# Non-canonical /apocryphal documents mentioned in Brock (2003): These articles were lifted from Wikipedia

# Gospel of Peter

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The **Gospel of Peter** ([Ancient Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_language): κατά Πέτρον ευαγγέλιον, [romanized](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanization_of_Ancient_Greek): *kata Petron euangelion*), or the **Gospel according to Peter**, is an ancient text concerning [Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus) [Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ_(title)), only partially known today. It is considered a [non-canonical gospel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-canonical_gospels) and was rejected as [apocryphal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocryphal) by the Church's synods of Carthage and Rome, which [established the New Testament canon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Development_of_the_New_Testament_canon).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-1) It was the first of the non-canonical gospels to be rediscovered, preserved in the dry sands of Egypt.

A major focus of the surviving fragment of the Gospel of Peter is the [passion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passion_(Christianity)) narrative, which ascribes responsibility for the [crucifixion of Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion_of_Jesus) to [Herod Antipas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod_Antipas) rather than to [Pontius Pilate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pontius_Pilate).

## Composition

### **Authorship**

The Gospel of Peter explicitly claims to be the work of [Saint Peter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Peter):

And I with my companions was grieved; and being wounded in mind we hid ourselves:

— Gospel of Peter, 7

But I [Simon Peter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon_Peter) and [Andrew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apostle_Andrew) my brother took our nets and went to the sea;

— Gospel of Peter, 14.

However, scholars generally agree that the Gospel of Peter is [pseudepigraphical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pseudepigraphy" \o "Pseudepigraphy) (bearing the name of an author who did not actually compose the text).[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-2)

The true author of the gospel remains a mystery. Although there are parallels with the three [Synoptic Gospels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synoptic_Gospels), Peter does not use any of the material unique to [Matthew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Matthew) or unique to [Luke](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Luke). [Raymond E. Brown](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raymond_E._Brown) and others find that the author may have been acquainted with the synoptic gospels and even with the [Gospel of John](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_John); Brown even suggests that the author's source in the canonical gospels was transmitted orally, through readings in the churches, i.e. that the text is based on what the author remembers about the other gospels, together with their own embellishments.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-3)

[Ron Cameron](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ron_Cameron_(biblical_scholar)) and others[[*who?*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Manual_of_Style/Words_to_watch#Unsupported_attributions)] have further speculated the Gospel of Peter was written independently of the synoptic gospels using an early proto-gospel. A consequence of this is the potential existence of a source text that formed the basis of the passion narratives in Matthew, Luke, and Mark, as well as in Peter. [Origen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origen) makes mention of the Gospel of Peter as agreeing with the tradition of the [Hebrews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrews). The relationship to the [Gospel according to the Hebrews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_according_to_the_Hebrews) becomes more clear when [Theodoret](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodoret" \o "Theodoret) states that the [Nazarenes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazarene_(sect)) made use of the Gospel of Peter, for it is known by the testimony of the Fathers generally that the Nazarene Gospel was commonly called the [Gospel according to the Hebrews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_according_to_the_Hebrews). The same Gospel was in use among the [Ebionites](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebionites), and, in fact, as almost all critics[[*who?*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Manual_of_Style/Words_to_watch#Unsupported_attributions)] are agreed, the Gospel according to the Hebrews – under various names such as the Gospel according to Peter, according to the Apostles, the Nazarenes, Ebionites, Egyptians, etc. – was substantially the same work, circulated very widely throughout the early Church, though with modifications.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-4)

### **Date**

The gospel is widely thought to date from after the composition of the four canonical gospels. Scholars are divided as to the exact date of the text, with [Bart Ehrman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bart_Ehrman) placing it in the first half of the 2nd century and considering it to have been compiled based on oral traditions about Jesus, independent of the canonical gospels.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-e/p_370%E2%80%93372-5) The dating of the text depends to a certain extent on whether the text condemned by [Serapion, Bishop of Antioch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serapion_of_Antioch" \o "Serapion of Antioch) upon inspection at [Rhossus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arsuz" \o "Arsuz) is the same as the text that was discovered in modern times.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-e/p_371-6) The Rhossus community had already been using it in their liturgy.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-7)[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-8)

[John Dominic Crossan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Dominic_Crossan) argues that the Gospel of Peter, as it is found in the modern day, was composed in the 2nd century but incorporates a passion narrative source that predates all other known passion accounts. He calls this primitive passion source the "Cross Gospel." Crossan asserts that this Cross Gospel was written before the [synoptic gospels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synoptic_gospel) of Mark, Matthew, and Luke and that it influenced both them and the Gospel of Peter.[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-9) Crossan's view is not accepted by mainstream Biblical scholars.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-the_historical_jesus_a03-10)

[Craig A. Evans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Craig_A._Evans) argues that the Gospel of Peter was written in the 2nd century CE to counter anti-Christian polemics of that time (such as the ones found in [Celsus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celsus" \o "Celsus)'s [*The True Word*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_True_Word)).[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-11)

Later Western references, which condemn the work, such as [Jerome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerome) and the [*Decretum Gelasianum*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decretum_Gelasianum), traditionally connected to [Pope Gelasius I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Gelasius_I), are apparently based upon the judgment of [Eusebius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eusebius), not upon a direct knowledge of the text.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-12)

## Historical references

The [Second Epistle of Clement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Epistle_of_Clement) (an anonymous 2nd century [homily](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homily) erroneously attributed to [Pope Clement I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Clement_I)) refers to a passage thought to be from the Gospel of Peter:[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-13)

2 Clement 5:2  
For the Lord saith, Ye shall be as lambs in the midst of wolves.  
  
2 Clement 5:3  
But Peter answered and said unto Him, What then, if the wolves  
should tear the lambs?  
  
2 Clement 5:4  
Jesus said unto Peter, Let not the lambs fear the wolves after they  
are dead; and ye also, fear ye not them that kill you and are not  
able to do anything to you; but fear Him that after ye are dead  
hath power over soul and body, to cast them into the Gehenna of  
fire.

[Origen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origen) mentions[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-14) "the Gospel according to Peter, as it is called", together with "the Book of James" (believed by scholars to be the apocryphal [Gospel of James](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infancy_Gospel_of_James)), in support of the doctrine of the [perpetual virginity of Mary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perpetual_virginity_of_Mary). However, it is not clear that he was referring to what is known modernly as the Gospel of Peter because the extant fragments say nothing about this or about the birth of Jesus.

In his [*Church History*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_History_(Eusebius)), [Eusebius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eusebius) writes that [Bishop Serapion of Antioch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serapion_of_Antioch) had been informed that a Christian community in [Rhosus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arsuz" \o "Arsuz) was using the Gospel of Peter in their liturgy and had sent a letter authorizing them to do so, while also denying that such Gospel was actually written by [Saint Peter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Peter). Later, however, Serapion was informed that the Gospel of Peter "hid a heresy", which he attributed to [Marcian of Rhossos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcian_of_Rhossos" \o "Marcian of Rhossos) and that he identified with [docetism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Docetism" \o "Docetism). Serapion reports that he read the Gospel carefully and had the opportunity "to find, along with much of the Savior's true doctrine, some additions".[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-15) Eusebius also states that several works had been attributed to Peter: the [First Epistle of Peter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Epistle_of_Peter), the [Second Epistle of Peter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Epistle_of_Peter), the [Acts of Peter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter), the Gospel of Peter, the [Preaching of Peter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preaching_of_Peter) and the [Apocalypse of Peter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocalypse_of_Peter). He accepts the First Epistle of Peter as genuine, while he rejects all the others as spurious.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-16) [Jerome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerome) mistakenly says in his [*De Viris Illustribus*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Viris_Illustribus_(Jerome)) that Serapion wrote the Gospel of Peter.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-17)

In his *Compendium of Heretical Accounts*, [Theodoret](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodoret" \o "Theodoret) states that the sects of the [Nazarene](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazarene_(sect)) used the Gospel of Peter in their liturgy,[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-18) but this is considered to be highly unlikely and anachronistic.[[*by whom?*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Manual_of_Style/Words_to_watch#Unsupported_attributions)] In his *Church History*, [Philip of Side](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_of_Side) states that "the ancients absolutely refused the [Gospel of the Hebrews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_the_Hebrews), the Gospel of Peter and the [Gospel of Thomas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas), which they considered the work of heretics."[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-19)

## Discovery

The Gospel of Peter was recovered in 1886 by the French archaeologist [Urbain Bouriant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urbain_Bouriant" \o "Urbain Bouriant) in the modern Egyptian city of [Akhmim](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akhmim" \o "Akhmim) (60 miles (97 km) north of [Nag Hammadi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nag_Hammadi)). The 8th- or 9th-century [manuscript](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manuscript) had been respectfully buried with an Egyptian [monk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monk). The fragmentary Gospel of Peter was the first non-canonical gospel to have been rediscovered, preserved in the dry sand of Egypt. Publication, delayed by Bouriant until 1892,[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-20) occasioned intense interest.[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-21) From the [passion sequence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passion_(Christianity)) that is preserved, it is clear that the gospel was a narrative gospel, but whether a complete narrative similar to the canonical gospels or simply a Passion cannot be said.

Two other papyrus fragments from [Oxyrhynchus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxyrhynchus" \o "Oxyrhynchus) (P.Oxy 4009 and P.Oxy. 2949) were uncovered later and published in 1972. They are possibly, but not conclusively, from the Gospel of Peter and would suggest, if they belonged, that the text was more than just a passion narrative. These small fragments both seem to give first person accounts of discussions between Jesus and Peter in situations prior to the Passion week. It has also been speculated that the [Fayyum Fragment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fayyum_Fragment" \o "Fayyum Fragment) may be an excerpt from the Gospel of Peter.[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-22)

To date it is one of four early non-canonical narrative gospels, which exist only in fragmentary form: this Gospel of Peter, the [Egerton Gospel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egerton_Gospel), and the two very fragmentary [Oxyrhynchus Gospels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxyrhynchus_Gospels" \o "Oxyrhynchus Gospels) ([P.Oxy. 840](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papyrus_Oxyrhynchus_840" \o "Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 840) and [P.Oxy. 1224](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papyrus_Oxyrhynchus_1224" \o "Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1224)). The main point of interest from the first[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-23) has resided in establishing its relationship to the [four canonical gospels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel).

## Contents

[J. Rendel Harris](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Rendel_Harris) (1852–1941) decided to introduce the Gospel of Peter to the public in *A Popular Account of the Newly-Recovered Gospel of Peter.* He opens with a description of its discovery, offering his opinions regarding its date and original language. Classifying the work as a Docetic gospel, Harris defines the community in which it arose as well as its use during the Patristic age. He translates the fragment and then proceeds to discuss the sources behind it. Harris is convinced that the author borrowed from the canonical accounts, and he lists other literature that may have incorporated the Gospel of Peter, with special emphasis on the [*Diatessaron*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diatessaron).

[Edgar J. Goodspeed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edgar_J._Goodspeed) stated that the main importance of this work is that it is the first of the Christian [apologies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apologetics), although on the next page he admits that only "bits" actually fall into that category.[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-24)

One of the chief characteristics of the work is that [Pontius Pilate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pontius_Pilate) is exonerated of all responsibility for the Crucifixion, the onus being laid upon [Herod Antipas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod_Antipas), the scribes, and other Jews, who pointedly do not "wash their hands" like Pilate. However, the Gospel of Peter was condemned as [heretical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heresy) by c. 200 AD for its alleged [docetic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Docetism) elements.

The opening leaves of the text are lost, so the Passion begins abruptly with the trial of Jesus before Pilate, after Pilate has washed his hands, and closes with its unusual and detailed version of the watch set over the tomb and the [resurrection](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resurrection). The Gospel of Peter is more detailed in its account of the events after the Crucifixion than any of the canonical gospels, and it varies from the canonical accounts in numerous details: Herod gives the order for the execution, not Pilate, who is exonerated; Joseph (of Arimathea, which place is not mentioned) has been acquainted with Pilate; in the darkness that accompanied the crucifixion, "many went about with lamps, supposing that it was night, and fell down".

Jesus' cry from the cross, which the Gospels of [Mark](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mark) and [Matthew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Matthew) gives as "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" which Mark and Matthew explains as meaning "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is reported in Peter as "My power, my power, thou hast forsaken me". Immediately after, Peter states that "when he had said it he was taken up", suggesting that Jesus did not actually die. This, together with the claim that on the cross Jesus "remained silent, as though he felt no pain", has led many early Christians to accuse the text of [docetism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Docetism" \o "Docetism). [F. F. Bruce](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F._F._Bruce) writes:

The docetic note in this narrative appears in the statement that Jesus, while being crucified, 'remained silent, as though he felt no pain', and in the account of his death. It carefully avoids saying that he died, preferring to say that he 'was taken up', as though he – or at least his soul or spiritual self – was 'assumed' direct from the cross to the presence of God. (We shall see an echo of this idea in the Qur'an.) Then the cry of dereliction is reproduced in a form which suggests that, at that moment, his divine power left the bodily shell in which it had taken up temporary residence.[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-25)

F. F. Bruce continues:

Apart from its docetic tendency, the most striking feature of the narrative is its complete exoneration of Pilate from all responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus. Pilate is here well on the way to the goal of canonisation which he was to attain in the Coptic Church. He withdraws from the trial after washing his hands, and Herod Antipas takes over from him, assuming the responsibility which, in Luke's passion narrative, he declined to accept. Roman soldiers play no part until they are sent by Pilate, at the request of the Jewish authorities, to provide the guard at the tomb of Jesus. The villians [[*sic*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sic)] of the piece throughout are 'the Jews' – more particularly, the chief priests and the scribes. It is they who condemn Jesus to death and abuse him; it is they who crucify him and share out his clothes among themselves.[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-26)

The account in Peter tells that the supposed writer and other disciples hid because they were being sought on suspicion of plotting to set fire to the temple, and totally rejects any possibility of their disloyalty. The centurion who kept watch at the tomb is given the name [Petronius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petronius_(centurion)). Details of the sealing of the tomb, requested of Pilate by the elders of the Jewish community, elaborates upon Matthew 27:66, "So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch", saying instead:[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-27)

And Pilate gave them Petronius the centurion with soldiers to guard the tomb. And with them came elders and scribes to the sepulchre, and having rolled a great stone together with the centurion and the soldiers, they all who were there together set it at the door of the sepulchre; and they affixed seven seals and pitched a tent there and guarded it. And early in the morning as the Sabbath was drawing on, there came a multitude from Jerusalem and the region round about, that they might see the sepulchre that was sealed.

Most importantly, the Resurrection and Ascension, which are described in detail, are not treated as separate events, but occur on the same day:

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 with a great light and approach the tomb. And the stone that 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 close by keeping guard. And as they declared what things they had seen, again they saw three men come forth from the tomb, and two of them supporting one, and a cross following them. And the heads of the two reached to heaven, but the head of him who was led by them overpassed the heavens. And they heard a voice from the heavens, saying, You have preached to them that sleep. And a response was heard from the cross, Yes.

The text is unusual at this point in describing the Cross itself as speaking,[[a]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-28) and even moving out of the tomb. Deane Galbraith shows that the Gospel of Peter has derived its unusual description of the talking and moving cross by interpreting the first six verses of [LXX](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint) Psalm 18 (Psalm 19 in the [Masoretic Text](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masoretic_Text)) as a prophecy of Jesus' resurrection.[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Peter#cite_note-29) The text then proceeds to follow the Gospel of Mark, ending at the [short ending](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_16) (where the women flee the empty tomb in fear), adding on an extra scene set during the [Feast of Unleavened Bread](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover), where the disciples leave Jerusalem, and ends, like the short ending, without Jesus being physically seen.

**Acts of Paul**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

*Not to be confused with*[*Acts of Paul and Thecla*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Paul_and_Thecla)*.*

The **Acts of Paul** is one of the major works and earliest [pseudepigraphal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pseudepigrapha) series from the [New Testament apocrypha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament_apocrypha) also known as [Apocryphal Acts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_the_Apostles_(genre)). This work is part of a body of literature either about or purporting to be written by [Paul the Apostle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle), including letters, narratives, prayers, and apocalypses. An approximate date given to the Acts of Paul is 100-160 CE.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Paul#cite_note-Jones2007-1) The Acts of Paul were first mentioned by [Tertullian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertullian), who deemed the work to be heretical because it encouraged women to preach and baptize. The Acts of Paul were considered orthodox by [Hippolytus of Rome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippolytus_of_Rome) but were eventually regarded as heretical when the [Manichaeans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manichaeism) started using the texts. The author of the Acts of Paul is unknown, but probably came from a Christian community in [Asia Minor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anatolia) that revered Paul. The work does not use the canonical [Acts of the Apostles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_the_Apostles) as a source; instead it relies on oral traditions of Paul's missionary work. The text is primarily known from Greek manuscripts.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Paul#cite_note-Pervo_2014_p._61-2) The discovery of a [Coptic language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coptic_language) version of the text demonstrated that the text was composed of:

* The [Acts of Paul and Thecla](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Paul_and_Thecla)
* The [Third Epistle to the Corinthians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_Epistle_to_the_Corinthians)
* The Martyrdom of the Holy Apostle Paul

All of these constituent parts were often considered worth treating as separate texts and frequently appeared independently, leading to speculation that the Acts of Paul may have been compiling disparate stories into one work, although other parts scholars believe to be original to the Acts of Paul. Besides the four main sections mentioned above, the remainder of the Acts of Paul exist only in fragments from the 3rd and 5th centuries:

* The Healing of [Hermocrates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermocrates" \o "Hermocrates) from [Dropsy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edema)
* The Strife of the [Ephesian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephesus) Beasts

The texts are a coherent whole and are generally thought to have been written by one author using oral traditions, rather than basing it on any of the other apocrypha or the orthodox canon. The main emphasis of the text is on chastity and anti-[Gnosticism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnosticism). According to Tertullian, the author was a priest in Asia Minor. While the priest encouraged female ministry, he expressed doctrinal orthodoxy in regard to continence and Resurrection. Also, they mentioned the close relationship between sexual purity and salvation.

**Overview**

The Acts of Paul — which was declared to be [*antilegomena*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antilegomena) by [Eusebius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eusebius) in his [*Church History*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_History_(Eusebius)) — consists of narratives depicting Paul's preaching and other activities, such as the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, *Paul's Correspondence With the Corinthians*, and the *Martyrdom of the Holy Apostle Paul*.

[Paul's Correspondence With the Corinthians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_Epistle_to_the_Corinthians) was written roughly a century after the death of Paul, with the intention of correcting perceived misinterpretations of Paul's first and second epistles, as well as to counter certain Gnostic teachings. This work consists of two letters. The first letter is the Epistle of the Corinthians to Paul, in which the author tells the story of how two [presbyters](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyter) had come to Corinth, preaching "pernicious words". Specifically, they claimed that God is not almighty, there is no resurrection of the body, man was not created by God, Christ had not come in the flesh, nor was he born of Mary, and the world was created not by God but rather by angels. The second letter is Paul's response to the first. In this letter, the author repudiates all of the claims made by the two presbyters.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Paul#cite_note-PickCorinth-3)

The Martyrdom of the Holy Apostle Paul tells the story of Paul's last days in Rome. Upon learning that Paul had resurrected a young man who had died after falling from a parapet, [Nero](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nero) became fearful that the Roman Empire might be overthrown by the Christians. This was the event that precipitated the [Neronian persecution of Christians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_Christians_in_the_Roman_Empire#Neronian_persecution) in general, as well as the specific order to behead Paul. According to this work, when Paul was beheaded, milk — rather than blood — spurted from his neck.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Paul#cite_note-PickMartyrdom-4)[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Paul#cite_note-Lipsius1891-5)

[Richard J. Bauckham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_J._Bauckham) argues that the author of the Acts of Paul drew directly from [2 Timothy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Epistle_to_Timothy) in addition to 1 and 2 Corinthians to write a sequel to the Acts of the Apostles based on their understanding of Paul’s final years.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Paul#cite_note-6)

**Acts of Peter**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **Acts of Peter** is one of the earliest of the [apocryphal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocrypha) [Acts of the Apostles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_the_Apostles_(genre)) in [Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity), dating to the late 2nd century AD. The majority of the text has survived only in the [Latin translation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vetus_Latina) of the [Codex Vercellensis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Vercellensis), under the title ***Actus Petri cum Simone*** ("Act of Peter with Simon"). It is notable for a description of a miracle contest between [Saint Peter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Peter) and [Simon Magus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon_Magus), the first record of the tradition that Saint Peter was [crucified head-down](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cross_of_Saint_Peter), and as the origin of the saying "[Quo vadis?](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quo_vadis%3F)".

**Dating and history**

The Acts of Peter were originally composed in [Koine Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koine_Greek" \o "Koine Greek) during the second half of the 2nd century, probably in [Asia Minor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asia_Minor).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter#cite_note-James1924-1) The style of the Acts' writing is quite similar to that of four other apocryphal Acts – [Acts of Andrew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Andrew), [Acts of John](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_John), [Acts of Paul](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Paul), and [Acts of Thomas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Thomas). For this reason, all five of these works were traditionally attributed to a single author; [Photios I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photios_I_of_Constantinople" \o "Photios I of Constantinople) (c. 810/820 – 893) identified this author as [Leucius Charinus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leucius_Charinus" \o "Leucius Charinus). [Epiphanius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epiphanius_of_Salamis) (c. 310/320 – 403) had earlier identified Leucius as a companion of [John the Apostle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_the_Apostle).[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter#cite_note-ECW-Leucius-2)

The [Manicheans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manichaeism) are believed to have collected these five apocryphals Acts into a single corpus by the end of the 4th century.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter#cite_note-ECW-Leucius-2) The current consensus is that the five works are interrelated, but were written by five separate authors, none of whom include Leucius.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter#cite_note-Elliott2005-3) Despite this, the works are still frequently referred to as the "Manichean Acts of Leucius Charinus", or simply the "Leucian Acts".[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter#cite_note-ECW-Leucius-2)

The earliest extant manuscript of the Acts of Peter is a [Late Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Late_Latin) translation contained in the [Codex Vercellensis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Vercellensis), which is believed to be the earliest manuscript of the [*Vetus Latina*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vetus_Latina). This [codex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex) is preserved in the Capitulary Library of the [Vercelli Cathedral](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vercelli_Cathedral). The chapters describing [Peter's crucifixion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cross_of_Saint_Peter) (XXXIII–XLI) are preserved separately as 'Martyrdom of the Holy Apostle Peter' in various manuscripts in Latin, [Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek), [Coptic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coptic_language), [Slavonic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Church_Slavonic), [Syriac](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syriac_language), [Ethiopic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethiopic), [Armenian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_language), and [Arabic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic_language).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter#cite_note-James1924-1)

It has been proposed that the martyrdom account was an earlier, separate text to which the preceding chapters were affixed.

**Content**

In the text, Peter performs many miracles, such as healing a crippled beggar.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter#cite_note-4) Peter preaches that Simon Magus is performing magic in order to convert followers through deception. Outraged, Peter challenges Simon to a contest, in order to prove whose works are from a divine source and whose are merely trickery. In the contest, Simon takes flight, and in retaliation, Peter strikes him down with the power of God, praying that Simon not be killed but badly injured. Simon is then taken to Terracina to one Castor "And there he was sorely cut (Lat. by two physicians), and so Simon the angel of Satan came to his end."[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter#cite_note-5)

Peter's confrontation with Simon Magus has some resemblance to the Prophet [Elijah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah)'s confrontation with the [Priests of Baal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah#Challenge_to_Baal), as depicted in the [Old Testament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Testament)'s [Book of Kings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Books_of_Kings)[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter#cite_note-6) – a text with which the writer of the Acts of Peter was likely familiar.

Following this incident, Peter plans to flee the city; however, he sees an apparition of [Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus), and takes it as a message that he must stay and be crucified to see Jesus again in Heaven (see [Quo vadis?](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quo_vadis%3F)).

Peter preaches to [Agrippa's](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod_Agrippa_II) concubines that they should practice abstinence and chastity. The enraged Agrippa orders Peter to be crucified; Peter requests to be crucified upside-down.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter#cite_note-Pick1909-7)

**The inverted crucifixion of Peter**

No [canonical text](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_canon) refers to the death of Saint Peter. Apart from the Acts of Peter, the earliest attestation that Saint Peter was [executed by crucifixion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Peter#Crucifixion_at_Rome) is found in *Adversus Gnosticos Scorpiace*, a treatise composed by [Tertullian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertullian) in the first decade of the 3rd century.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter#cite_note-Tertullian-8)[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter#cite_note-CE1913-9)

Sometime in the middle of the 3rd century, [Origen of Alexandria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origen) popularized the tradition that Peter requested to be crucified upside-down.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter#cite_note-Barnes1900-10) At the end of the 4th century, [Jerome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerome) wrote in his [*De Viris Illustribus*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Viris_Illustribus_(Jerome)) ("On Illustrious Men") that the reason for this request was that Peter felt he was unworthy to die in the same manner as Jesus.[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter#cite_note-DVI-11)[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter#cite_note-newadvent-12)

However, in the Acts of Peter, the author writes that Peter's request to be crucified upside-down was to make a point: that the values of those crucifying him were inverted themselves, emphasizing the need to look beyond these values and adopt those of Jesus.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter#cite_note-Pick1909-7)

**Gospel of Mary**

The **Gospel of Mary** is a [non-canonical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament_apocrypha) text discovered in 1896 in a 5th-century [papyrus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papyrus) [codex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex) written in [Sahidic Coptic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coptic_language#Sahidic). This [Berlin Codex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin_Codex) was purchased in Cairo by German diplomat [Carl Reinhardt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Reinhardt).

Although the work is popularly known as the Gospel of Mary, it is not classed as a [gospel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel) by some scholars, who restrict the term 'gospel' to texts "primarily focused on recounting the teachings and/or activities of Jesus during his adult life".[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-1)

The [Berlin Codex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin_Codex), also known as the [Akhmim Codex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akhmim_Codex" \o "Akhmim Codex), also contains the [*Apocryphon of John*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocryphon_of_John), the [*Sophia of Jesus Christ*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sophia_of_Jesus_Christ), and a summary of the [*Act of Peter*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Act_of_Peter). All four works contained in the manuscript are written in the [Sahidic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coptic_language#Sahidic) dialect of Coptic.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-2) Two other fragments of the Gospel of Mary have been discovered since, both written in Greek ([Papyrus Oxyrhynchus L 3525](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papyrus_Oxyrhynchus_L_3525) and [Papyrus Rylands 463](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papyrus_Rylands_463)). [P.Oxy. L 3525](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papyrus_Oxyrhynchus_L_3525" \o "Papyrus Oxyrhynchus L 3525) "... was in fact found by [Grenfell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard_Pyne_Grenfell) and [Hunt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Surridge_Hunt) some time between 1897 and 1906, but only published in 1983,"[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-3) by P. J. Parsons.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-4)

The two fragments were published in 1938 and 1983 respectively, and the Coptic translation was published in 1955 by Walter Till.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-5)

Dating the gospel, as with most ancient literary texts, is problematic. As the earliest extant fragment of the gospel (the Rylands papyrus) dates to the early Third Century, it must predate this. [Karen L. King](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karen_Leigh_King), Hollis Professor of Divinity at [Harvard Divinity School](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harvard_Divinity_School), suggested that the gospel was composed early in the Second Century, noting that it evidences familiarity with the [Gospel of John](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_John), and perhaps the [letters of Paul](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pauline_epistles), thus likely postdating 90–100 CE.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-6) Christopher Tuckett's discussion in his 2007 volume notes Pasquier's preference for a date in the second half of the century; Tuckett himself ultimately opts for a middle position – he places it in the first half of the Second Century but later than King.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-7)

The Gospel of Mary is not present in the list of apocryphal books of section five of the [Decretum Gelasianum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decretum_Gelasianum" \o "Decretum Gelasianum).[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-8)

**The identity of "Mary"**

Scholars do not always agree which of the [New Testament people named Mary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament_people_named_Mary) is the central character of the Gospel of Mary. Stephen J. Shoemaker and F. Stanley Jones have suggested that she may be [Mary the mother of Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_(mother_of_Jesus)).[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-9) Barbara J. Silvertsen alternatively suggests that she may be a [sister of Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brothers_of_Jesus) - an individual who has largely been lost in history.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-10) Silvertsen says that while none of the canonical Gospels identify Jesus' sisters by name ([Mark 6:3](https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Mark%206:3&version=nrsv), [Matthew 13:56](https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Matthew%2013:56&version=nrsv)), one of his sisters is identified as "Mary" in the [Gospel of Philip](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Philip).[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-gnosis.org-11)

Arguments in favor of [Mary Magdalene](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Magdalene) are based on her status as a known follower of [Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus), the tradition of being the first witness of his [resurrection](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resurrection_appearances_of_Jesus), and her appearance in other early Christian writings. She is mentioned as accompanying Jesus on his journeys ([Luke 8:2](https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Luke%208:2&version=nrsv)) and is listed in the [Gospel of Matthew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Matthew) as being present at his crucifixion ([Matthew 27:56](https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Matthew%2027:56&version=nrsv)). In the [Gospel of John](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_John), she is recorded as the first witness of Jesus' resurrection ([John 20:14–16](https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=John%2020:14%E2%80%9316&version=nrsv)); ([Mark 16:9](https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Mark%2016:9&version=nrsv) later manuscripts).

Esther A. de Boer compares her role in other non-canonical texts, noting that "in the Gospel of Mary it is Peter who is opposed to Mary’s words, because she is a woman. Peter has the same role in the [Gospel of Thomas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas) and in [Pistis Sophia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pistis_Sophia). In Pistis Sophia the Mary concerned is identified as Mary Magdalene."[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-Boer-12) The final scene in the Gospel of Mary may also provide evidence that Mary is indeed Mary Magdalene. [Levi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Matthew), in his defense of Mary and her teaching, tells [Peter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Peter), "Surely the Saviour knows her very well. That is why he loved her more than us."[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-sol.com.au-13) In the [Gospel of Philip](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Philip), a similar statement is made about Mary Magdalene.[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-gnosis.org-11)

King also argues in favor of naming Mary Magdalene as the central figure in the Gospel of Mary. She summarizes: “It was precisely the traditions of Mary as a woman, as an exemplary disciple, a witness to the ministry of Jesus, a visionary of the glorified Jesus, and someone traditionally in contest with Peter, that made her the only figure who could play all the roles required to convey the messages and meanings of the Gospel of Mary.”[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-14)

Richard Valantasis writes in *The Beliefnet Guide to Gnosticism and Other Vanished Christianities* (see [Beliefnet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beliefnet" \o "Beliefnet)) that the Mary here is Mary Magdalene. Valantasis clarifies that this doesn’t “confirm an earthly marriage between her and Jesus – far from it – but it opens an incredible window into the intellectual and spiritual world of the second century C.E.” The idea that there would be a gospel from Mary Magdalene is “controversial,” however because Andrew objected to the strangeness of Mary’s revelations from Jesus. Peter argued, as Valantasis mentions, that “Jesus would not have revealed such important teachings to a woman,” and that “her stature cannot be greater than that of the male apostles."[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-15)

**Contents**

The most complete text of the Gospel of Mary is contained in the [Berlin Codex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin_Codex), but even so, it is missing six manuscript pages at the beginning of the document and four manuscript pages in the middle.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-16) As such, the narrative begins in the middle of a scene, leaving the setting and circumstances unclear. King believes, however, that references to the death of the Savior and the commissioning scene later in the narrative indicate the setting in the first section of the text is a post-resurrection appearance of the Savior.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-17) As the narrative opens, the Savior is engaged in dialogue with his disciples, answering their questions on the nature of matter and the nature of sin. At the end of the discussion, the Savior departs, leaving the disciples distraught and anxious. According to the story, Mary speaks up with words of comfort and encouragement. Then Peter asks Mary to share with them any special teaching she received from the Savior, “Peter said to Mary, ‘Sister, we know that the Savior loved you more than the rest of the women. Tell us the words of the Savior which you remember – which you know (but) we do not, nor have we heard them.’”[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-gnosis.org-11) Mary responds to Peter’s request by recounting a conversation she had with the Savior about visions.

(Mary) said, "I saw the Lord in a vision and I said to him, ‘Lord, I saw you today in a vision.’" He answered and said to me: “Blessed are you, that you did not waver at the sight of me. For where the mind is, there is the treasure." I said to him, "So now, Lord, does a person who sees a vision see it <through> the soul <or> through the spirit?"[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-sol.com.au-13)

In the conversation, the Savior teaches that the inner self is composed of soul, spirit/mind, and a third mind that is between the two which sees the vision. Then the text breaks off and the next four pages are missing. When the narrative resumes, Mary is no longer recalling her discussion with the Savior. She is instead recounting the revelation given to her in her vision. The revelation describes an ascent of a soul, which as it passes on its way to its final rest, engages in dialogue with four powers that try to stop it.

Her vision does not meet with universal approval:

But Andrew answered and said to the brethren, "Say what you think concerning what she said. For I do not believe that the Savior said this. For certainly these teachings are of other ideas."[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-18)

Peter also opposed her in regard to these matters and asked them about the Savior. "Did he then speak secretly with a woman, in preference to us, and not openly? Are we to turn back and all listen to her? Did he prefer her to us?"[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-19)

**Interpretation**

The Gospel of Mary is often interpreted as a [Gnostic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnosticism) text. According to [Pheme Perkins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pheme_Perkins" \o "Pheme Perkins), on the basis of thirteen works she has analyzed,[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-20) the Gospel follows a format similar to other known Gnostic dialogues which contain a revelation discourse framed by narrative elements. The dialogues are generally concerned with the idea of the Savior as reminder to human beings of their bond with God and true identity, as well as the realization of the believer that redemption consists of the return to God and liberty from matter after death. The Gospel of Mary contains two of these discourses (7:1–9:4 and 10:10–17:7) including addresses to [New Testament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament) figures (Peter, Mary, [Andrew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Andrew) and Levi) and an explanation of [sin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sin) as [adultery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adultery) (encouragement toward an [ascetic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asceticism) lifestyle) which also suit a Gnostic interpretation. Scholars also say that the 5th-century [Coptic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copts) version of the Gospel is part of the [Berlin Codex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin_Codex) along with the [Apocryphon of John](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocryphon_of_John) and [The Sophia of Jesus Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Sophia_of_Jesus_Christ) which are typically viewed as Gnostic texts. However, while many scholars take for granted the Gnostic character of the Gospel of Mary, the Gnostic beliefs concerning [creation theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creation_theory) and the [Demiurge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demiurge) that would suggest an extreme dualism in the creation is not present in the portions currently retrieved.[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-De_Boer_2004-21)

According to [Bart Ehrman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bart_Ehrman), "Mary (Magdalene) is accorded a high status among the apostles of Jesus." Levi actually acknowledges that Jesus loved her more than he loved all of the other apostles. Mary said she had a conversation with Jesus, and Andrew and Peter questioned this. "Four pages are lost from the manuscript", so there is really no way for anyone to know exactly what happened.[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-22)

De Boer (2004), however, suggests that the Gospel of Mary should not be read as a Gnostic specific text, but that it is to be "interpreted in the light of a broader Christian context". She argues that the Gospel stems from a monistic view of creation rather than the dualistic one central to Gnostic theology and also that the Gospel’s views of both Nature and an opposite nature are more similar to [Jewish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaism), Christian, and [Stoic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stoicism) beliefs. She suggests that the soul is not to be freed from Powers of Matter, but rather from the powers of the opposite nature. She also says that the Gospel’s main purpose is to encourage fearful disciples to go out and preach the gospel.

[Karen King](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karen_Leigh_King) considers the work to provide

an intriguing glimpse into a kind of Christianity lost for almost fifteen hundred years...[it] presents a radical interpretation of Jesus' teachings as a path to inner spiritual knowledge; it rejects His suffering and death as the path to eternal life; it exposes the erroneous view that Mary of Magdala was a prostitute for what it is – a piece of theological fiction; it presents the most straightforward and convincing argument in any early Christian writing for the legitimacy of women's leadership; it offers a sharp critique of illegitimate power and a utopian vision of spiritual perfection; it challenges our rather romantic views about the harmony and unanimity of the first Christians; and it asks us to rethink the basis for church authority.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-KLKing-23)

King concludes that “both the content and the text’s structure lead the reader inward toward the identity, power and freedom of the true self, the soul set free from the Powers of Matter and the fear of death”. “The Gospel of Mary is about inter-Christian controversies, the reliability of the disciples’ witness, the validity of teachings given to the disciples through post-resurrection revelation and vision, and the leadership of women.”[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-De_Boer_2004-21)

King also sees evidence for tensions within 2nd-century Christianity, reflected in "the confrontation of Mary with Peter, [which is] a scenario also found in *The*[*Gospel of Thomas*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas),[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-24) [*Pistis Sophia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pistis_Sophia),[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary#cite_note-25) and the [*Coptic Gospel of the Egyptians*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coptic_Gospel_of_the_Egyptians). Peter and Andrew represent orthodox positions which deny the validity of esoteric revelation and reject the authority of women to teach."

**Acts of Philip**

The [Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koine_Greek) ***Acts of Philip*** (***Acta Philippi***) is an episodic [gnostic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnosticism) [apocryphal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocrypha) [book of acts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_the_Apostles_(genre)) from the mid-to-late fourth century,[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-1) originally in fifteen separate [*acta*](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/acta),[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-2) that gives an accounting of the miraculous acts performed by the [Apostle Philip](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apostle_Philip), with overtones of the [heroic romance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_(heroic_literature)).

**History**

The *Acts of Philip* is most completely represented by a text[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-3) discovered in 1974 by [François Bovon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fran%C3%A7ois_Bovon) and Bertrand Bouvier in the library of [Xenophontos monastery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xenophontos_monastery" \o "Xenophontos monastery) on [Mount Athos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Athos) in [Greece](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greece).[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-harvard-4) The manuscript dates from the fourteenth century but its language identifies it as a copy of a fourth-century original.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-harvard-4) Many of the narratives in the manuscript were already known from other sources, but some were hitherto unknown.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-5)

Bovon at first suggested that the text's character named [Mariamne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mariamne_(name)" \o "Mariamne (name)) may be identical to [Mary Magdalene](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Magdalene).[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-harvard-4)

However, following the Discovery Channel's popularized speculations in [*The Lost Tomb of Jesus*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lost_Tomb_of_Jesus), Bovon underlined that, while he believes that the Mariamne in the Acts of Philip may be Mary Magdalene, he does not believe that the Mariamne of the [Talpiot tomb](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talpiot_Tomb) discussed in *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* is the same person, not that Mary Magdalene's real name was Mariamne.

Writing in an open letter to the [Society of Biblical Literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society_of_Biblical_Literature):

I do not believe that Mariamne is the real name of Mary of Magdalene. Mariamne is, besides Maria or Mariam, a possible Greek equivalent, attested by [Josephus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josephus), [Origen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origen), and the Acts of Philip, for the Semitic [Myriam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miriam). The Mariamne of the Acts of Philip is part of the apostolic team with Philip and Bartholomew; she teaches and baptizes: Philip baptizes men, Mary baptizes women. In the beginning, her faith is stronger than Philip's faith. This portrayal of Mariamne fits very well with the portrayal of Mary of Magdala in the [Manichean Psalms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manichaeism), the [Gospel of Mary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary), and [Pistis Sophia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pistis_Sophia). My interest is not historical, but on the level of literary traditions. I have suggested this identification in 1984 already in an article of New Testament Studies.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-6)

New translations of the full text as discovered by Bovon have been published in [French](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_language), 1996, and in English in 2012. Previous English translations, such as that in [M.R. James](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M.R._James), are based on the collections of fragments that were known previous to Bovon's discovery.

**Contents**

The narrative recounts that [Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus) sent out a group of followers to spread his message. The followers were [Philip](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_the_Apostle), [Bartholomew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Bartholomew), and a woman named [Mariamne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mariamne_(name)" \o "Mariamne (name)), who is identified in the text as Philip's sister, and is a leading figure in the second half of the text. They form a community that seemes to practice [vegetarianism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vegetarianism) and [celibacy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celibacy),[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-harvard-4) and uses a form of the [eucharist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eucharist) where [vegetables](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vegetables) and [water](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water) were consumed in place of [bread](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bread) and [wine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wine).[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-7) Mariamne [wears men's clothes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transvestism) and holds positions of authority comparable to men, serving as a [priest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priest) and a [deacon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deacon).[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-harvard-4) Due to this, the Acts have been proposed to be an [Encratite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encratites) text with [Gnostic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnostic) influences,[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-8) with Mariamne's clothings reaffirming her resistance against the snake of [Eden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garden_of_Eden)'s seduction of [Eve](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eve).[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-Og2-9)

The group travels through pagan lands spreading Christianity by performing powerful miracles, in a series of cycles that has been described to owe "as much to Christian doctrine, which they try to endorse, as they do to the raw material of Eastern and Mediterranean mythology, which they shamelessly exploit."[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-10) Among their miraculous accomplishments were the conversion of a talking [leopard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leopard) and a talking [goat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goat) into additional companions,[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-harvard-4) a feat familiar in the (non-canonical) apostolic Acts.[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-Cza-11)

Phillip and his companions are sent by Jesus to preach in the city of the *Ophianoi*, pagans that worship a race of [snakes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snakes) and [dragons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dragons). This city, named as *Ophiorhyme*, is identified with [Hierapolis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hierapolis), the site of Phillip's tomb and cult.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-Og1-12) The group crosses various lands in route to the city while exorcizing monsters, which are revealed to be [demons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demon), as well as the offspring of the snakes into which the [Pharaoh's sorcerers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jannes_and_Jambres) turned their staffs. After their submission, Phillip turns them into [black men](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_men) in order for them to build a church before disappearing.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-Og1-12) The group arrives in the city, where the inhabitants attack them and subject them to pagan trials, but they defeat them by working miracles, and ultimately reach the city's gated temple, where the [Echidna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Echidna_(mythology)#The_Viper_in_the_Acts_of_Philip) or mother of the snakes is worshipped.[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-Og2-9)[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-13) The temple and the monster are then sent to the abyss in a final miracle.[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-Og2-9)

Some of the text's episodes are identifiable as belonging to more closely related "cycles".[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Philip#cite_note-Cza-11) Two episodes recounting events of Philip's commission (3 and 8) have survived in both shorter and longer versions. There is no commission narrative in the surviving texts: Philip's authority rests on the prayers and benediction of Peter and John and is explicitly bolstered by a divine epiphany, in which the voice of Jesus urges "Hurry Philip! Behold, my angel is with you, do not neglect your task" and "Jesus is secretly walking with him".(ch. 3).

# *Pistis Sophia*

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

***Pistis Sophia*** ([Koinē Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koin%C4%93_Greek_language" \o "Koinē Greek language): Πίστις Σοφία) is a [Gnostic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnosticism) text discovered in 1773,[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pistis_Sophia#cite_note-1) possibly written between the 3rd[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pistis_Sophia#cite_note-2) and 4th centuries AD.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pistis_Sophia#cite_note-3) The existing manuscript, which some scholars place in the late 4th century,[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pistis_Sophia#cite_note-4) relates one Gnostic group's teachings of the transfigured [Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus) to the assembled disciples, including [his mother Mary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary,_mother_of_Jesus), [Mary Magdalene](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Magdalene), and [Martha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martha). (In this context, "transfigured" refers to Jesus after his death and resurrection, not the [event during his life](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transfiguration_of_Jesus) where he spoke to appearances of [Moses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moses) and [Elijah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah) on a mountain.) In this text, the risen Jesus had spent eleven years speaking with his disciples, teaching them only the lower mysteries. After eleven years, he receives his true garment and is able to reveal the higher mysteries revered by this group. The prized mysteries relate to complex cosmologies and knowledge necessary for the soul to reach the highest divine realms.

Much of the first two books of the manuscript are dedicated to outlining the myth of the fall and restoration of the figure known as Pistis Sophia, in particular giving detailed parallels between her prayers of repentance and particular [Psalms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psalms) and [Odes of Solomon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odes_of_Solomon).

Although in many Gnostic texts and systems [Sophia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sophia_(Gnosticism)) is a major female divinity, in *Pistis Sophia* she originates and dwells outside of the divine realm. Her fall and redemption parallel that found in versions of the Sophia myth such as that in the [Apocryphon of John](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocryphon_of_John), but the actions all take place in the material aeons, and she can only be restored to her place in the thirteenth aeon, outside the Kingdom of Light.

*Pístis Sophía* has been preserved in a single [Coptic language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coptic_language) manuscript originally comprising 178 leaves of parchment, but currently consisting of 174 leaves. This "[Askew Codex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Askew_Codex)" was purchased by the [British Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Museum) (now [British Library](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Library)) in 1785 from collector [Anthony Askew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthony_Askew). The Greek title *Pístis Sophía* was assigned by [Carl Gottfried Woide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Gottfried_Woide), based on a title at the beginning of Book 2, "The Second Book of the Pistis Sophia," which was added by a later hand. [Carl Schmidt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Schmidt_(Coptologist)) suggests Τεύχη τοῦ Σωτῆρος "Books of the Saviour", based on a title found at the end of the same book.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pistis_Sophia#cite_note-5)

The expression *Pístis Sophía* is obscure, and its English translations varied: "The Wisdom of Faith", "Faith Wisdom", "Wisdom in Faith", or "Faith in Wisdom". To some later Gnostics, [*Sophia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sophia_(wisdom)) was a divine [syzygy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aeon_(Gnosticism)) of Christ, rather than simply a word meaning [*wisdom*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wisdom), and this context suggests the interpretation "The Faith of Sophia", or "The Loyalty of Sophia". Both the [Berlin Codex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin_Codex) and a papyrus codex at [Nag Hammadi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nag_Hammadi) have an earlier, simpler *Sophia* wherein the transfigured Christ explains *Pístis* obscurely:

Again, his disciples said: "Tell us clearly how they came down from the invisibilities, from the immortal to the world that dies?" The perfect Saviour said: "Son of Man consented with Sophia, his consort, and revealed a great [androgynous](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Androgynous) light. Its male name is designated 'Saviour, begetter of all things'. Its female name is designated 'All-begettress Sophia'. Some call her 'Pistis'".

The work is divided into several parts, with scholarly debate as to the number of parts. The most common view is that the work consists of four books,[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pistis_Sophia#cite_note-6) but some scholars have posited as many as five or six books.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pistis_Sophia#cite_note-7)[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pistis_Sophia#cite_note-8)[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pistis_Sophia#cite_note-9) Additionally, the codex contains two fragments in a later hand that are not directly connected to any of the main books.

Until the discovery of the [Nag Hammadi library](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nag_Hammadi_library) in 1945, the Askew Codex was one of three codices that contained almost all of the Gnostic writings that had survived the suppression of such literature both in East and West, the other two codices being the [Bruce Codex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bruce_Codex) and the [Berlin Codex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin_Codex). Aside from these primary sources, everything written about gnosticism before the [Nag Hammadi library](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nag_Hammadi_library) became available is based on quotes, characterizations, and caricatures in the writings of the enemies of Gnosticism. The purpose of these heresiological writings was polemical, presenting gnostic teachings as absurd, bizarre, and self-serving, and as an aberrant [heresy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heresy) from a proto-orthodox and orthodox Christian standpoint.

## Text

The work as a whole shows clear signs of having been compiled from multiple sources, with only the first two books following directly on each other. Even within a single book, occasionally multiple, differing accounts of a single event or cosmological outline appear, suggesting the use and preservation of several sources. Changes in terminology and cosmological description between books also shows that it is a compilation of texts that may have been written over a period of some time.

The bulk of the text (Books 1-3) is in the form of a dialogue between Jesus and the disciples, both male and female. [Mary Magdalene](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Magdalene) is the most featured disciple, who provides many questions and scriptural interpretations; John “the Virgin” is the second most prominent. Other figures named as followers include Andrew, Bartholomew, James, John, Mary the mother of Jesus, Martha, Matthew, Peter, Philip, Salome, Simon the Canaanite, and Thomas.

### **First Book**

The first book (Chapters 1-62) establishes that Jesus remained with the disciples for 11 years after the resurrection, teaching them only the lowest of the mysteries. At a certain point, he ascends and traverses the [aeons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aeon_(Gnosticism)" \o "Aeon (Gnosticism)), defeating the wicked [archons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archon_(Gnosticism)), before returning to speak with the disciples further. It connects Jesus’ actions to the effectiveness of astrologers in the world – it suggests he has reduced, but not eliminated, the effectiveness of astrological magic. This leads into the introduction of the myth of Pistis Sophia's fall and restoration, which takes up the bulk of both the first and second book. Pistis Sophia recites several prayers/repentances, and after each one a disciple interprets the repentance in light of one of the [Psalms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psalms) or [Odes of Solomon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odes_of_Solomon).

Unlike other versions of the Gnostic myth, such as the [Apocryphon of John](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocryphon_of_John), here Pistis Sophia is a being of the lower, material aeons. She is not a high, divine being, and her restoration is not to the realms of light, but only back to her place in the thirteenth aeon. This is significant in distinguishing the theology of this book from other Gnostic systems – it prioritizes its own, distinct cosmology and mythology above the Sophia myth, which to this author represents inferior, material struggles.

### Second Book

This book makes up Chapters 63-101. After the conclusion of the story of Pistis Sophia, the text turns to lengthy explanations of cosmology and the knowledge offered by the mysteries of this author's system. The end of the book also suggests the close connection of this work with the [Books of Jeu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Books_of_Jeu) found in the [Bruce Codex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bruce_Codex) (Chapter 99).

### **Third Book**

The third book (Chapters 102-135) is mostly concerned with presenting an ethical or lifestyle code for adherents of the text. It outlines what is needed for right thought and right action, as well as actions that are not acceptable and their punishments. It also discusses at length the dissemination of the mysteries, repentance, and when it is or is not permissible to grant the mysteries to others. Finally, it discusses the formation of the human being, its components, and how they are connected. Again the Books of Jeu are referenced (Chapter 134), with the stipulation that they contain mysteries that are necessary for all, including the righteous.

### **Fourth Book**

Part one of this book (Chapters 136-143) deals with [cosmological](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosmological) and astrological speculation, and ritual development. It presents a myth of fallen archons of the aeons being imprisoned within the zodiacal sphere; outlines five realms of punishment (the Midst, mhte) and the types of sinners each holds; and gives specific configurations of the planets in the zodiac that allow souls to be released from each region. Jesus also interprets the elements of his incarnation and their role in the world, and administers the “baptism of the first offering” to his disciples.

The second part of what is commonly thought of as the fourth book (chapters 144-148) appears after a [lacuna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lacuna_(manuscripts)) in the text, and is probably part of a separate book.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pistis_Sophia#cite_note-10) Its cosmology is different to the preceding text, and it focuses entirely on the destiny of various types of souls and the punishments of sinners. Some of the sins listed are duplicates from part one of book four, but list different punishments.

## Cosmology

Cosmology is a primary focus of the Pistis Sophia – learning the structure of the universe and how to traverse it is considered key in these texts, and the cosmology is one of the most complex from any Gnostic text remaining today. Summarizing the cosmology is further complicated because the structure is slightly different in each of its separate books, with certain realms added and removed.

Some scholars have suggested cosmologies encompassing the entirety of the codex;[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pistis_Sophia#cite_note-11)[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pistis_Sophia#cite_note-12) recently an outline has been made looking at the cosmology of each text individually.[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pistis_Sophia#cite_note-13) A general overview could be seen as:

* **The Treasury of Light** (the place of the right; separate regions in Books 1 & 2 only)
* **The Midst** (*mesos*)
* **The thirteenth aeon** (excluded in Book 3 and part two of Book 4)
* **The twelve aeons**/*[heimarmene](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heimarmene" \o "Heimarmene)* (separate regions in Books 1 & 2 only)
* **The first sphere** (Books 1 & 2 only)
* **The firmament** (Books 1 & 2 only)
* **Amente** (Book 3 and part two of Book 4 only)
* **Chaos** (Book 3 and part two of Book 4 only)
* **The Midst** (*mhte*) (Books 3 & 4 only)
* **The Outer Darkness** (Books 3 & 4 only)

Notably, the portion of Books 1 & 2 dealing with the myth of Pistis Sophia's fall and redemption use a different cosmology from the rest of those books. The most controversial point in this alternate cosmological conception is reference to the thirteenth aeon, Pistis Sophia's home, as a place of “righteousness;” this view of the thirteenth aeon is absent from the rest of the text.[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pistis_Sophia#cite_note-14)

In Books 1-3, all the regions except for the punishment realms are also known as the Spaces of the First Mystery, and in Books 1 & 2, all the regions from the thirteenth aeon downward are considered the [Outer Darkness](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Outer_Darkness).

Generally speaking, the aeonic realms represent the material universe, bounded by the stars and the [zodiac](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zodiac). The Midst is the space dividing this region from the upper realms, and is sometimes a waiting space for souls before being allowed to enter the light realms. The goal of the soul is to ascend beyond the aeons and enter the upper realms of light. This is achieved by receiving the mysteries offered by the group represented by these texts.

The mysteries are not explicitly listed in the text; an initiate would most likely have to prove him or herself worthy by living for some period according to the ethical guidelines provided in the texts before undergoing the baptisms and gaining access to the mysteries. The Books of Jeu are noted as a source of the mysteries; it is probable that the texts found in the Bruce Codex are very similar, if not identical, with these texts.

## Key figures

### **Pistis Sophia**

The story of Pistis Sophia's fall and restoration (chapters 29-82) dominates much of Books 1 & 2. She dwells in the thirteenth aeon, is tricked into leaving her aeon and descending into Chaos, has her light-power stolen, and is not allowed to return to her place until Jesus ascends through the aeons. She recites many repentances and prayers, and is repeatedly persecuted by wicked archontic beings before being allowed to wait just outside of the thirteenth aeon for restoration.

It is noteworthy that she is not a divine being, as portrayed in other versions of the Gnostic myth such as the Apocryphon of John. She is a being of the material aeons, and her restoration is only as far as the thirteenth material aeon. The myth as a whole seems to have been adopted to address the beliefs of another Gnostic group, and to assert the superiority of this text's system: humans who receive the mysteries of this group can surpass Pistis Sophia and reach the divine realms of light.

### **Authades**

Authades is the equivalent of [Ialdabaoth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ialdabaoth" \o "Ialdabaoth)/the [demiurge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demiurge) in versions of the Sophia myth such as that found in the Apocryphon of John. Unlike Ialdabaoth, he is not created by the Sophia figure, and in fact he holds a slightly higher hierarchical position than Pistis Sophia. His sin is wishing to rule all the material aeons, and he grows jealous when Pistis Sophia chooses to worship the light rather than continuing the ways of the aeons. Authades appears only in the chapters dealing with the Sophia myth; elsewhere Sabaoth the Adamas is the representative of evil in these texts.

### **Jesus**

[Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus) serves as a teacher or instructor, teaching his disciples information about the divine world they will need to progress to a higher state of being, as well as knowledge of the cosmic realms, their inhabitants, and their functions. He teaches the disciples baptismal rites, and instructs them to give these rites to all who show themselves worthy. He is closely tied to the highest divine being. However, little significance is given to his earthly incarnation – the ritual bread and wine in the baptism is not associated with the Christian Eucharist, and the crucifixion and resurrection play little role. Here, he only gains his true garment and teaches the disciples the higher mysteries eleven years after his resurrection – downplaying versions of Christianity claiming his earlier teachings as ultimate truth.

### **Jeu**

This is the demiurge of these texts. Jeu dwells in the Treasury of Light and organizes the cosmos. He places the archons and the aeons in their proper places, and assigns powers to the planets, effectively offering a divine origin for [astrology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astrology). This is particularly noteworthy given the anti-cosmic nature of some other Gnostic groups.

He is sometimes referred to as the “Father of Jesus’ Father.” Jeu is considered the father of the Great Sabaoth, the Good, who provides the soul to Jesus’ earthly incarnation – thus Jeu is the father of Jesus’ earthly father. The divine Jesus’ true father remains the highest, ineffable God.

### **Zorokothora Melchisedek**

Often referred to simply as [Melchisedek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melchisedek" \o "Melchisedek), this figure also dwells in the Treasury of Light or Place of the Right. His primary role is overseeing transport of light from the lower realms to the higher light realms as it becomes purified. His subordinates also deliver certain souls out of the punishment regions when believers on Earth pray for them.[*[citation needed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed" \o "Wikipedia:Citation needed)*]

### **The Great Sabaoth, the Good**

As mentioned above, this figure provides a power or soul for Jesus’ earthly incarnation, making him effectively Jesus’ earthly father. This role is most widely discussed through extensive interpretations of [Psalm 85](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psalm_85):10-11 in Chapters 62-63.[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed)]

### **Sabaoth, the Adamas**

This is the primary representative of evil or wickedness in the majority of the Pistis Sophia. He is accused of inappropriate sexual conduct, begetting archons and other beings, and as a result he is imprisoned in the bounds of the zodiac, or the material universe. For those human souls who did not receive the mysteries before death and are thus bound to be reincarnated in the world, he is also responsible for giving the “cup of forgetfulness,” denying them the knowledge they had acquired from previous lives and punishments.[[*c*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed)

**Dialogue of the Saviour**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **Dialogue of the Saviour** is one of the [New Testament apocrypha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament_apocrypha) texts that was found within the [Nag Hammadi library](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nag_Hammadi_library) of predominantly [Gnostic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnostic) texts. The text appears only once in a single [Coptic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coptic_language) [codex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex), and is heavily damaged. The surviving portions indicate that the general content is a dialogue with [Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus), in a similar manner to, and possibly based on, the [Gospel of Thomas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas).

The text is somewhat peculiarly constructed, containing also a few large interruptions seemingly out of place within, and only superficially edited into, the dialogue. Starting with a series of questions ultimately concerning esoteric knowledge and its pursuit, the text abruptly turns to a description of the origin of the world, interrupted briefly by a return to dialogue. Having expounded the description of creation, it returns to the Gnostic question and answer session about how to achieve [salvation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvation) via [gnosis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnosis), but is abruptly interrupted by a *natural history list* of the [Four Elements](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_element), the powers of heaven and earth, and so forth.

After the history list, there is an *apocalyptic* vision, in which [Didymus Judas Thomas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_the_Apostle), Mary, and Matthew, are shown hell from the safety of the edge of the earth, and an angel announces that the material world was an unintended evil creation (see [Yaltabaoth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yaltabaoth" \o "Yaltabaoth)). Finally, the text returns to the question-based dialogue.

**Composition**

The rather artificial manner in which other texts (the vision of hell, the natural history list, and the creation theory) appear to have been inserted into a question-based dialogue, and the abrupt change halfway through from referring to Jesus as *Lord* to referring to him as *Saviour*, has led many to propose that it is based on four or five different original works. However, due to the damage that the text has suffered, study of it has so far proven too difficult to identify what these texts might be (although the dialog shares an affinity with the Gospel of Thomas). The final redaction is estimated to have taken place around 150 AD.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialogue_of_the_Saviour#cite_note-1)

**The Sophia of Jesus Christ**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **Sophia of Jesus Christ** is a [Gnostic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnosticism) text that was first discovered in the [Berlin Codex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin_Codex) (a Codex purchased in Cairo in 1896 and given to the Berlin Museum which also contains the *Gospel of Mary*, the *Apocryphon of John*, and a summary of the *Act of Peter*). More famously, the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* is also among the many Gnostic tractates in the [Nag Hammadi codices](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nag_Hammadi_library), discovered in [Egypt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt) in 1945. The Berlin-Codex manuscript (as opposed to its contents) probably dates to c. AD 400, and the Nag-Hammadi manuscript has been dated to the 300s. However, these are complemented by a few fragments in Greek dating from the 200s, indicating an earlier date for the contents. The text has strong similarities to the [*Epistle of Eugnostos*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistle_of_Eugnostos), which is also found in the Nag Hammadi codices, but with a Christian framing added, and expanding it somewhat.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Sophia_of_Jesus_Christ#cite_note-1)

**Background**

The debate about dating is critical, since some argue that it reflects the "true, recorded, sayings" of [Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus), which is possible if they were to be dated as far back as the 1st century. Others argue that they are, in fact, considerably later, and constitute an unreliable secondary source (at best *post factum* hearsay).

Most scholars argue that the text is of Gnostic origin, based on the similarities between the [mystical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mysticism) teachings found in the text itself and standard Gnostic themes. Highly mystical, the content of this text concerns creation of [gods](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deity), [angels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angel), and the [universe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universe) with an emphasis on [infinite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infinity) and [metaphysical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphysics) [truth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth).

The perfect saviour hath said: "Come (you) from things unseen unto the end of those that are seen, and the very emanation of Thought shall reveal unto you how faith in they which are unseen was found in them which are seen, they that belong to the Unbegotten Father. Whomsoever hath ears to hear, let him hear!"

— *The Sophia of Jesus Christ*

The text is composed of 13 questions from the disciples, followed by brief discourses by Jesus in response.

1. The first question concerns the vanity and futility of searching for God.
2. The second concerns how to find truth, but only explaining what it is not.
3. The third concerns how truth was revealed to the [gnostics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnosticism" \o "Gnosticism) at the beginning of time.
4. The fourth concerns how one must awake to see the truth.
5. The fifth concerns how things began.
6. The sixth concerns how mankind came to [gnosis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnosis).
7. The seventh concerns the position of Jesus in all this.
8. The eighth concerns the identity of Jesus.
9. The ninth concerns how the spirit connects to the material.
10. The tenth concerns the number of spirits.
11. The eleventh concerns the immortal.
12. The twelfth concerns those who are not material.
13. The final question concerns where mankind came from and what purpose it should have.

***Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, by Bartholomew the Apostle***

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The ***Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, by Bartholomew the Apostle*** is a pseudonymous work of the [New Testament apocrypha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament_apocrypha). It is not to be confused with the book called [*Questions of Bartholomew*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Questions_of_Bartholomew) and either text may be identical with the lost [*Gospel of Bartholomew*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Bartholomew).

**Sources**

The text is known from three partial manuscripts, and additional fragments, all of which are in [Coptic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coptic_language). The text contains visions by [Bartholomew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bartholomew), and acts of [Thomas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_(apostle)), but is predominantly about [The Passion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passion_(Christianity)), and the [Eucharist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eucharist). The text seems to have no semblance of [gnostic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnostic) interpretations, and instead appears to be a text aiming to fill in the supernatural details of the Passion, and to emphasise the value and meaning of church liturgy.

**Contents**

The text starts with a description of Jesus' own comprehension of his own fate, i.e. the [crucifixion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion). It is followed by a tale in which someone attempts to stand in for Jesus (i.e. die in his place), but the priests are initially unable to kill him, even though they try stoning and putting him in an oven.

Subsequently, the text describes Jesus [descending into hell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harrowing_of_Hell), finding [Judas Iscariot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judas_Iscariot) there, and preaching to him. Jesus then rescues everyone from hell, except for Judas, [Cain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cain_and_Abel), and [Herod the Great](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod_the_Great). This is followed by a flashback described by a gardener to the night when angels, fiery chariots, and God, descended to earth, and resurrected Jesus.

Bartholomew is present at the scene, and is shown the highest level of heaven so that he can see the [liturgy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liturgy) going on there to celebrate the resurrection. Bartholomew then has a flashback about a divine visitation at the Mount of Olives.

Meanwhile, Thomas is busy resurrecting *Siophanes* (possibly a transcription error and meant to read *Theophanes*), his son. On returning to life, Siophanes describes what the afterlife was like, while Thomas proceeds to baptise all of the amazed townsfolk, who number some 12,000.

Finally, in order to witness the ascension of Jesus, Thomas is brought to the others via a cloud. At this point Thomas is surprised to see Jesus resurrected (despite having just brought his own son back to life), and celebrates the eucharist with the other apostles. Then they disperse to evangelise.

# Gospel of Thomas

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **Gospel of Thomas** (also known as the **Coptic Gospel of Thomas**) is an [extra-canonical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extra-canonical)[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEFoster200816-1) [sayings gospel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logia). It was discovered near [Nag Hammadi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nag_Hammadi), Egypt, in December 1945 among a group of books known as the [Nag Hammadi library](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nag_Hammadi_library). Scholars speculate that the works were buried in response to a letter from Bishop [Athanasius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athanasius_of_Alexandria) declaring a strict canon of Christian scripture. Scholars have proposed dates of composition as early as AD 200 and as late as AD 250.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEValantasis199712-2)[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEPorter20109-3) Since its discovery, many scholars have seen it as evidence in support of the existence of a "[Q source](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Q_source)," which might have been very similar in its form as a collection of sayings of Jesus without any accounts of his deeds or his life and death, referred to as a sayings gospel.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTESchnelle2007230-4)[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-5)

The [Coptic language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coptic_language) text, the second of seven contained in what modern-day scholars have designated as Nag Hammadi Codex II, is composed of 114 sayings attributed to [Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus). Almost two-thirds of these sayings resemble those found in the [canonical gospels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canonical_gospels)[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTELinssen2020-6) and its *[editio princeps](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Editio_princeps" \o "Editio princeps)* counts more than 80% of parallels,[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEGuillaumontPuechQuispelTill195959%E2%80%9362-7) while it is speculated that the other sayings were added from [Gnostic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnostic) tradition.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEEhrman2003b19%E2%80%9320-8) Its place of origin may have been [Syria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syria_(region)), where [Thomasine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomasines) traditions were strong.[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEDunnRogerson20031574-9) Other scholars have suggested an [Alexandrian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandria) origin.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEBrown2019-10)

The introduction states: "These are the hidden words that the living Jesus spoke and Didymos Judas Thomas wrote them down."[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEPattersonRobinsonBethge1998-11) Didymus ([Koine Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koine_Greek" \o "Koine Greek)) and Thomas ([Aramaic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aramaic_language)) both mean "twin". Modern scholars do not consider the Apostle Thomas the author of this document and the author remains unknown.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEDeConick20062-12)

Because of its discovery with the Nag Hammadi library, and the cryptic emphasis on "gnosis" in some of the sayings, it was widely thought that the document originated within a [school](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/School_(discipline)) of early Christians, [proto-Gnostics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Gnosticism).[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTELayton1987361-13)[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEEhrman2003a59-14) However, critics have questioned whether the description of Thomas as a entirely gnostic gospel is based solely upon the fact that it was found along with gnostic texts at Nag Hammadi.[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEDavies1983a23%E2%80%9324-15)[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEEhrman2003a59-14)

The Gospel of Thomas is very different in tone and structure from other [New Testament apocrypha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament_apocrypha) and the four canonical Gospels. Unlike the canonical Gospels, it is not a [narrative](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative#Literary_theory) account of the life of Jesus; instead, it consists of *logia* (sayings) attributed to Jesus, sometimes stand-alone, sometimes embedded in short [dialogues](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialogue#Literary_and_philosophical_genre) or [parables](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parable#Parables_of_Jesus); 13 of its 16 parables are also found in the [Synoptic Gospels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synoptic_Gospels). The text contains a possible allusion to the death of Jesus in logion 65[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEDeConick2006214-16) ([Parable of the Wicked Tenants](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parable_of_the_Wicked_Husbandmen), paralleled in the Synoptic Gospels), but does not mention his [crucifixion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion_of_Jesus), his [resurrection](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resurrection_of_Jesus), or the [final judgement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Final_judgement); nor does it mention a messianic understanding of Jesus.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEMcGrath200612-17)[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEDunnRogerson20031573-18)

[Origen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origen) condemned a book called "Gospel of Thomas" as heretical; however, it is not clear that it is the same gospel of Thomas, as he possibly meant the [Infancy Gospel of Thomas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infancy_Gospel_of_Thomas).[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-19)

## Finds and publication

The manuscript of the Coptic text ([CG II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nag_Hammadi_Codex_II)), found in 1945 at Nag Hammadi, Egypt, is dated at around 340 AD. It was first published in a photographic edition in 1956.[[note 1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-20) This was followed three years later (1959) by the first English-language translation, with Coptic transcription.[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEGuillaumontPuechQuispelTill1959-21) In 1977, [James M. Robinson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_M._Robinson) edited the first complete collection of English translations of the Nag Hammadi texts.[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTERobinson1988-22) The Gospel of Thomas has been translated and annotated worldwide in many languages.

The original Coptic manuscript is now the property of the [Coptic Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coptic_Museum) in Cairo, Egypt, Department of Manuscripts.[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTELabib1956-23)

### Oxyrhynchus papyrus fragments

After the Coptic version of the complete text was discovered in 1945 at Nag Hammadi, scholars soon realized that three different Greek text fragments previously found at [Oxyrhynchus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxyrhynchus" \o "Oxyrhynchus) (the [Oxyrhynchus Papyri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxyrhynchus_Papyri" \o "Oxyrhynchus Papyri)), also in Egypt, were part of the Gospel of Thomas.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEGrenfellHunt1897-24)[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEGrantFreedman1960-25) These three papyrus fragments of Thomas date to between 130 and 250 AD.

Prior to the Nag Hammadi library discovery, the sayings of Jesus found in Oxyrhynchus were known simply as [Logia Iesu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logia). The corresponding [Uncial script](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uncial_script) Greek fragments of the Gospel of Thomas, found in Oxyrhynchus are:

* [P. Oxy. 1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papyrus_Oxyrhynchus_1): fragments of logia 26 through 33, with the last two sentences of logion 77 in the Coptic version included at the end of logion 30 herein.
* [P. Oxy. 654](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papyrus_Oxyrhynchus_654) : fragments of the beginning through logion 7, logion 24 and logion 36 on the flip side of a papyrus containing [surveying](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surveying) data.[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-26)
* [P. Oxy. 655](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papyrus_Oxyrhynchus_655) : fragments of logia 36 through 39. 8 fragments designated *a* through *h*, whereof *f* and *h* have since been lost.[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-27)

The wording of the Coptic sometimes differs markedly from the earlier Greek Oxyrhynchus texts, the extreme case being that the last portion of logion 30 in the Greek is found at the end of logion 77 in the Coptic. This fact, along with the quite different wording Hippolytus uses when apparently quoting it (see below), suggests that the Gospel of Thomas "may have circulated in more than one form and passed through several stages of redaction."[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEMeier1991125-28)

Although it is generally thought that the Gospel of Thomas was first composed in Greek, there is evidence that the Coptic Nag Hammadi text is a translation from [Syriac](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syriac_language) (see [Syriac origin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#Syriac_origin)).

### **Attestation**

The earliest surviving written references to the *Gospel of Thomas* are found in the writings of [Hippolytus of Rome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippolytus_(writer)) (*c.* 222–235) and [Origen of Alexandria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origen_of_Alexandria) (*c.* 233).[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEKoester199077ff-29) Hippolytus wrote in his [*Refutation of All Heresies*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Refutation_of_All_Heresies) 5.7.20:

[The [Naassenes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naassenes" \o "Naassenes)] speak...of a nature which is both hidden and revealed at the same time and which they call the thought-for kingdom of heaven which is in a human being. They transmit a tradition concerning this in the Gospel entitled "According to Thomas," which states expressly, "The one who seeks me will find me in children of seven years and older, for there, hidden in the fourteenth [aeon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aeon" \o "Aeon), I am revealed."

This appears to be a reference to saying 4 of Thomas, although the wording differs significantly. As translated by Thomas O. Lambdin, saying 4 reads: "Jesus said, 'the man old in days will not hesitate to ask a small child seven days old about the place of life, and he will live. For many who are first will become last, and they will become one and the same".[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTERobinson1988126-30) In this context, the preceding reference to the "sought-after reign of the heavens within a person" appears to be a reference to sayings 2 and 3.[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEJohnson2010-31) Hippolytus also appears to quote saying 11 in *Refutation* 5.8.32, but without attribution.[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEJohnson2010-31)

[Origen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origen) listed the "Gospel according to Thomas" as being among the [heterodox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heterodoxy) apocryphal gospels known to him (*Hom. in Luc.* 1).

In the 4th and 5th centuries, various Church Fathers wrote that the Gospel of Thomas was highly valued by [Mani](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mani_(prophet)). In the 4th century, [Cyril of Jerusalem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyril_of_Jerusalem) mentioned a "Gospel of Thomas" twice in his [*Catechesis*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catechesis): "The Manichaeans also wrote a Gospel according to Thomas, which being tinctured with the fragrance of the evangelic title corrupts the souls of the simple sort."[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-32) and "Let none read the Gospel according to Thomas: for it is the work not of one of the twelve Apostles, but of one of the three wicked disciples of Manes."[[32]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-33) The 5th-century *[Decretum Gelasianum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decretum_Gelasianum" \o "Decretum Gelasianum)* includes "A Gospel attributed to Thomas which the Manichaean use" in its list of heretical books.[[33]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEKoester199078-34)

## Date of composition

Richard Valantasis writes:

Assigning a date to the Gospel of Thomas is very complex because it is difficult to know precisely to what a date is being assigned. Scholars have proposed a date as early as 3rd century AD or as late as 4th century AD, depending upon whether the Gospel of Thomas is identified with the original core of sayings, or with the author's published text, or with the Greek or Coptic texts, or with parallels in other literature.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEValantasis199712-2)

Valantasis and other scholars argue that it is difficult to date Thomas because, as a collection of *logia* without a narrative framework, individual sayings could have been added to it gradually over time.[[34]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEPattersonRobinsonBethge199840-35) Valantasis dates Thomas to 200AD, with some of the material certainly coming from the first stratum which is dated to 200 – 400 AD.[[35]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEValantasis199720-36) J. R. Porter dates the Gospel of Thomas to 250 AD.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEPorter20109-3)

Scholars generally fall into one of two main camps: an "early camp" favoring a date for the core "before the end of the first century,"[[36]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-37) prior to or approximately contemporary with the composition of the canonical gospels; and a more common "late camp" favoring a date in the 2nd century, after composition of the canonical gospels.[[quote 1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Bock2-38)[[quote 2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-39)

### **Early camp**

#### **Form of the gospel**

Theissen and Merz argue the genre of a collection of sayings was one of the earliest forms in which material about Jesus was handed down.[[37]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTETheissenMerz199838%E2%80%9339-40) They assert that other collections of sayings, such as the Q source and the collection underlying [Mark 4](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_4), were absorbed into larger narratives and no longer survive as independent documents, and that no later collections in this form survive.[[37]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTETheissenMerz199838%E2%80%9339-40) [Marvin Meyer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marvin_Meyer) also asserted that the genre of a "sayings collection" is indicative of the 1st century,[[38]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEMeyer200173-41) and that in particular the "use of parables without allegorical amplification" seems to antedate the canonical gospels.[[38]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEMeyer200173-41)

#### **Independence from Synoptic Gospels**

[Stevan L. Davies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stevan_L._Davies) argues that the apparent independence of the ordering of sayings in Thomas from that of their parallels in the synoptics shows that Thomas was not evidently reliant upon the canonical gospels and probably predated them.[[39]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEDavies1992-42)[[40]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEDaviesn.d.-43) Several authors argue that when the logia in Thomas do have parallels in the synoptics, the version in Thomas often seems closer to the source. Theissen and Merz give sayings 31 and 65 as examples of this.[[37]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTETheissenMerz199838%E2%80%9339-40) Koester agrees, citing especially the parables contained in sayings 8, 9, 57, 63, 64 and 65.[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEKoesterLambdin1996125-44) In the few instances where the version in Thomas seems to be dependent on the Synoptics, Koester suggests, this may be due to the influence of the person who translated the text from Greek into Coptic.[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEKoesterLambdin1996125-44)

Koester also argues that the absence of narrative materials, such as those found in the canonical gospels, in Thomas makes it unlikely that the gospel is "an eclectic excerpt from the gospels of the New Testament".[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEKoesterLambdin1996125-44) He also cites the absence of the eschatological sayings considered characteristic of Q source to show the independence of Thomas from that source.[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEKoesterLambdin1996125-44)

#### **Intertextuality with John's gospel**

Another argument for an early date is what some scholars have suggested is an interplay between the [Gospel of John](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_John) and the *logia* of Thomas. Parallels between the two have been taken to suggest that Thomas' *logia* preceded John's work, and that the latter was making a point-by-point riposte to Thomas, either in real or mock conflict. This seeming dialectic has been pointed out by several New Testament scholars, notably Gregory J. Riley,[[42]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTERiley1995-45) [April DeConick](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/April_DeConick),[[43]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEDeConick2001-46) and [Elaine Pagels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elaine_Pagels).[[44]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEPagels2004-47) Though differing in approach, they argue that several verses in the Gospel of John are best understood as responses to a Thomasine community and its beliefs. Pagels, for example, says that the Gospel of John states that Jesus contains the divine light, while several of Thomas' sayings refer to the light born 'within'.[[45]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-48)[[46]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-49)[[47]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-50)

The Gospel of John is the only canonical one that gives Thomas the Apostle a dramatic role and spoken part, and Thomas is the only character therein described as being *apistos* (unbelieving), despite the failings of virtually all the Johannine characters to live up to the author's standards of belief. With respect to the famous story of "[Doubting Thomas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doubting_Thomas)",[[48]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-51) it is suggested[[44]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEPagels2004-47) that John may have been denigrating or ridiculing a rival school of thought. In another apparent contrast, John's text matter-of-factly presents a bodily resurrection as if this is a [*sine qua non*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sine_qua_non) of the faith; in contrast, Thomas' insights about the spirit-and-body are more nuanced.[[49]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-52) For Thomas, resurrection seems more a cognitive event of spiritual attainment, one even involving a certain discipline or asceticism. Again, an apparently denigrating portrayal in the "Doubting Thomas" story may either be taken literally, or as a kind of mock "comeback" to Thomas' logia: not as an outright censuring of Thomas, but an improving gloss. After all, Thomas' thoughts about the spirit and body are really not so different from those which John has presented elsewhere.[[note 2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-53) John portrays Thomas as physically touching the risen Jesus, inserting fingers and hands into his body, and ending with a shout. Pagels interprets this as signifying one-upmanship by John, who is forcing Thomas to acknowledge Jesus' bodily nature. She writes that "...he shows Thomas giving up his search for experiential truth – his 'unbelief' – to confess what John sees as the truth...".[[50]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEPagels200466%E2%80%9373-54) The point of these examples, as used by Riley and Pagels, is to support the argument that the text of Thomas must have existed and have gained a following at the time of the writing of the Gospel of John, and that the importance of the Thomasine logia was great enough that John felt the necessity of weaving them into his own narrative.

As this scholarly debate continued, theologian Christopher W. Skinner disagreed with Riley, DeConick, and Pagels over any possible John–Thomas interplay, and concluded that in the book of John, Thomas the disciple "is merely one stitch in a wider literary pattern where uncomprehending characters serve as [foils](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foil_(literature)) for Jesus's words and deeds."[[51]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTESkinner200938,_227-55)

#### **Role of James**

Albert Hogeterp argues that the Gospel's saying 12, which attributes leadership of the community to [James the Just](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_the_Just) rather than to [Peter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Peter), agrees with the description of the early Jerusalem church by Paul in Galatians [2:1–14](https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Galatians%202:1%E2%80%9314&version=nrsv) and may reflect a tradition predating AD 70.[[52]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEHogeterp2006137-56) Meyer also lists "uncertainty about James the righteous, the brother of Jesus" as characteristic of a 1st-century origin.[[38]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEMeyer200173-41)

In later traditions (most notably in the Acts of Thomas, Book of Thomas the Contender, etc.), Thomas is regarded as the twin brother of Jesus.[[53]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTETurnern.d.-57) Nonetheless, this gospel holds some sentences (log. 55, 99, and 101), that are in opposition with the [familial group of Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brothers_of_Jesus), which involves difficulties when it tries to identify him with James, brother of Jesus, quoted by [Josephus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josephus) in [Antiquities of the Jews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antiquities_of_the_Jews). Moreover, there are some sayings, (principally log. 6, 14, 104) and [Oxyrhinchus papyri 654](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papyrus_Oxyrhynchus_654" \o "Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 654) (log. 6) in which the Gospel is shown in opposition to [Jewish traditions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minhag), especially in respect to [circumcision](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brit_milah) and [dietary practices](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kashrut) (log. 55), key issues in the early [Jewish-Christian community](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_Christian) led by James (Acts 15: 1–35, Gal. 2:1–10).

#### **Depiction of Peter and Matthew**

In saying 13, Peter and Matthew are depicted as unable to understand the true significance or identity of Jesus. Patterson argues that this can be interpreted as a criticism against the school of Christianity associated with the Gospel of Matthew, and that "[t]his sort of rivalry seems more at home in the first century than later", when all the apostles had become revered figures.[[54]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEPattersonRobinsonBethge199842-58)

#### **Parallel with Paul**

According to Meyer, Thomas's saying 17: "I shall give you what no eye has seen, what no ear has heard and no hand has touched, and what has not come into the human heart", is strikingly similar to what [Paul](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_of_Tarsus) wrote in [1 Corinthians 2:9](https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1%20Corinthians%202:9&version=nrsv)[[38]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEMeyer200173-41) (which was itself an allusion to [Isaiah 64:4](https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Isaiah%2064:4&version=nrsv)[[55]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-1corNIV-59)).

### **Late camp**

The late camp dates *Thomas* some time after 100 AD, generally in the early second century. They generally believe that although the text was composed around the mid-second century, it contains earlier sayings such as those originally found in the New Testament gospels of which *Thomas* was in some sense dependent in addition to inauthentic and possibly authentic independent sayings not found in any other extant text. J. R. Porter dates Thomas much later, to the mid-third century.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEPorter20109-3)

#### **Dependence on the New Testament**

Several scholars have argued that the sayings in *Thomas* reflect conflations and harmonisations dependent on the canonical gospels. For example, saying 10 and 16 appear to contain a redacted harmonisation of [Luke 12:49](https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Luke%2012:49&version=nrsv), [12:51–52](https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Luke%2012:51%E2%80%9352&version=nrsv) and [Matthew 10:34–35](https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Matthew%2010:34%E2%80%9335&version=nrsv). In this case it has been suggested that the dependence is best explained by the author of *Thomas* making use of an earlier harmonised oral tradition based on Matthew and Luke.[[56]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTESnodgrass1989-61)[[57]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEGrantFreedman1960136%E2%80%93137-62) Biblical scholar [Craig A. Evans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Craig_A._Evans) also subscribes to this view and notes that "Over half of the New Testament writings are quoted, paralleled, or alluded to in Thomas... I'm not aware of a Christian writing prior to AD 150 that references this much of the New Testament."[[58]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEStrobel200736-63)

Another argument made for the late dating of Thomas is based upon the fact that Saying 5 in the original Greek (Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 654) seems to follow the vocabulary used in the Gospel according to Luke ([Luke 8:17](https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Luke%208:17&version=nrsv)), and not the vocabulary used in the Gospel according to Mark ([Mark 4:22](https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Mark%204:22&version=nrsv)). According to this argument – which presupposes firstly the rectitude of the two-source hypothesis (widely held among current New Testament scholars[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed)]), in which the author of Luke is seen as having used the pre-existing gospel according to Mark plus a lost Q source to compose his gospel – if the author of Thomas did, as Saying 5 suggests – refer to a pre-existing Gospel according to Luke, rather than Mark's vocabulary, then the Gospel of Thomas must have been composed after both Mark and Luke, the latter of which is dated to between 60 and 90 AD.

Another saying that employs similar vocabulary to that used in Luke rather than Mark is Saying 31 in the original Greek (Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1), where Luke 4:24's term *dektos* (acceptable) [4:24](https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Luke%204:24&version=nrsv) is employed rather than [Mark 6:4](https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Mark%206:4&version=nrsv)'s *atimos* (without honor). The word *dektos* (in all its cases and genders) is clearly typical of Luke, since it is only employed by him in the canonical gospels [Luke 4:19](https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Luke%204:19&version=nrsv); [4:24](https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Luke%204:24&version=nrsv); [Acts 10:35](https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Acts%2010:35&version=nrsv)). Thus, the argument runs, the Greek Thomas has clearly been at least influenced by Luke's characteristic vocabulary.[[note 3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-64)

J. R. Porter states that, because around half of the sayings in Thomas have parallels in the synoptic gospels, it is "possible that the sayings in the Gospel of Thomas were selected directly from the canonical gospels and were either reproduced more or less exactly or amended to fit the author's distinctive theological outlook."[[59]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEPorter2010166-65) According to [John P. Meier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_P._Meier), scholars predominantly conclude that Thomas depends on or harmonizes the Synoptics.[[60]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEMeier1991135%E2%80%93138-66)

##### Syriac origin

Several scholars argue that Thomas is dependent on Syriac writings, including unique versions of the canonical gospels. They contend that many sayings of the Gospel of Thomas are more similar to Syriac translations of the canonical gospels than their record in the original Greek. [Craig A. Evans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Craig_A._Evans) states that saying 54 in *Thomas*, which speaks of the poor and the kingdom of heaven, is more similar to the Syriac version of Matthew 5:3 than the Greek version of that passage or the parallel in Luke 6:20.[[61]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEEvans2008[[Category:Wikipedia_articles_needing_page_number_citations_from_September_2010]]%3Csup_class=%22noprint_Inline-Template_%22_style=%22white-space:nowrap;%22%3E&#91;%3Ci%3E[[Wikipedia:Citing_sources|%3Cspan_title=%22This_citation_requires_a_reference_to_the_specific_page_or_range_of_pages_in_which_the_material_appears.&#32;(September_2010)%22%3Epage&nbsp;needed%3C/span%3E]]%3C/i%3E&#93;%3C/sup%3E-67)

[Klyne Snodgrass](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Klyne_Snodgrass) notes that saying 65–66 of *Thomas* containing the Parable of the Wicked Tenants appears to be dependent on the early harmonisation of Mark and Luke found in the old Syriac gospels. He concludes that, "*Thomas*, rather than representing the earliest form, has been shaped by this harmonizing tendency in Syria. If the *Gospel of Thomas* were the earliest, we would have to imagine that each of the evangelists or the traditions behind them expanded the parable in different directions and then that in the process of transmission the text was trimmed back to the form it has in the Syriac Gospels. It is much more likely that Thomas, which has a Syrian provenance, is dependent on the tradition of the canonical Gospels that has been abbreviated and harmonized by oral transmission."[[56]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTESnodgrass1989-61)

[Nicholas Perrin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_Perrin) argues that *Thomas* is dependent on the [*Diatessaron*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diatessaron), which was composed shortly after 172 by [Tatian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tatian) in Syria.[[62]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEPerrin2006-68) Perrin explains the order of the sayings by attempting to demonstrate that almost all adjacent sayings are connected by Syriac catchwords, whereas in Coptic or Greek, catchwords have been found for only less than half of the pairs of adjacent sayings.[[63]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEPerrin2002-69) Peter J. Williams analyzed Perrin's alleged Syriac catchwords and found them implausible.[[64]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEWilliams2009-70) [Robert F. Shedinger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_F._Shedinger) wrote that since Perrin attempts to reconstruct an [Old Syriac](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syriac_language) version of Thomas without first establishing Thomas' reliance on the *Diatessaron*, Perrin's logic seems [circular](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circular_reasoning).[[65]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEShedinger2003388-71)

##### Lack of apocalyptic themes

[Bart D. Ehrman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bart_D._Ehrman) argues that the [historical Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_Jesus#Apocalyptic_prophet) was an [apocalyptic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocalypse) preacher, and that his apocalyptic beliefs are recorded in the earliest Christian documents: Mark and the authentic [Pauline epistles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pauline_epistles). The earliest Christians believed Jesus would soon return, and their beliefs are echoed in the earliest Christian writings. The Gospel of Thomas proclaims that the Kingdom of God is already present for those who understand the secret message of Jesus (Saying 113), and lacks apocalyptic themes. Because of this, Ehrman argues, the Gospel of Thomas was probably composed by a Gnostic some time in the early 2nd century.[[66]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEEhrman199975%E2%80%9378-72) Ehrman also argued against the authenticity of the sayings the Gospel of Thomas attributes to Jesus.[[67]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEEhrman2012219-73)

[Elaine Pagels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elaine_Pagels) points out the Gospel of Thomas promulgates the Kingdom of God not as a final destination but a state of self-discovery. Additionally, the Gospel of Thomas conveys that Jesus ridiculed those who thought of the Kingdom of God in literal terms, as if it were a specific place. Pagels goes on to argue that, through Saying 22, readers are to believe the "Kingdom" symbolizes a state of transformed consciousness.[[68]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEPagels1979128%E2%80%93129-74)

[John P. Meier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_P._Meier) has repeatedly argued against the historicity of the Gospel of Thomas, stating that it cannot be a reliable source for [the quest of the historical Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Quest_of_the_Historical_Jesus) and also considers it a Gnostic text.[[69]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEMeier1991110-75) He has also argued against the authenticity of the parables found exclusively in the Gospel of Thomas.[[70]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEMeier2016[[Category:Wikipedia_articles_needing_page_number_citations_from_July_2021]]%3Csup_class=%22noprint_Inline-Template_%22_style=%22white-space:nowrap;%22%3E&#91;%3Ci%3E[[Wikipedia:Citing_sources|%3Cspan_title=%22This_citation_requires_a_reference_to_the_specific_page_or_range_of_pages_in_which_the_material_appears.&#32;(July_2021)%22%3Epage&nbsp;needed%3C/span%3E]]%3C/i%3E&#93;%3C/sup%3E-76) [Bentley Layton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bentley_Layton) included the Gospel of Thomas into his list of Gnostic scriptures.[[71]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTELayton1987[[Category:Wikipedia_articles_needing_page_number_citations_from_July_2021]]%3Csup_class=%22noprint_Inline-Template_%22_style=%22white-space:nowrap;%22%3E&#91;%3Ci%3E[[Wikipedia:Citing_sources|%3Cspan_title=%22This_citation_requires_a_reference_to_the_specific_page_or_range_of_pages_in_which_the_material_appears.&#32;(July_2021)%22%3Epage&nbsp;needed%3C/span%3E]]%3C/i%3E&#93;%3C/sup%3E-77)

[Craig A. Evans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Craig_A._Evans) has argued that the Gospel of Thomas represents the theological motives of 2nd century Egyptian Christianity and is dependent on the Synoptic Gospels and the Diatesseron.[[72]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEEvans2008[[Category:Wikipedia_articles_needing_page_number_citations_from_July_2021]]%3Csup_class=%22noprint_Inline-Template_%22_style=%22white-space:nowrap;%22%3E&#91;%3Ci%3E[[Wikipedia:Citing_sources|%3Cspan_title=%22This_citation_requires_a_reference_to_the_specific_page_or_range_of_pages_in_which_the_material_appears.&#32;(July_2021)%22%3Epage&nbsp;needed%3C/span%3E]]%3C/i%3E&#93;%3C/sup%3E-78)

[N.T. Wright](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/N.T._Wright), Anglican bishop and professor of New Testament history, also sees the dating of Thomas in the 2nd or 3rd century. Wright's reasoning for this dating is that the "narrative framework" of 1st-century Judaism and the New Testament is radically different from the worldview expressed in the sayings collected in the Gospel of Thomas. Thomas makes an anachronistic mistake by turning Jesus the Jewish prophet into a Hellenistic/Cynic philosopher. Wright concludes his section on the Gospel of Thomas in his book *The New Testament and the People of God* in this way:

[Thomas'] implicit story has to do with a figure who imparts a secret, hidden wisdom to those close to him, so that they can perceive a new truth and be saved by it. 'The Thomas Christians are told the truth about their divine origins, and given the secret passwords that will prove effective in the return journey to their heavenly home.' This is, obviously, the non-historical story of Gnosticism ... It is simply the case that, on good historical grounds, it is far more likely that the book represents a radical translation, and indeed subversion, of first-century Christianity into a quite different sort of religion, than that it represents the original of which the longer gospels are distortions ... Thomas reflects a symbolic universe, and a worldview, which are radically different from those of the early Judaism and Christianity.[[73]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEWright1992443-79)

## Relation to the New Testament canon

Although arguments about some potential New Testament books, such as the [*Shepherd of Hermas*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shepherd_of_Hermas) and [Book of Revelation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Revelation), continued well into the 4th century, four canonical gospels, attributed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, were accepted among [proto-orthodox Christians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-orthodox_Christians) at least as early as the mid-2nd century. Tatian's widely used [*Diatessaron*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diatessaron), compiled between 160 and 175 AD, utilized the four gospels without any consideration of others. [Irenaeus of Lyons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irenaeus_of_Lyons) wrote in the late 2nd century that: "since there are four-quarters of the earth ... it is fitting that the church should have four pillars ... the four Gospels."[[74]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-80) and then shortly thereafter made the first known quotation from a fourth gospel – the now-canonical version of the Gospel of John. The late 2nd-century [Muratorian fragment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muratorian_fragment) also recognizes only the three synoptic gospels and John.

Bible scholar [Bruce Metzger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bruce_Metzger) wrote regarding the formation of the New Testament canon:

Although the fringes of the emerging canon remained unsettled for generations, a high degree of unanimity concerning the greater part of the New Testament was attained among the very diverse and scattered congregations of believers not only throughout the Mediterranean world, but also over an area extending from Britain to Mesopotamia.[[75]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEMetzger199775-81)

## Relation to the Thomasine milieu

The question also arises as to various sects' usage of other works attributed to Thomas and their relation to this work.

The [Book of Thomas the Contender](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Thomas_the_Contender), also from Nag Hammadi, is foremost among these, but the extensive [Acts of Thomas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Thomas) provides the mythological connections. The short and comparatively straightforward [Apocalypse of Thomas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocalypse_of_Thomas) has no immediate connection with the synoptic gospels, while the canonical [Jude](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistle_of_Jude) – if the name can be taken to refer to Judas Thomas Didymus – certainly attests to early intra-Christian conflict.

The [Infancy Gospel of Thomas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infancy_Gospel_of_Thomas), shorn of its mythological connections, is difficult to connect specifically to the Gospel of Thomas, but the Acts of Thomas contains the [Hymn of the Pearl](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hymn_of_the_Pearl) whose content is reflected in the [Psalms of Thomas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psalms_of_Thomas) found in [Manichaean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manichaean) literature. These psalms, which otherwise reveal [Mandaean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mandaean) connections, also contain material overlapping the Gospel of Thomas.[[76]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEMasingR%C3%A4tsep1961-82)

## Importance and author

Considered by some as one of the earliest accounts of the teachings of Jesus, the *Gospel of Thomas* is regarded by some scholars as one of the most important texts in understanding [early Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Christianity) outside the [New Testament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament).[[77]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEFunkHoover199315-83) In terms of faith, however, no major Christian group accepts this gospel as canonical or authoritative. It is an important work for scholars working on the Q document, which itself is thought to be a collection of sayings or teachings upon which the gospels of Matthew and Luke are partly based. Although no copy of Q has ever been discovered, the fact that Thomas is similarly a 'sayings' Gospel is viewed by some scholars as an indication that the early Christians did write collections of the sayings of Jesus, bolstering the Q hypothesis.[[78]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEEhrman2003b57%E2%80%9358-84)

Modern scholars do not consider Thomas the Apostle the author of this document and the author remains unknown. J. Menard produced a summary of the academic consensus in the mid-1970s which stated that the gospel was probably a very late text written by a Gnostic author, thus having very little relevance to the study of the early development of Christianity. Scholarly views of Gnosticism and the Gospel of Thomas have since become more nuanced and diverse.[[79]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEDeConick20062%E2%80%933-85) Paterson Brown, for example, has argued forcefully that the three Coptic Gospels of Thomas, [Philip](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Philip) and [Truth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Truth) are demonstrably not Gnostic writings, since all three explicitly affirm the basic reality and sanctity of incarnate life, which Gnosticism by definition considers illusory and evil.[[80]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEPaterson_Brownn.d.-86)

In the 4th century [Cyril of Jerusalem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyril_of_Jerusalem) considered the author a disciple of [Mani](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mani_(prophet)) who was also called Thomas.[[81]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTESchneemelcher2006111-87) Cyril stated:

Mani had three disciples: Thomas, Baddas and Hermas. Let no one read the Gospel according to Thomas. For he is not one of the twelve apostles but one of the three wicked disciples of Mani.[[82]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTELayton1989106-88)

Many scholars consider the *Gospel of Thomas* to be a gnostic text, since it was found in a library among others, it contains Gnostic themes, and perhaps presupposes a Gnostic worldview.[[83]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEEhrman2003b59ff-89) Others reject this interpretation, because *Thomas* lacks the full-blown mythology of Gnosticism as described by [Irenaeus of Lyons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irenaeus_of_Lyons) (ca. 185), and because Gnostics frequently appropriated and used a large "range of scripture from Genesis to the Psalms to Homer, from the Synoptics to John to the letters of Paul."[[84]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEDavies1983b6%E2%80%938-90) The Mysticism of the gospel of Thomas also lack many themes found in second century Gnosticism.[[85]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-91) According to David W. Kim the association of the Thomasines and Gnosticism are anachronistic and the book seems to predate the Gnostic movements.[[86]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-92)

## The historical Jesus

Some modern scholars (most notably those belonging to the [Jesus Seminar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_Seminar)) believe that the Gospel of Thomas was written independently of the canonical gospels, and therefore is a useful guide to [historical Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_Jesus) research.[[77]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEFunkHoover199315-83)[[87]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEKoester199084%E2%80%9386-93) Scholars may utilize one of several critical tools in [biblical scholarship](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_criticism), the [criterion of multiple attestation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criterion_of_multiple_attestation), to help build cases for historical reliability of the sayings of Jesus. By finding those sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas* that overlap with the [Gospel of the Hebrews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_the_Hebrews), Q, Mark, Matthew, Luke, John, and Paul, scholars feel such sayings represent "multiple attestations" and therefore are more likely to come from a historical Jesus than sayings that are only singly attested.[[88]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEFunkHoover199316ff-94)

## Comparison of the major gospels

The material in the comparison chart is from *Gospel Parallels* by B. H. Throckmorton,[[89]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEThrockmorton1979-95) *The Five Gospels* by R. W. Funk,[[90]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEFunkHoover1993-96) *The Gospel According to the Hebrews* by E. B. Nicholson[[91]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTENicholson1879-97) and *The Hebrew Gospel and the Development of the Synoptic Tradition* by J. R. Edwards.[[92]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEEdwards2009-98)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Matthew, Mark, Luke** | **John** | **Thomas** | **Nicholson/**  **Edwards Hebrew Gospel** |
| New Coven  ant | The central theme of the Gospels – Love God with all your being and love your neighbor as yourself | The central theme – Love is the New Command-ment given by Jesus[[93]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-99) | Secret knowledge, love your friends[[94]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-100) | The central theme – Love one another[[quote 4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-101) |
| Forgiveness | Very important – particularly in Matthew and Luke[[95]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-102) | Assumed[[96]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-103) | Mentions being forgiven in relation to blasphemy against the Father and Son, but no forgiveness to those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit[[97]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-104) | Very important – Forgive-ness is a central theme and this gospel goes into the greatest detail[[quote 5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-105) |
| The Lord's Prayer | In Matthew & Luke but not Mark[[98]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Trite-106) | Not mentioned | Not mentioned | Important – "mahar" or "tomorrow"[[quote 6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-107)[[quote 7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-108) |
| Love & the poor | Very Important – The rich young man[[99]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-109) | Assumed[[100]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-110) | Important[[quote 8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-111) | Very important – The rich young man[[quote 9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-112) |
| Jesus starts his ministry | Jesus meets John the Baptist and is baptized in the 15th year of [Tiberius Caesar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiberius_Caesar)[[101]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-113) | Jesus meets John the Baptist, 46 years after [Herod's Temple](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod%27s_Temple) is built (John 2:20)[[102]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-114) | Only speaks of John the Baptist[[quote 10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-115) | Jesus meets John the Baptist and is baptized. This gospel goes into the greatest detail[[103]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Epiphanius,_Panarion_30:13-116) |
| Disciples-number | Twelve[[104]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Matt_10:1,_Mk_6:8,_Lk_9:3-117) | Twelve[[105]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Jn_13:23,_19:26,_20:2,_21:7,_21:20-118) | not mentioned[[106]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Logion_13-119) | Twelve[[quote 11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-120) |
| Disciples-inner circle | [Peter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Peter), [Andrew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_the_Apostle), [James](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James,_son_of_Zebedee) & [John](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_the_Apostle)[[104]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Matt_10:1,_Mk_6:8,_Lk_9:3-117) | Peter, Andrew, [the Beloved Disciple](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Beloved_Disciple)[[105]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Jn_13:23,_19:26,_20:2,_21:7,_21:20-118) | [Thomas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_the_Apostle),[[106]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Logion_13-119) [James the Just](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_the_Just)[[107]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-121) | Peter, Andrew, James, & John[[103]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Epiphanius,_Panarion_30:13-116) |
| [Disciples](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disciples_of_Jesus)-others | Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, Simon the Zealot, Judas Thaddaeus, & Judas Iscariot[[105]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Jn_13:23,_19:26,_20:2,_21:7,_21:20-118) | Philip, [Nathanael](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nathanael_(disciple_of_Jesus)), Thomas, Judas not Iscariot & Judas Iscariot[[105]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Jn_13:23,_19:26,_20:2,_21:7,_21:20-118) | Peter,[[106]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Logion_13-119)[[108]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Logion_114-122) Matthew,[[106]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Logion_13-119) Mariam,[[108]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Logion_114-122)[[109]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-123) & [Salome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salome_(disciple))[[110]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-124) | Matthew, James the Just (Brother of Jesus), Simon the Zealot, Thaddaeus, Judas Iscariot[[111]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-125) |
| Possible Authors | Unknown;[[note 4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-126) [Mark the Evangelist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_the_Evangelist) & [Luke the Evangelist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luke_the_Evangelist) | The Beloved Disciple[[note 5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-127) | Unknown | [Matthew the Evangelist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_the_Evangelist) (or Unknown)[[quote 12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-128) |
| Virgin birth account | Described in Matthew & Luke, Mark only makes reference to a "Mother"[[112]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-129) | Not mentioned, although the "Word becomes flesh" in John 1:14 | N/A as this is a gospel of Jesus' sayings | Not mentioned. |
| Jesus' baptism | Described[[98]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Trite-106) | Seen in flash-back (John 1:32–34)[[98]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Trite-106) | N/A | Described great detail[[quote 13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-130) |
| Preaching style | Brief one-liners; parables[[98]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Trite-106) | Essay format, Midrash[[98]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Trite-106) | Sayings, parables[[quote 14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-131) | Brief one-liners; parables[[98]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Trite-106) |
| Storytelling | Parables[[113]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEMillsBullardMcKnight1990-132) | Figurative language & metaphor[[114]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEVan_der_Watt2000-133) | hidden, parables[[115]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-134) | Parables[[116]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-FOOTNOTEScott1989-135) |
| Jesus' theology | 1st-century populist Judaism[[note 6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Hillel-136) | Critical of Jewish authorities[[117]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-137) | disputed, possibly proto-Gnostic | 1st-century Judaism[[note 6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Hillel-136) |
| Miracles | Many miracles | [Seven Signs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_Signs) | N/A | Fewer miracles[[118]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-138) |
| Duration of ministry | Not mentioned, possibly 3 years according to the [Parable of the barren fig tree](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parable_of_the_barren_fig_tree) (Luke 13) | 3 years (Four Passovers)[[119]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-139) | N/A | 1 year[[note 7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-Events_leading_up_to_Passover-140) |
| Location of ministry | Mainly Galilee | Mainly Judea, near Jerusalem | N/A | Mainly Galilee |
| Passover meal | Body & Blood = Bread and wine | Interrupts meal for foot washing | N/A | Hebrew Passover is celebrated but details are N/A Epiphanius[[120]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-141) |
| Burial shroud | A single piece of cloth | Multiple pieces of cloth[[note 8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-142) | N/A | Given to the High Priest[[121]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-143) |
| Resurrection | Mary and [the women](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Female_disciples_of_Jesus) are the first to learn Jesus has arisen[[122]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-144) | John adds detailed account of Mary's experience of the Resurrection[[123]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-145) | N/A | In the Gospel of the Hebrews is the unique account of Jesus appearing to his brother, [James the Just](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_the_Just).[[124]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas#cite_note-146) |