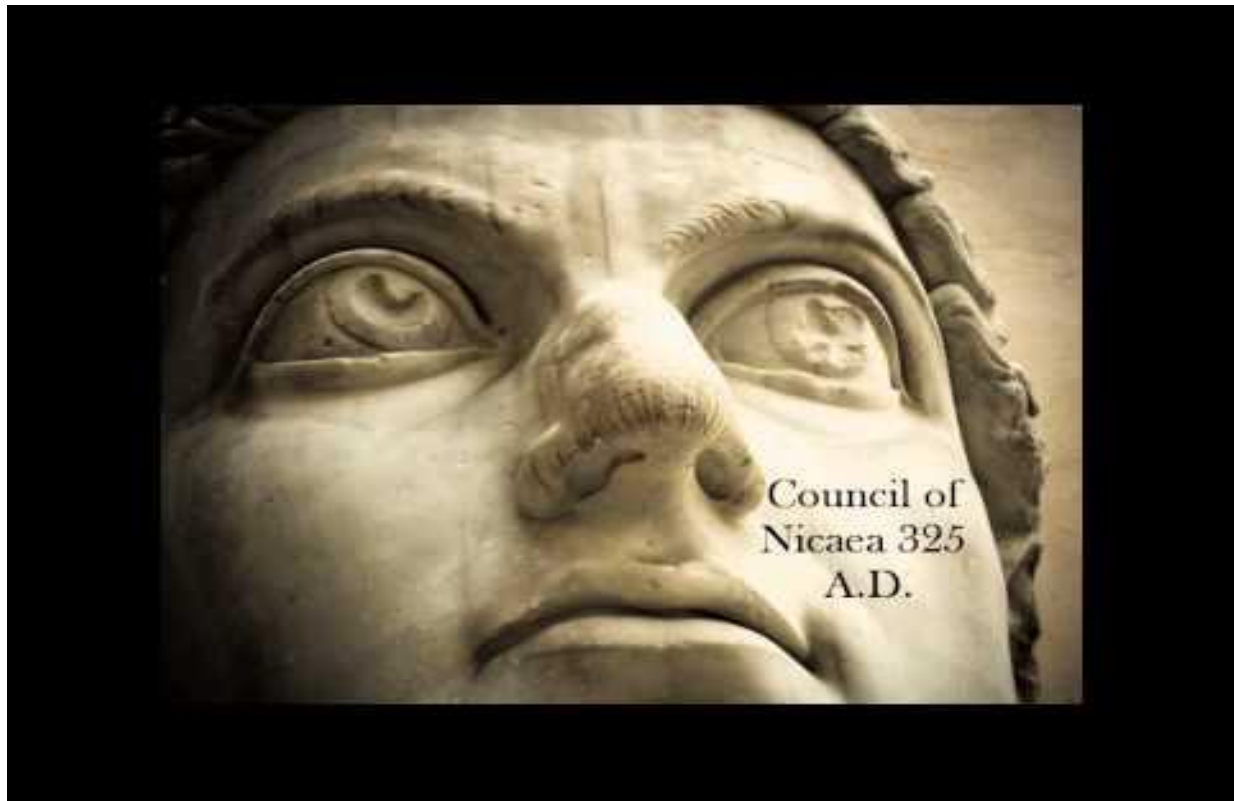
- *Koinonos* is most often used in the NT of a “partner”.
- Luke uses this term to describe James and John as Peter’s business “partners” (5:10).
- Contrary to Teabing’s claim, the statement that Mary was Jesus’ *companion* does not at all prove that she was His wife.

The “Gospel” of Philip



But what about the statement:
“Christ loved her more than all the disciples and used to kiss her often on the mouth.”

- This portion of the manuscript is damaged. We don’t actually know *where* Christ kissed Mary.



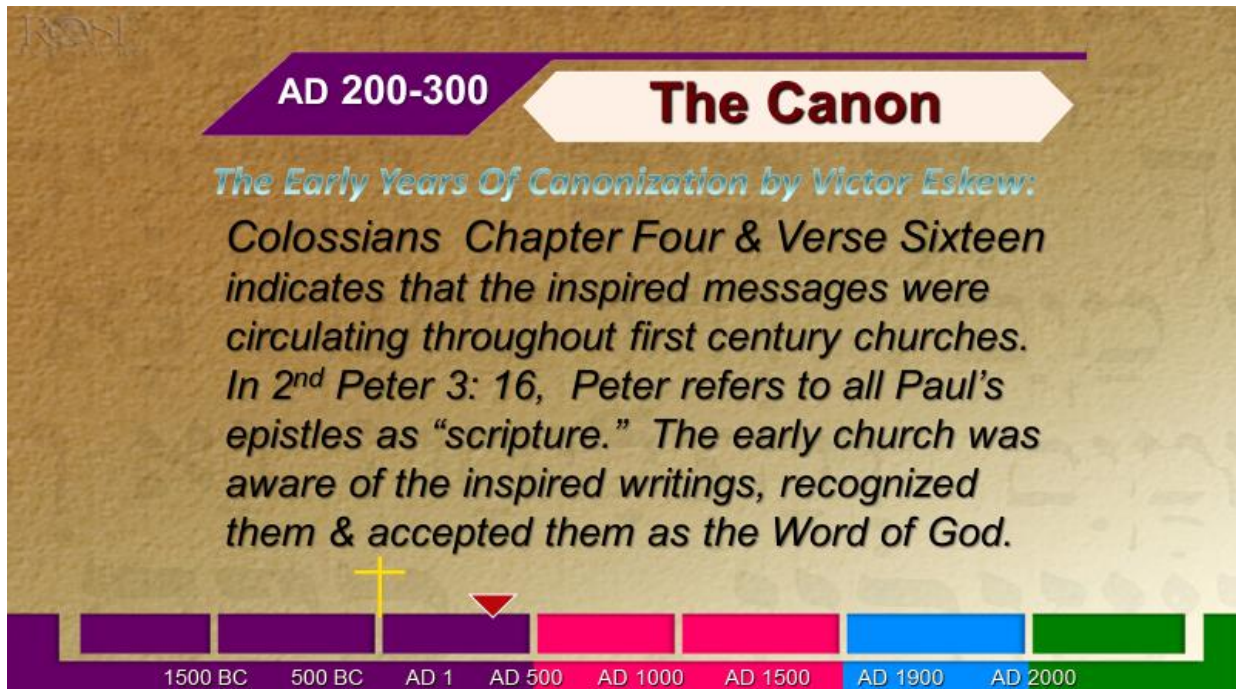
Scripture

THE RELIABILITY OF SCRIPTURE

The interval between the dates of the original composition [of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John] and the earliest extant evidence [is] so small as to be negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed.¹⁵

—Sir Frederic Kenyon, former director of the British Museum

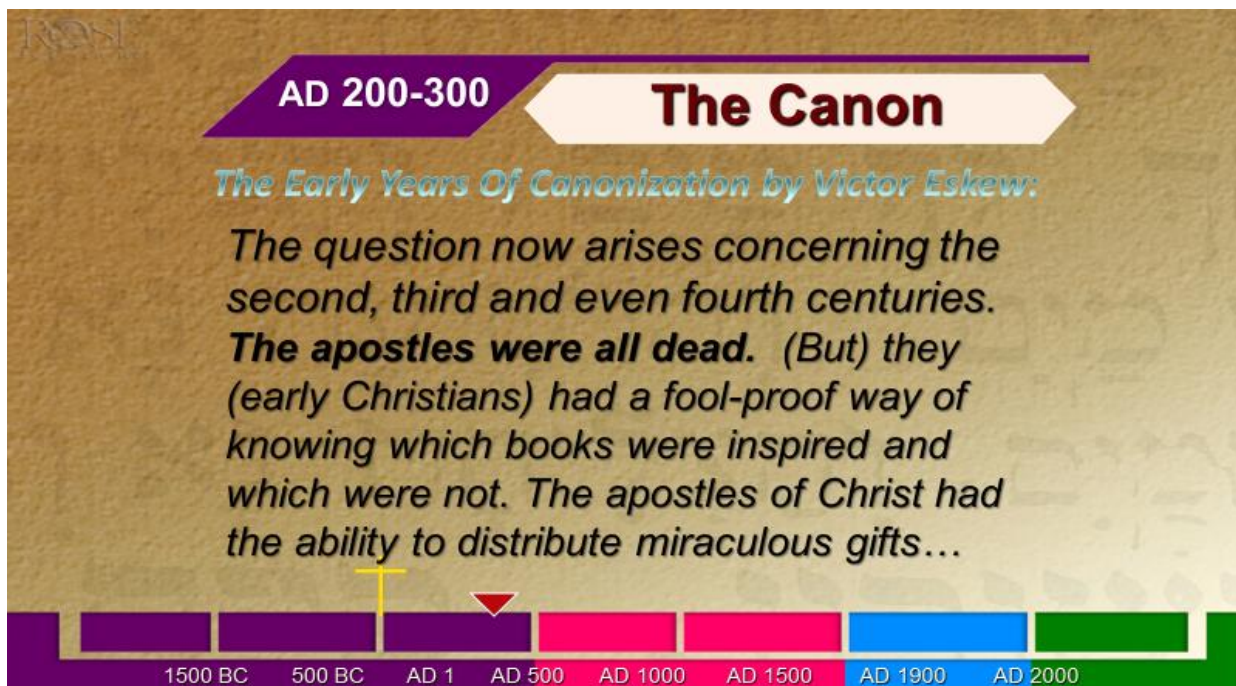
QUESTION NUMBER ONE:
IS THE CANON COMPLETE?
THE SHORT ANSWER IS YES!



AD 200-300 **The Canon**

The Early Years Of Canonization by Victor Eskew:
Colossians Chapter Four & Verse Sixteen indicates that the inspired messages were circulating throughout first century churches. In 2nd Peter 3: 16, Peter refers to all Paul's epistles as "scripture." The early church was aware of the inspired writings, recognized them & accepted them as the Word of God.

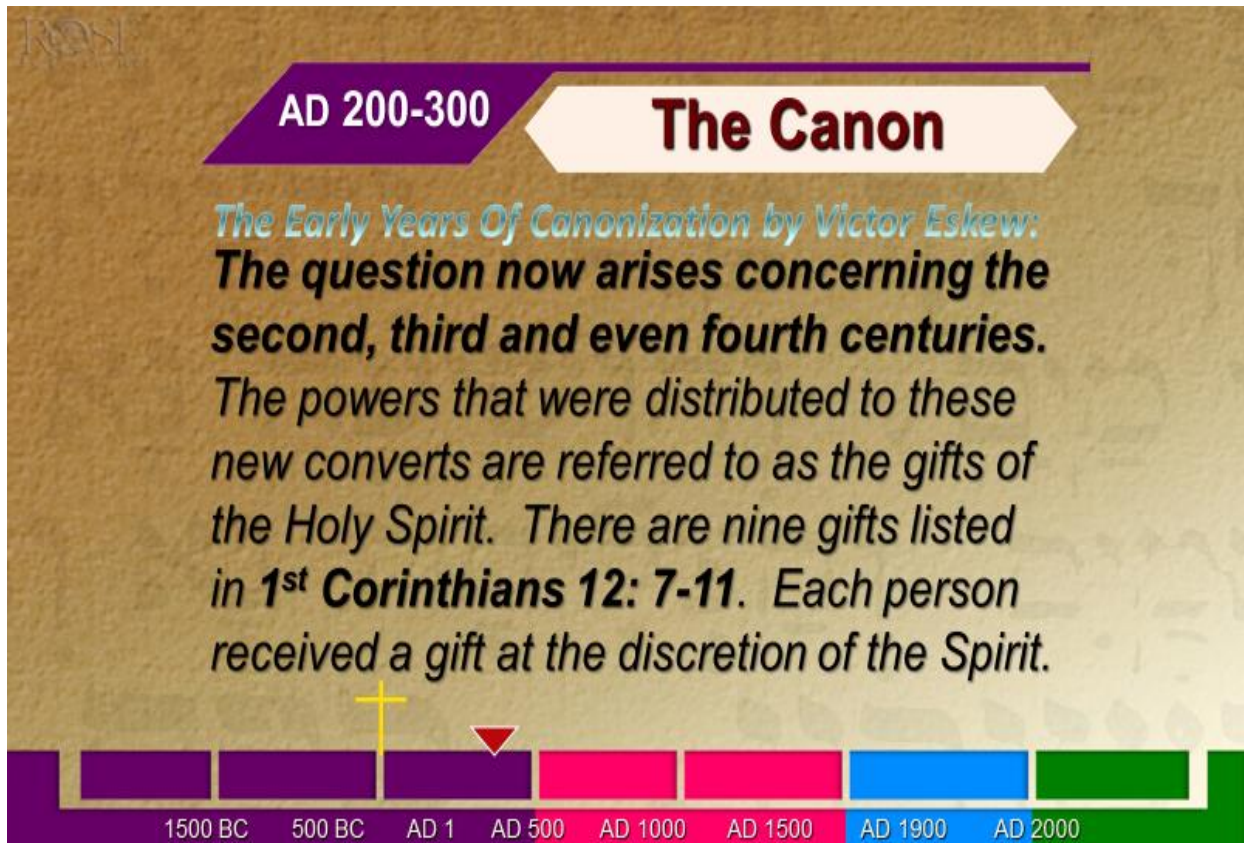
Timeline: 1500 BC, 500 BC, AD 1, AD 500, AD 1000, AD 1500, AD 1900, AD 2000



AD 200-300 **The Canon**

The Early Years Of Canonization by Victor Eskew:
*The question now arises concerning the second, third and even fourth centuries. **The apostles were all dead.** (But) they (early Christians) had a fool-proof way of knowing which books were inspired and which were not. The apostles of Christ had the ability to distribute miraculous gifts...*

Timeline: 1500 BC, 500 BC, AD 1, AD 500, AD 1000, AD 1500, AD 1900, AD 2000

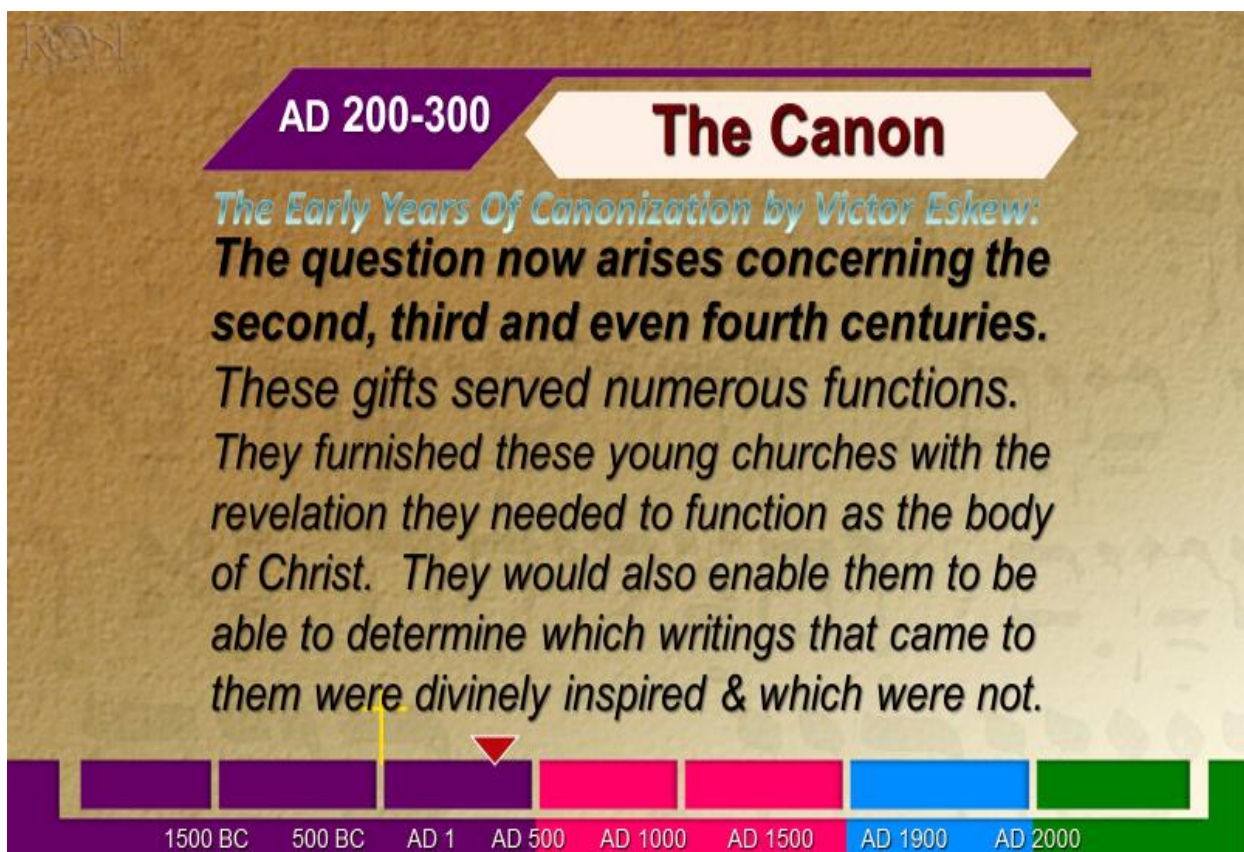


AD 200-300 **The Canon**

*The Early Years Of Canonization by Victor Eskew:
The question now arises concerning the second, third and even fourth centuries. The powers that were distributed to these new converts are referred to as the gifts of the Holy Spirit. There are nine gifts listed in 1st Corinthians 12: 7-11. Each person received a gift at the discretion of the Spirit.*

Timeline: 1500 BC, 500 BC, AD 1, AD 500, AD 1000, AD 1500, AD 1900, AD 2000

This slide features a purple header with the text 'AD 200-300' and 'The Canon'. Below the header is a paragraph of text in italics. At the bottom is a horizontal timeline with colored segments and labels for 1500 BC, 500 BC, AD 1, AD 500, AD 1000, AD 1500, AD 1900, and AD 2000. A yellow cross is positioned above AD 1, and a red triangle points down to AD 500.



AD 200-300 **The Canon**

*The Early Years Of Canonization by Victor Eskew:
The question now arises concerning the second, third and even fourth centuries. These gifts served numerous functions. They furnished these young churches with the revelation they needed to function as the body of Christ. They would also enable them to be able to determine which writings that came to them were divinely inspired & which were not.*

Timeline: 1500 BC, 500 BC, AD 1, AD 500, AD 1000, AD 1500, AD 1900, AD 2000

This slide features a purple header with the text 'AD 200-300' and 'The Canon'. Below the header is a paragraph of text in italics. At the bottom is a horizontal timeline with colored segments and labels for 1500 BC, 500 BC, AD 1, AD 500, AD 1000, AD 1500, AD 1900, and AD 2000. A yellow cross is positioned above AD 1, and a red triangle points down to AD 500.

