

Children Of The Living Father

**Discovering what the
real Jesus taught**

Johan Meyer

Children Of The Living Father

By Johan Meyer

for Jesus

To Debbie

Thank you, my love, for walking beside me as I wrestled with the things that once felt untouchable. Your steady presence through the unsettling task of dissecting my faith gave me the courage to keep going, even when it weighed on you too.

Each of us is entrusted with our own journey — our own unique relationship with the Father, and our own unfolding understanding of God. That's the mystery and beauty of it. Yet somehow, in that sacred individuality, you and I meet in the same place: holding fast to the same truths about faith, God, and life.

I treasure that. And I treasure you.

I love you.

To Demi

I admire the remarkable woman you've grown into. From the very first time I read the Bible to you, your instinct to question stood out. I still remember reading the story of Moses parting the sea, and you, wide-eyed and unfiltered, asked, "*Really? Do you actually believe that?*"

You were small, and your honesty made me smile — but truthfully, it also shook me. At the time, I couldn't imagine questioning the Bible. It's taken me many years to learn how to view it with that same clarity and courage you showed so naturally.

Thank you for all the coffees and helping me in our business.

Keep thinking for yourself.

I'm so proud of you. I love you.

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Child of the living Father

I am a child of the living Father. Being a child of God, has nothing to do with religion, dogma or belonging to a church. We are all born in the image of God. We have the light of God within us - whether that light will shine is up to us.

Jesus calls us to seek the truth. The truth is that a lot of what we have been taught in Christian churches is a lie. The image of Jesus presented by mainstream Christianity is largely shaped by theological developments that arose decades—even centuries—after he walked the earth. It is not about mere “faith in Jesus” but about embracing and living his teachings. Jesus came to reveal God as a loving Father, not a distant deity demanding sacrifices or rigid religious rituals. His message was one of empowerment—encouraging us to become the people God intended us to be and fostering a deep, personal relationship with our Father.

If you want to follow the real Jesus, the historical Jesus, you must be willing to question what you believe, what you have been taught. It will not be easy.

Jesus said, "Those who seek should not stop seeking until they find. When they find, they will be disturbed. When they are disturbed, they will marvel, and will reign over all.

- Gospel of Thomas, Saying 2

If you are willing to face the truth, if you are willing to work through the disturbing part, you will be rewarded.

Before we start

About this book

I am making this book available free of charge. The latest version of this book can be downloaded from my website: <https://NearTheFire.net>

The purpose of this book and some background

Okay, I know it is not a “book”. I didn't publish anything. It is just a PDF document. But I did put a lot of research and work into this, so I am calling it a book.

This book 😊 is divided into the following parts:

1. **Introduction** – An overview of what it means to be a child of God and an explanation of what this book seeks to achieve (this section)
2. **The Bible** – In this section, we explore the false teachings surrounding the Bible. To uncover the historical Jesus, it is essential to first understand what the Bible truly is—and

what it is not. While this section is lengthy, exposing a deeply entrenched lie is no trivial task.

3. **Christianity and the Early Church** - In this section you will see that Christianity is not what you think.
4. **The importance of the Gospel of Thomas** - Why the Gospel of Thomas is as important as the canonical gospels (if not more).
5. **The Historical Jesus** – Here, we examine how the historical (real) Jesus differs from the portrayal many of us have encountered in church teachings.
6. **The Sayings of the Gospel of Thomas** – This section presents my interpretations of the Gospel of Thomas.

Before I begin, I want to share a bit of personal background. While I enjoy reading works by biblical scholars, I am not one myself. My aim is simply to share what I have discovered. At best, I hope this might help someone else find the truth for themselves, and at the very least, I can provide an explanation of what I believe.

I was brought up in a Christian home (although we were not very religious). During a church camp in high school I had a born-again experience. As a new-born Christian, I was eager to please God and did everything and believed everything the pastors said. I believed the Bible was the Word of God for decades and the church played an important role in my life and faith. I even joined a missionary group for a year (full time).

A few years ago (probably more like a decade), I began to notice cracks in my religion. Certain aspects of Christianity just didn't make sense to me. It started with small things, like our pastor preaching that women should always listen to their husbands and be subject to them, even when they were wrong. I also observed how the world embraced and accepted people of different sexual orientations, religions, and ideas about God, while the church condemned, rejected, and even hated them.

This set me on a path where I started to take a very honest and critical look at my faith and the Bible - a path of dissecting my religion. What I discovered changed not only my idea of the Bible and Christianity, it changed me.

Some technical stuff

Referring to the authors of gospels

Most biblical scholars agree that the gospels were not written by eyewitnesses and that the names for the gospels were allocated to them in the second half of the second century (don't just watch an apologist YouTube video saying otherwise, look at the evidence the biblical scholars give). When I refer to the author of a gospel as Mark, Matthew, Luke or John, I am simply referring to the author and using the name allocated to them. I am not referring to the apostles Matthew or John, or to someone named Luke or Mark.

When I refer to Luke, I might be referring to the author of the Gospel of Luke and/or Acts as most biblical scholars believe the same author wrote both.

Translations used

All verses that are quoted, unless otherwise stated, will be from the NRSVUE. Translations of the Gospel of Thomas will be from 'The Scholars' Translation of the Gospel of Thomas' by Stephen Patterson and Marvin Meyer, unless otherwise stated.

If I refer to a saying without mentioning a specific saying from a specific gospel, it will be a reference to a saying in the Gospel of Thomas. I might also refer to a saying in the Gospel of Thomas as Thomas and the number of the saying (example Thomas 3).

What does the images in this book mean

Most of the images in this book are uniquely generated using AI specifically for this project. I aimed to get them as close as possible to what I envisioned. However, please don't read too much into the images, as my budget for this book 😊 didn't allow for hiring an illustrator.

Credit, where credit is due

If you know me personally—or have watched any of my videos—you might be surprised by the level of English used in this book. English isn't my first language, so I'll be honest: I've leaned on Copilot (AI) to help improve some of the wording along the way.

But the ideas and message are mine. Or rather... not mine at all. I believe I'm simply passing on the message of Jesus.

Think for yourself and don't be offended

I am not here to tell you what you should believe, nor do I think that what you believe is wrong. As I will illustrate throughout this book, God did not provide us with a set of word-for-word, divinely authored instructions—He didn't. Instead, we have a collection of books written over the span of more than a century by different authors, each offering their own perspectives on God and Jesus. To make matters more complex, we do not possess the original writings but rather copies of copies—many of which have been altered over time.

Seeking God through these texts is no simple task. Mistakes are inevitable—for all of us. However, I do not believe God will judge us for getting it wrong. Instead, I believe He will hold us accountable for our motives: whether we were sincere in seeking Him and the truth, and how we treated others along the way.

I don't know everything and there are definitely things that I don't understand correctly. I am learning and continue to learn. As I learn, my ideas about faith, God and the Bible changes and evolves - as it should. Therefore, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of discovering the

truth for yourself. Conduct your own investigations and seek understanding, rather than simply accepting what I or anyone else tells you without question.

I am deeply passionate about the Bible and my faith. In my eagerness to share what I have learned, I might sometimes come across as challenging your beliefs, but that is not my intention. I respect others' beliefs even if I don't agree with them. As I will point out in this book, I believe we can have different understandings of God and still love the same God. I don't expect to convince anyone of something in just a few pages that took me years to process. I simply share my beliefs in the hope that they might help someone with their struggles.

With all that said, buckle up Alice, it's time to go down the rabbit hole 😊

The Bible

Do you believe the Bible is the Word of God? If God wrote a book, wouldn't you want to see what it has to say? Many people believe that the Bible is the Word of God but they don't really bother to read it. They will listen to others talk about it (pastors and preachers) and they will do some light reading, but they will not take the time to read it and study it carefully. If they did, they would realize something that took me a very long time to fully grasp.

The Bible is not the word of God. It literally took me years to write these eight words. It was a painful process of many years of study and prayer. I went from '*maybe not everything in the Bible is the Word of God*', to '*the Bible contains the Word of God*' to eventually, '*The Bible is NOT the Word of God*'.

This doesn't mean the Bible is unimportant. I still study it daily and have discovered a renewed desire and excitement for its teachings. The difference now is that I can approach the Bible with a clearer understanding of what it truly is and what it is not. This allows me to uncover the real Jesus, the historical Jesus, and who he actually was. We need to read the Bible to understand what Jesus taught, but we also need to discern what he actually said and what might have been later additions by those who wrote down or copied his words.

You might be furious right now. Thinking, how can I say that about the Bible?



But that is the wrong question. The question should be, how can you say that the Bible is the 'Word of God'? Where do you get that idea from? You will probably think of that famous verse that says all scripture is inspired by God.

All scripture is NOT inspired by God

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

- 2 Timothy 3:16

There are a couple of problems with this verse. First, most biblical scholars believe that 2 Timothy (and a couple of other books of Paul) was not written by Paul. It was written decades after his death by someone claiming to be Paul - with other words, a forgery.

If you want to believe it was written by Paul, you have a bigger problem. At the time of this letter, most of the New Testament did not exist yet. None of the gospels were written yet. So what scripture is 'Paul' referring to, the Old Testament? The Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) they had could also have been a bit different to ours. For example the book of Enoch is referred to in the New Testament but not included in our Bible.

Now, you can believe what I believed when I started on this journey, when I discovered some problems with how we ended up with the specific books we have in our Bible: *God had a plan all along*. At the time 'Paul' was writing this verse, maybe he didn't understand what the *scripture* will become, but God did, and God *inspired* him to write those words.

If however you want to believe that God supernaturally inspired people to write the Bible, all scripture, word for word, then you have to believe that the Bible is univocal - speaking with one voice, God's voice. That will mean there can't be any contradictions or mistakes. The fact is that there are contradictions - a lot! Not only technical contradictions like how many women were at the tomb, or how Judas died, but serious contradictions about teachings and about what we should believe.

It is not just that there are contradictions. If God went through the trouble of letting various authors write down His words, word for word, don't you think He would have also made sure that we have those written words? We don't. We have copies that have been altered significantly, not just mistakes, intentional changes to the point where scholars need to make educated guesses of which copy is closer to the originals that we no longer have. More on that later.

There is a lot more clear evidence that the Bible is not the Word of God, from the Bible itself, but before I get to that. Do you really want the Bible to be the Word of God? Are you sure?

Do you really want the Bible to be the Word of God?

If you want to believe that the Bible is the Word of God, then you *have to* believe ..

- God is an evil God that instructed His people to commit genocide. To murder innocent women, children and even infants. - 1 Samuel 15:3
- God is a sadistic God, that hardens peoples minds and then severely punishes them because they do not listen (Exodus 4:21, 9:35).
- God approves slavery - and no, not a good kind. It is not like an employment contract to pay off debt. The slavery that is mentioned in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) is explained in Exodus 21 where you can beat your slave half to death, as long as the slave doesn't die in the first 2 days - because the slave is your *property*. There is also slavery that is not linked to unpaid debt - Leviticus 25:44-46.
- God is a homophobic God - Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Timothy 1:9-10
- God is a sexist God that thinks less of women - From menstruation is something dirty (Leviticus 15:20) and rape isn't that bad (Deuteronomy 22:23-27), to women should keep quite and listen to their husbands (Timothy 2:12)
- God doesn't like disabled people - Leviticus 21:16-21
- God thinks it is a good idea to take the infants of your enemy and bash them against rocks - Psalm 137:9

- God sent two she-bears to maul 42 children to death because they called a prophet a 'baldhead' - 2 Kings 2:23-24

Do you really want this to be *your* God?

The above list is just a couple examples why it is not a bad thing that the Bible is not the Word of God - it is however not the reason why I believe it is not.

Jesus did not believe the Old Testament scripture was the Word of God.

In Deuteronomy 24:1-4 Moses wrote that a man can divorce his wife with a letter. It is in the Bible. It is part of the Torah. Jesus however says that should never have been in the Bible - He said it is something that Moses said and not God (Mark 10:4-9).

These two verses broke the Bible for me:

But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he [MOSES] wrote this commandment for you [IN THE BIBLE]. But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' [SO WHAT WAS WRITTEN IN THE BIBLE IS WRONG AND NOT FROM GOD]

- Mark 10:5-6 (I added sections between brackets)

To me it is so clear and obvious - Jesus draws a line through the idea that all scripture was inspired by God - he specifically quotes a scripture in the Old Testament and says it was definitely NOT inspired by God, but written by a *man* who was getting a bit frustrated with the people around him.

I should be able to stop here - what other evidence do you need that not every word in the Bible was inspired by God?

This is not the only example where Jesus rejected Old Testament laws as I will show in more detail shortly ([Jesus as a Jew and the Jewish laws](#)). These two verses however changed everything for me, it opened my mind to the possibility that not every verse in the Bible was from God.

The verses that did it for me, might not be the ones that convince you. Your epiphany might come in a completely different way. For Barth Ehrman (well known biblical scholar) it was Mark 2:25-26 where either Jesus or the author of Mark made a mistake (as Abiathar was not the high priest at the time) that opened the flood gates for him.

If you believe the Bible is the Word of God - then it must be important to you, right? Read it! You will discover the truth.

The problem with Paul and most of the New Testament

Paul wrote most of the New Testament. The problem with Paul is that he never met Jesus. He claimed to have had some sort of an experience where Jesus appeared to him, but he never spent any real time with Jesus. Jesus spent years teaching his disciples. He took them separately and taught them things he didn't teach anyone else.

Not only did Paul not spend any time with Jesus, he brags about the fact that he didn't get his knowledge about Jesus from the disciples that did spend time with Jesus but he got it *instantly* during a revelation from Jesus (Galatians 1:12). He was already building churches when he decided to meet the disciples for the first time - after three years! (Galatians 1:13).

On a side note: Here is another contradiction. In Acts we read that Paul met the disciples a couple of days after he converted. According to Paul himself, it was three years. As we will see shortly, Acts is not reliable.

He even states further that he could learn nothing from those who did spend time with Jesus, Peter, James and John (Galatians 2:6). Really? You get an opportunity to talk with someone who spends years being taught by Jesus and there is *nothing* you could learn from them?

The problem is that Paul didn't agree with what they were taught (what Jesus taught them). Paul had his own gospel. He even calls it *my gospel*, not 'The Gospel', not 'The Gospel of Jesus', 'My Gospel' (Romans 2:16, Romans 16:25, Timothy 2:8).

There are several key differences between the gospel of Paul and the gospel of Jesus.

Jesus	Paul
Teachings focused a lot on the Kingdom of God and how to find it. The kingdom of God is here and now.	Did not teach anything about the kingdom of God except that it is coming one day.
Taught nothing about organized religion (churches), never left an organized assembly behind like Paul did.	A lot of teachings about church gatherings, leadership and the importance of the church. Established churches/assemblies.
Said we should not appoint leaders (Mark 10:42-45, Matthew 23:8-11)	Gave instructions for how leaders should be appointed and instructed believers to obey leadership (1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9)
Focused on personal growth and personal relationship with God.	Focused on the church and the 'body of Christ'.
The Vine and the Branches (John 15) We should love one another, but each of us is a branch, directly rooted in the vine (Jesus). Your relationship with Jesus is not dependent	The Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12) Each body member is dependent on the other. There are members that are less important and others that are more important.

<p>on other believers. If a branch (believer) does not carry fruit, it simply falls away, it does not affect the others. A vine spreads out, does not stay in one place (Gospel of Thomas 113) Jesus is the Vine, God is the Gardener.</p> <p>Note: I very seldom quote from John as I believe it is not reliable. It might have been something that Jesus taught - even if he didn't, he did not teach about the 'body of Christ'.</p>	<p>There is a head (church leadership) that is in control of the other members. It is about the body (church). Jesus and God are not even part of the metaphor.</p>
<p>Champion women and give them a voice.</p>	<p>Says women should submit to men and keep quiet.</p>
<p>If you want to enter the kingdom, you should help others, forgive others, and seek the kingdom.</p>	<p>You are saved by grace (more on atonement later).</p>

You might be thinking that it was Paul who wrote the majority of the New Testament, essentially founded the Christian religion, and spread the gospel of Jesus to the Gentiles. Paul did write most of the New Testament, but I am interested in what Jesus said. I follow Jesus, not Paul. We will get into the start of Christianity a bit later.

The idea that Paul took the gospel to the gentiles is wrong. Paul took his own gospel to the gentiles. Jesus was the first one to spread the good news to gentiles and his followers did not only spread the message amongst Jews. In Acts Peter preached to gentiles before Paul - in a moment I will say that Acts is not reliable, but I am saying, the idea that Acts is saying it is only Paul that preached to the gentiles is wrong. We also have fairly credible accounts of Thomas going to India to spread the message.

Acts and the early church

The model or idea of church today is built on things that Paul said and what we see the early church(es) did in Acts. As we will see a bit later, those that followed Paul were just one group of Christians, there were other Christians that rejected his teachings.

Acts is called 'The Acts of the Apostles' but it is not about the apostles. Some of the apostles are mentioned in the beginning of Acts, but it is only to set the stage for Paul. Acts is about Paul and the assemblies he was involved in. Apart from a brief mention of the apostles during the council of Jerusalem in Acts 15, the apostles are not mentioned again in the 28 chapters of Acts. Once the stage is set for Paul early in Acts, the story of Peter abruptly ends with the words:

'... and then he left for another place
- Acts 12:17

Acts is mainly about Paul. The book of Acts is also not reliable. Some critical biblical scholars even go so far as to describe it as a work of fiction. Instead of listing all the contradictions in Acts (that you can find by doing a quick search on the internet), I will point out a couple problems to show you that the author of Acts changed or added things to his story to make the early 'church' (followers of Paul) look bigger and more organized than what it actually was.

The most excellent Theophilus

The same author wrote the Gospel of Luke and Acts. Acts follow where Luke ends. We don't know who wrote Luke-Acts, but we do know he wrote it for someone named Theophilus. Theophilus was probably a Roman official or someone important as the author of Luke and Acts addresses Theophilus as 'Most Excellent' - a title used elsewhere in Acts to address a Roman governor. This might indicate why Luke-Acts tried to portray a bigger, more organized church. It is a bit concerning, shouldn't the good news be for everyone? Didn't Jesus teach us not to give special attention to important people?

The 72 Disciples in Luke

The idea of a bigger more organized church starts in Luke. In Mark and Matthew, Jesus only sends out 12 disciples and there is no mention that they deserve 'wages'. In Matthew it states that they deserve food given to them wherever they spread the message and stay (Matthew 10:10). In Luke Jesus also sends out 12, but then he sends out another 72. Not only that, but in Luke they deserved to be paid! (Luke 10:7 NRSVUE). Why would Mark and Matthew leave out the more impressive 72 and where did Luke get this story from if Mark was his source (as most biblical scholars agree).

The Pentecost

One of the most striking events in Acts is Pentecost—the supposed beginning of the church. Yet, this event never actually happened. The only gospel that presents Jesus instructing his disciples to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit is Luke. The other gospels do not omit this detail; rather, they tell an entirely different story.

In Mark—widely regarded as the most historically reliable gospel—and Matthew, Jesus instructs his disciples to go to Galilee after his crucifixion. This command is repeated by the figure at the tomb. In Matthew, they obey and encounter Jesus for the first time in Galilee. Luke, however, portrays a different sequence of events: after the crucifixion, the disciples stay in Jerusalem. The very next day, Jesus appears to them and instructs them to wait there for the Holy Spirit.

These conflicting narratives are not merely variations—they tell fundamentally different stories. Mark and Matthew depict a Jesus who sends his disciples back home (Galilee), where he later appears to them. From there, they spread his teachings — not by founding an institutional church, but through personal discipleship: "each one teaches one." Luke, on the other hand, portrays a Jesus who commands his disciples to remain in Jerusalem, leading to the

establishment of a centralized church. This culminates in the grand Pentecost event described in Acts.

While Peter and some apostles may have returned to Jerusalem at some point, and a mass conversion could have occurred during his ministry, the Pentecost as described in Acts was not the foundational baptism of the Holy Spirit nor the definitive beginning of the church. Many other instances in Acts reveal how its author exaggerates or reshapes events to construct the image of an organized, institutionalized church.

A United Church

We read the story of Paul's conversion and what happened shortly after in Acts 9.

On a side note, in Acts 9 is yet another contradiction as Acts described people at the conversion heard a voice but saw nothing (Acts 9:7) and later in Acts 22:9 it states they heard nothing but saw a light. Some translations like the NIV try to reconcile these two accounts, but when you read a more reliable translation like the NRSV the contradiction is obvious.

According to the book of Acts, shortly after Paul's conversion, he travels to Jerusalem to meet the apostles, who subsequently send him on a mission to the Gentiles. However, if we examine Paul's own account in Galatians 1 and 2, we learn that he only visited the disciples three years after his conversion, and that visit was brief, lasting only fifteen days. It is clear from Paul's own words that he did not like the apostles. Keep in mind that Galatians was written by Paul himself (one of the letters of Paul that is attributed to Paul as the author) and it was written decades before Acts.

We can see that the author of Acts tries to portray a church that is unified, that sends out Paul on his mission. According to Paul's more accurate account, there was no unified church and Paul didn't get along with the apostles.

There was no real church in Jerusalem with no clear leadership. There were a couple of elders that were seen as leaders, but they did not take on a leadership role - this was in line with what Jesus taught them - do not appoint leaders. From Paul's own words, we can see that there was no clear leadership and we can see what Paul thought of them.

And from those who were supposed to be acknowledged leaders (what they actually were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those leaders contributed nothing to me.

- Galatians 2:6

The Council of Jerusalem

Acts 15 describes a council meeting about what rules should apply to gentile believers. The whole church is involved and then a letter is written that is sent out to all the assemblies. The letter stated a couple of rules - *that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from sexual immorality* (28-29).

Paul however describes the same event in Galatians 2. There is no council and there is no letter that goes out to all the churches. It is simply a couple (very few) believers that got together. They asked nothing of Paul except that he should help the poor - nothing else.

They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do

- Galatians 2:10

We can see that Luke grossly exaggerated the events that happened in Jerusalem - there was no council and no apostolic decree.

Ananias and Sapphira

Have you ever considered the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10)? They were struck down by God for exaggerating their donation to the church. If God acted this way, Christians would no longer exist. Many claim to tithe faithfully but don't actually give 10% of their total income—often only after deductions. This is similar to what Ananias and Sapphira did; they gave most of their possessions but lied about keeping a portion for themselves.

Do you really believe this is our God? Killing people instantly for exaggerating how much money they gave to the church? This story was told by Luke as he wanted a bigger organized church - that needs money.

There is a lot more wrong with Acts

There are a lot more problems with Acts. There are a lot of contradictions between the story of Paul in Acts and Paul's own account in his letters. There are also other contradictions like the famous contradiction is how Judas died - compare Acts 1 with Matthew 27. It is however not the purpose of this book to point out every contradiction. With the couple things I pointed out we can clearly see that Acts is not a historically accurate account of what really happened.

The Gospels

If we shouldn't follow Paul and just focus on Jesus, then all we need to do is read the gospels as they have the words of Jesus, right? If you do, you are getting closer to following Jesus, but unfortunately it is not that straightforward.

We need to understand that the Gospels do not contain the exact words of Jesus. I will go into detail to show you this is a *fact*. To look for what the real Jesus said, the historical Jesus, we need to understand when the gospels were written. The earlier the gospel, the more reliable.

When and by whom were the Gospels written?

Most biblical scholars agree that the gospels were not written by eyewitnesses. We don't know who wrote the gospels and they only got their names in the second half of the second century.

The Gospel of Mark probably dates from 66–70 CE, Matthew and Luke around 85–90 CE, and John 90–110 CE. This is what most biblical scholars agree on. You will find YouTube videos of apologists 'debunking' this view, saying that the Gospels had much earlier dates and were written by eyewitness accounts. You can watch these videos, but if you are really interested in the truth, then also have a look at all the reasons (there are many) why those dates are given.

What is important is that we understand that the earliest canonical gospel was written three decades after Jesus actually spoke the words. Before that the words of Jesus were spread through oral traditions. A story can change a lot over thirty years! Especially if people wanted it to change.

We can clearly see how the story of Jesus changed in the couple of years after they started recording what Jesus said and did by comparing the four canonical gospels. Then we also need to keep in mind that all the canonical gospels were written decades after Jesus lived. By then, Paul's version of the gospel was already widespread and must have influenced what the authors wrote.

Take a deep breath. I understand this may be unsettling. However, by freeing yourself from the constraints of dogma, you can begin to uncover who Jesus truly was and what he really said. Studying these imperfect books about Jesus with a critical mind, understanding that they were written decades after Jesus actually spoke the words, will help you get as close as possible to what he really taught.

The problem with the manuscripts we have

I once believed that it didn't matter who wrote the Gospels or when they were written, because the Holy Spirit worked through the authors to ensure we had the exact words of Jesus—every word in the Bible inspired by God. But I no longer hold that view, for reasons explored in this book.

The only problem is not that it took decades before someone actually wrote down what Jesus said, the problem is that we don't have those words that were written down. We do not even have a copy, we have copies of copies. The copies we do have have been copied over and over for literally centuries.

These manuscripts contain variations—many are minor, but others are significant enough that biblical scholars struggle to determine which versions most accurately reflect the original writings. In many cases, their conclusions amount to nothing more than an educated guess.

Apologists often argue that these discrepancies are trivial, claiming they don't alter doctrine or affect Jesus' teachings. However, as I will demonstrate, that assertion is simply not true.

This leads to an unavoidable question: If God, through His Holy Spirit, ensured that His words—and those of Jesus—were recorded, why did He not also ensure the preservation of the original text? The fact remains—we do not have those original words. And if God did not consider it important to protect and preserve the original manuscripts, then logic suggests that the original text was never meant to be an immutable, perfectly preserved account of divine speech.

Examples of differences

Below are a couple of examples of differences - there are a lot more. Newer translations of the Bible will indicate that earlier manuscripts do not include the verses or that they are different.

Difference	Why it matters
The Last 12 verses of Mark are not part of the original gospel	It is the only place in Mark where Jesus stated his followers should be baptised and that signs will accompany them. Even if something similar is stated by Matthew, determining if it is something Jesus really said, a very important factor to look at, is in how many sources the statement is found.
The woman caught in adultery (John 7:53-8:12) were added by scribes and are not part of the original text.	It is possible that there was an oral tradition of this event that was never included in the original gospel, so later scribes added the story. But it is also possible that this never happened. Maybe 'don't judge others' has to do with what they believe and does not mean murderers, rapists and adulterers should not be judged by us and face no consequences.
The Johannine Comma (1 John 5:7-8) was added some eleven hundred years later.	This verse is the only verse in the Bible that directly supports the idea of the Trinity. The fact that it should not be in the Bible definitely has an impact on doctrine and what we believe about God.
Angry Jesus - Mark 1:41 When a man with a skin disease asked Jesus for healing, some manuscripts say he was moved with compassion while others say he was filled with anger.	Bart Ehrman gives a very compelling argument that the 'anger' version is the original (Misquoting Jesus, p.133). In the section Faith, Healing and Miracles , I discuss why Jesus would have been angry and how it changes what we believe about faith and healing. '

Luke 22:43-44 - Jesus in anguish, his sweat becoming like drops of blood - was not in the original Luke.	If we read each gospel on its own, trying to see what <i>that</i> author is saying about Jesus (like we should), we will see that Jesus in Luke was always calm, never scared or angry. If we include these verses that shouldn't be there, it changes the Jesus Luke wanted to portray. It might not change doctrine, but it does show how 'Jesus' changed over time.
In Mark 9:29 Jesus says some demons can only be cast out by prayer. Some translations add 'and fasting'.	The 'and fasting' part was added in later manuscripts. This is significant because I don't believe Jesus ever instructed us too fast and didn't fast himself (not according to Mark). This difference could also point to something different that Jesus might have said that I discuss in the Faith, Healing and Miracles section.
Mark 1:2 reads 'As it is written in the prophet Isaiah' while others read 'in the prophets'	The original is 'Isaiah' but Mark is actually quoting two prophets: Isaiah and Malachi. It is possible that the Malachi quote was also added later. It matters, because I don't think Jesus ever quoted Malachi. Have you read Malachi? Do you want that to be your God?
Luke 3:22 - Some manuscripts add 'today I have begotten you'.	Biblical scholars have a difficult time determining which one is the original. If 'today' is added it could be understood to support an adoptionist Christology - that would definitely change doctrine and dogma.

There are many more examples of changes that have been made, changes that were not simple spelling mistakes. There are changes made to make the role of women in the Bible less significant, anti-Jewish alterations, apologetic alternations, and more. To get a better understanding of this, I recommend you read Bart Ehrman's *Misquoting Jesus*.

The Biggest Problem

The biggest problem with the manuscripts we have is however not any of these differences that I have just mentioned, it is the ones we don't know about. We have very few manuscripts from the first three centuries - only a couple of fragments and not one full gospel manuscript. It is during this time when most of the changes to the original text would have taken place. Early manuscripts during the first three centuries were not being copied by professional scribes, but by educated members of the Christian congregations who could do the job and were willing to do so. The third century church father Origen, complained about this.

The differences among the manuscripts have become great, either through the negligence of some copyists or through perverse audacity of others; they either neglect to check over what they have transcribed, or in the process of checking, they make additions or deletions as they please.

- Origen (3rd Century)

It is a fact that there are many changes that we don't know about. What is important is that we understand we don't have the exact words of Jesus written down and that we must 'seek the truth' - try to get as close as possible to what the historical Jesus said and did. We can never be 100% sure, but I do believe that if we study the Bible critically we can get close.

Contradictions in the Gospels

The Bible contains a lot of contradictions (Old and New Testament), and so do the gospels. In this book, I will focus on just a few of these contradictions, specifically those that relate to a key point I want to highlight. However, many more exist, as a quick google search will show.

Some contradictions are irreconcilable, regardless of the effort one puts into resolving them. For instance, consider the question of what the disciples did immediately after the crucifixion. Jesus either told them to go to Galilee and that is what they did, and that is where they saw him for the first time (Mark and Matthew), or he told them to wait in Jerusalem and that is where they saw him for the first time (Luke). You can't argue that Luke simply didn't mention the trip to Galilee, it is about what Jesus told them, and where they saw Jesus first after the crucifixion.

Christian apologists often attempt to address contradictions by arguing that it is not impossible for them to be reconciled. However, in doing so, they risk straying from an honest pursuit of truth. Simply asserting that something is not impossible does not help us understand the author's intent or uncover the meaning they likely intended to convey.

Consider this: it is not impossible that an alien species abducted our Jack Russel, Cooper, and replaced it with an identical alien replica to spy on my family.



I can say that it is not impossible, because scientists acknowledge the possibility of extraterrestrial life. But, does the fact that it is not impossible, make it likely? Does it make it plausible? Certainly not. Why would an alien species go to such lengths to surveil someone inconsequential in such an elaborate manner? The point is this: just because something is not impossible does not mean it is probable—or even remotely plausible.

Now, you might think this is a ridiculous example, but that is exactly how ridiculous some of the Christian apologists' arguments are that tries to defend the inerrancy of the Bible. Take for example how Judas died. Many people don't realize that Judas's death, after he betrayed Jesus, is not mentioned in three of our Gospels: Mark, Luke, and John. It is mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew, and in the book of Acts (remember, same author as Luke). Although there are several striking similarities, there are also contradictions.

- In Matthew's account, the priests buy the field; in Acts it is Judas himself who buys it.
- In Matthew's account, Judas hangs himself; in Acts he falls headlong, bursts open, and spills his intestines on the field.
- In Matthew's account, it is a clear suicide; in Acts there is no reference to a suicide.
- In Matthew's account, the place is called the Field of Blood because it was purchased with blood money. In Acts, it is called the Field of Blood because Judas spilled his blood on it.

Just looking at how he died, Christian apologists often come up with the most absurd explanations to reconcile the two accounts. For example, they propose that Judas hanged himself, but the rope broke, causing him to fall headlong and burst open on the ground. Or perhaps he hanged himself, but when that didn't work, he climbed down and threw himself off a rock. They will come up with an explanation and then insist that it is not impossible. Okay, so maybe it is not impossible, but read both accounts for yourself. That is *not* the story that each author is telling. Each author obviously had his own idea of how Judas died. For an author to explain how Judas fell forward and burst open (because he was starting to decompose?) but failing (forgot?) to mention that he hanged himself is beyond ridiculous.

If you attempt to merge all the gospels into a single, unified account, you risk losing sight of the unique message each author is presenting. In doing so, you miss the truth, and you may ultimately miss who Jesus really is.

The Bible is not univocal; it does not speak with a single, unified voice. Not everything within its pages represents the direct, word-for-word speech of God.

Gospel of Mark

Mark is the earliest of the canonical gospels, which makes it the most reliable gospel in the Bible. However, this does not mean it is without flaws. It was written probably decades after Jesus spoke the words it records. It stands to reason that the author may not have captured Jesus' words with complete accuracy. Additionally, we must consider the possibility that the

author was influenced by ideas about Jesus, such as those from Paul and other early Christian thinkers, which were likely well established by the time Mark's gospel was composed.

Despite these limitations, Mark remains the most reliable gospel within the Bible. Therefore, it deserves our priority when interpreting the life and teachings of Jesus. When we encounter something in the other gospels that seems unclear or contradictory, we should turn to Mark as our most dependable source for comparison.

Gospel of Matthew

Most biblical scholars agree that Matthew used Mark as a source and that he was not an eyewitness to the teachings of Jesus. Since Matthew was composed later and relied on Mark, it is less reliable than the Gospel of Mark. However, Matthew includes significant material not found in Mark. Some of this content is shared with Luke, originating from what scholars call the Q source, while other portions are unique to Matthew (M Source). This makes it a vital account of the life and teachings of Jesus.

For Matthew, the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) was of profound significance, and we observe a recurring pattern where he appears to go to great lengths to connect Jesus to Old Testament prophecies, sometimes (many times) going too far. I will discuss a couple (not all) to demonstrate this pattern.

The Birth of Jesus

It is only Matthew and Luke that tells the story of Jesus' birth. In Mark Jesus simply comes from Nazareth. Throughout the gospels, Jesus is referred to as 'Jesus of Nazareth' or 'Jesus of Galilee'. Never 'Jesus of Bethlehem'. The author of John did not seem to think that Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

Others said, "He is the Messiah." Still others asked, "How can the Messiah come from Galilee? Does not Scripture say that the Messiah will come from David's descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?" Thus the people were divided because of Jesus.

- John 7:41-43

Matthew places Jesus in Bethlehem at his birth. No reason is given why they were in Bethlehem (looks like they stayed there and Jesus was born in a house, not a manger). I believe it was well known that Jesus' family was in Nazareth (even before the birth of Jesus). Luke had to come up with a reason why the writer of Matthew placed the birthplace in Bethlehem. He came up with the census but according to historians, there has never been any record of a census where the Romans wanted people to travel to their ancestral town - that would have been very problematic as biblical scholars have pointed out. The Romans were concerned about taxation – they wanted to know where everyone was currently staying.

According to Matthew, following the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary flee to Egypt, (where they stay until after Herod's death) to avoid the murder of their firstborn by Herod. Herod slaughters all male infants two years old and under. John the Baptist that was under two years somehow was spared without fleeing to Egypt. There is no contemporary historical confirmation of the slaughter of the innocents by Herod (Matt 2:16-18). Josephus, whose history contains much criticism of Herod, does not mention it.

According to Luke (2:22-40) following the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary remain in the area of Jerusalem for the Presentation (about forty days) and then return to Nazareth without ever going to Egypt. There is no slaughter of the infants.

If you want to harmonize these two accounts and say that Luke simply left out the move to Egypt you are lying to yourself. Luke went into detail and clearly says they moved back to Nazareth after remaining in Jerusalem for 40 days.

I agree with Bart Ehrman that Jesus was most likely born in Nazareth, as he is consistently referred to as Jesus of Nazareth, never Jesus of Bethlehem. However, his birthplace is not the critical issue. What matters is recognizing how Matthew deliberately connects Jesus to the Hebrew Bible—going too far and making mistakes.

Matthew wanted Jesus to be born in Bethlehem to align with Messianic expectations and crafted a framework where Jesus is also "called from Egypt." Yet, the passage Matthew references (Hosea 11:1) originally spoke of Israel, not Jesus. Some Jewish Christians later reinterpreted this text to fit their view of Jesus' life. This illustrates how gospel writers shaped events to reinforce theological claims rather than record strict historical facts.

The Two Donkeys

This discrepancy of the two donkeys might seem silly to you, so silly that you think it is not worth looking into. It will however demonstrate how the authors of the gospels changed the words of Jesus according to what was important to them.

In Matthew 21:1-17, Jesus asks for a donkey and a colt and he 'sat on both'. In Luke (Luke 19:28-40) and Mark (Mark 11:2), he just asks for one and only rides on one. John states that there was only one (John 12:14-15).



Those who defend the Bible as inerrant might argue that "sat on both" means Jesus sat on one donkey while using the other for his baggage, or that he alternated between the two donkeys. They will argue that it is not a contradiction as the other authors simply didn't think it was important to mention the other donkey. *But that is the problem. The words of Jesus were changed depending on what the author thought was important.* John doesn't quote the words of Jesus, but Mark, Matthew and Luke do. Lets start by looking at Matthew's version.

*When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, **saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.'** And he will send them immediately."* This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet:

*"Tell the daughter of Zion,
Look, your king is coming to you,
humble and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."*

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them.

- Matthew 21:1-7

Matthew wants Jesus to 'sit' on two donkeys because he again is over zealous in linking Jesus to the Old Testament. He is referring to the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9. He makes a mistake by

interpreting it literally as two animals. Zechariah is not saying the King will ride a colt and a donkey. Instead he is using synonymous parallelism that is often used in Hebrew literature - something is repeated that has already been expressed just with different wording – for example see Psalm 18:4-5.

Matthew not only added a second donkey, he changed the words of Jesus. Compare the quoted words of Jesus above in red with the one below in Mark (that Matthew used as a source).

and said to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it.

- Mark 11:2

How many donkeys Jesus used is not important, the fact that the words of Jesus were changed is. Matthew changed the wording in Mark (that he used as a source) because he wanted a second donkey in the story to fulfill what he thought was a prophecy of two donkeys. Luke, who also used Mark as a source, didn't change the words of Jesus to ask for two donkeys.

When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, 30 saying, “Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here.

- Luke 19:29-30

You might think that it doesn't change anything. How many donkeys Jesus asked for is not important. However, it clearly demonstrates that Matthew is willing to add words to what Jesus actually said because the Old Testament was important to Matthew and he wanted to link Jesus to the Old Testament as much as possible. We already saw examples of that with the birth narrative of Jesus as well.

The issue of the two donkeys extends beyond the question of how many donkeys Jesus requested. If we examine Zechariah 9, it becomes evident that the prophecy is not about Jesus. Instead, it portrays a king who will deliver judgment upon Israel's enemies and usher in peace for Israel. While it is true that Jesus rode a donkey, this act alone is not unique—after all, so have many others, including myself. Furthermore, Jesus did not bring peace to Israel; in fact, He explicitly stated, “I did not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34). This is yet another instance where the early followers of Jesus, particularly Matthew, sought to connect Jesus with their Jewish heritage by associating Him with Old Testament prophecies.

False prophet

*Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away[a] because of me this night, for it is written,
'I will strike the shepherd,*

and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'

- Matthew 26:31

Matthew says 'for it is written' and then quotes Zech. 13:7 to give an image where the followers of Jesus scattered after he was captured. But there is a problem - read Zechariah 13! The shepherd in Zechariah 13.7 is not the Messiah, it is not Jesus, it is a false prophet that God will punish.

More examples that matter

I will be discussing two more examples later in this book where Matthew went too with linking Jesus to the Hebrew Bible:

- [Where two or three are gathered together - discussed in Thomas 30](#)
- Matthew 5 - [Jesus as a Jew and the Jewish Law](#)

Despite all these 'discrepancies' in Matthew, Matthew remains a valuable source of the teachings of Jesus. It is just important that we understand that Matthew shows a pattern of trying to make the Hebrew Bible more important to Jesus than what it actually was.

Gospel of Luke

Most biblical scholars also believe that Luke used Mark as a source and was composed several years after Mark. I have already discussed how the author of Luke-Acts tries to portray a bigger, more organized church, sometimes exaggerating and sometimes even fabricating stories. As with Matthew, that doesn't mean everything in Luke is false, it is just something that we need to be aware of when studying Luke. I believe Luke tried to portray a very accurate account of the life of Jesus and it has a lot of unique content that is extremely important.

Gospel of John

The Gospel of John was once my favorite gospel. It is often considered the most spiritual, containing some of the Bible's most well-known verses—such as "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son..." (John 3:16). However, it is no longer my favorite. While I believe it retains some authentic sayings of the historical Jesus, much of its content was added decades later. It has a notably late date of composition (90–110 CE), and one of the primary reasons scholars assign it such a late date is its advanced theology.

The synoptic gospels—Mark, Matthew, and Luke—share many similarities, with only minor differences. Some variations seem to stem from later traditions rather than originating with Jesus himself. Yet, overall, their theological themes remain consistent. John, in contrast, presents radically different theological ideas, many of which are absent from the earlier synoptic gospels.

In the synoptics, salvation is tied to how one lives—helping others (Matthew 25:31–46), forgiving others (Matthew 6:1), and becoming like a child (Mark 10:14–15). In John, however, salvation is exclusive to those who *believe in Jesus*; those who do not believe are condemned

(John 3:18). John is the only gospel that has Jesus washing the feet of his disciples that could be interpreted as a metaphor of Jesus washing their sins away.

John shifts the focus entirely - it is no longer about the message of Jesus, for John, *Jesus is the message*. He is the *only* way to the Father, and belief in him is the sole requirement for salvation. John is the only gospel to use phrases like "*only begotten Son*" and '*one and only Son*'—whereas in the synoptics, Jesus tells us that we are *all* children of the Father. Yet, for John, God has only one Son.

Furthermore, the Jesus of John does not preach ethical lessons or deliver apocalyptic warnings as he does in the other gospels. There is no 'Sermon on the Mount', no parables, no urgent calls to moral action. Instead, John focuses on the identity of Jesus:

- I am the way
- I am the light
- I am the truth
- I am the vine
- I am the water of life

John's Jesus does not focus on *how* people live—he calls his disciples simply to *believe*. In contrast, the Jesus of the synoptic gospels emphasizes righteous living, love, justice, and ethical transformation.

Elaine Pagels gives a very compelling argument that the Gospel of John was written in response to the Gospel of Thomas (Beyond Believe, The Secret Gospel of Thomas, chapter 2).

This research has helped clarify not only what John's gospel is for but what it is against. John says explicitly that he writes "so that you may believe, and believing may have life in [Jesus'] name" (John 20:8). What John opposed, as we shall see, includes what the Gospel of Thomas teaches - that God's light shines not only in Jesus but, potentially at least, in everyone. Thomas's gospel encourages the hearer not so much to believe in Jesus as John requires, as to seek to know God through one's own, divinely given capacity, since all are created in the image of God. For Christians in later generations, the Gospel of John helped provide a foundation for a unified church, which Thomas, with its emphasis on each person's search for God, did not.

- Elaine Pagels, Beyond Believe, The Secret Gospel of Thomas p.34

Early Christians disagreed about whether John was a true gospel or a false one - and whether it should be part of the New Testament - Pagels quotes many scholarly works on this issue and she dedicated several chapters of her book explaining how controversial John was in the second and third centuries.

At crucial moments John's gospel directly contradicts the combined testimony of the other New Testament gospels. For example, Mark, Matthew and Luke agree that Jesus disrupting those

who did business at the temple was Jesus' last public act that finally drove the chief priest and his allies to arrest Jesus. In John, it's Jesus' first act and John gives the resurrection of Lazarus as the final straw that led to his arrest. In John the cleansing of the temple was also a lot more violent, with Jesus using a whip he knotted with small cords. Placing this act in the beginning of his gospel, John makes it clear Jesus was on a mission to purify and transform worship and he was against the Jews. John has Jesus saying that his own people (the Jews) were the devil's offspring (John 8:44).

It is only in the Gospel of John that Jesus is elevated to the status of God. It is only in John that salvation is only possible if you believe in and accept Jesus - creating an exclusive club for those who are saved and making it impossible for many - who might be seeking God and living according to the principles that Jesus taught (love, helping others, forgiveness).

Several biblical scholars like Professor Helmut Koester and Elaine Pagels believe that John knew what the gospel of Thomas taught - if not the actual text. Where John differs from the synoptic gospels, there are many similarities between John and Thomas. However, John and Thomas then come to very different conclusions regarding these similarities.

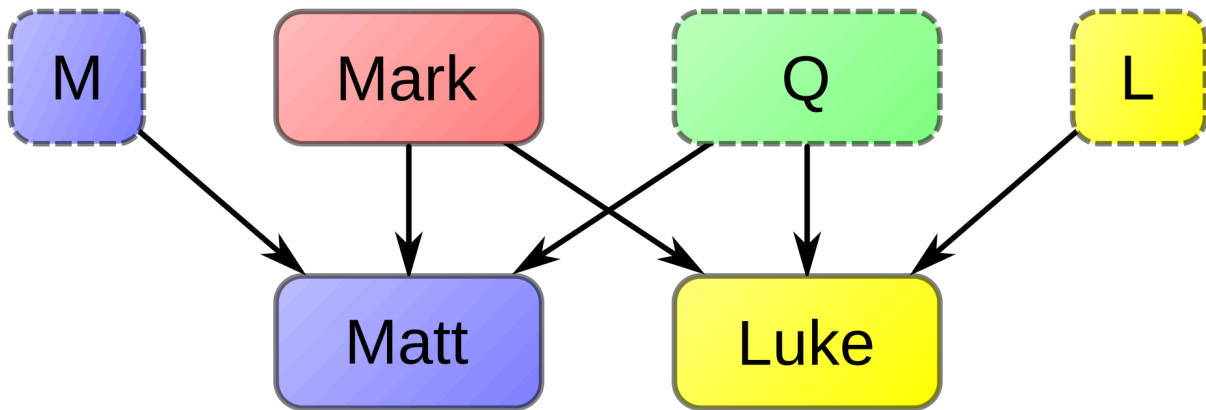
Finding Jesus In the Gospels

If we cannot trust everything that Jesus said in the Gospels, how can we know what Jesus really said and did?

Biblical scholars use several methods (criteria) to try and determine if something actually comes from the historical Jesus. The two most common criteria are:

- [Criterion of multiple attestation](#) - The criterion focuses on the sayings or deeds of Jesus that are attested to in more than one independent literary source such as Mark, Paul, Q, M, L, John, Thomas.
- [Criterion of dissimilarity](#) - The criterion states that if a saying attributed to Jesus is different from both the Jewish traditions of his time and the early Church that followed him, it is likely to come from the historical Jesus.

When using the criterion of multiple attestation, you need to understand the sources we have. Most biblical scholars believe that Matthew and Luke made use of another source (apart from Mark) named [Q Source](#). They believe we basically have the following source:



- M Source - content unique to Matthew
- Gospel of Mark
- Q Source (the content shared/copied by Matthew and Luke)
- L Source - content unique to Luke

And then also:

- Gospel of John
- Gospel of Thomas

If you look at a specific Jesus said in the gospels, it might be found in Matthew and Luke, but it might actually just come from Q - so only one source.

For those of us who aren't biblical scholars, this might look too complicated and overwhelming, even to the point of discouragement. How can we trust that what we're reading is truly accurate? At the beginning of this book, I referenced Saying 2 from the Gospel of Thomas, which encourages us to keep seeking the truth, even when the process is unsettling, and to persist until we reach a point of marvel. Once you move beyond the initial discomfort, a renewed sense of enthusiasm will emerge. This enthusiasm can transform your Bible study—especially the Gospels—into a journey of discovering the historical Jesus. I used to love studying the Bible, but now I study the Bible with new passion, on a whole new level.

To start off I suggest you do the following. It is actually something that Barth Ehrman suggested (I can't remember if it is one of his books I read, on his online blog, or something he said in one of his videos). Read the Gospel of Mark - it is our most reliable gospel in the Bible. Try to forget everything you know, or think you know, about Jesus. A lot of things we think Jesus said, is actually something that Paul said. Now, read it again, and again. Do this for at least three months, trying your best to forget everything you think you know about Jesus. At the end of the three months you will start to see a very different Jesus.

As you continue your study, start by focusing on the synoptic Gospels—Mark, Matthew, and Luke—as they provide a closer connection to the historical Jesus. Hold off on returning to the Gospel of John for now, and instead consider exploring the Gospel of Thomas, which I will discuss shortly. Once you have done this, there will be a couple (not a lot) of things in the synoptic gospels that stand out, that don't make sense, that you can then study and pray about.

If you then read John again, you will notice how drastically different the Gospel of John really is.

Don't get discouraged. Keep on seeking the truth. You will be rewarded.

The rest of the books in the Bible

We did cover the Old Testament (Jesus didn't believe everything in the Old Testament was the 'Word of God'). We also covered the gospels, Acts and all the letters of Paul - which is most of the New Testament. The letters of Peter were definitely not written by Peter. We find evidence of that within the letters (I might add details in a later version of this book). Hebrews were written by a follower or companion of Paul - so we can group Hebrews with Paul's letters. The letters of John (1 John, 2 John and 3 John) were possibly written by the same author of John or otherwise by Christians influenced by the teachings of John (so it also contains theological ideas that did not originate from Jesus).

The only other book that stands out for me as a book that really deserves attention is the Letter of James. It was also unlikely that it was written by James himself (the brother of Jesus) because of the language and style that was used, it is possible that it was written by followers of James if it wasn't James himself. I think it is noteworthy because the teachings of James line up with the teachings of the historical Jesus and what we find in the Gospel of Thomas.

I will discuss Revelation a bit later in this book when I look at the apocalyptic view of Jesus.

The Bible as the Word of God

Where does the idea, that most Christians today believe, that the Bible is the inerrant, infallible Word of God come from?

Barth Ehrman explains in his book, *Misquoting Jesus*, that Judaism was a religion of the Book and that it was the exception (page 17). Most religions of the time were not strongly based on scripture. The original teachings of Jesus were based on parables that were passed down orally. The spiritual movement that Jesus started was also not based on a book or scripture. Jesus didn't write down his words or got someone to write them down for him like Paul did. The gospels with the words of Jesus were written decades later by people who never met Jesus. If Jesus wanted a 'religion of the Book', he would have written down his words, or gotten someone to write it down. God would have made sure that we have the original manuscript with the exact words of Jesus. He didn't.

Even in Judaism, the religion of the book, there was a prophecy that one day, it will no longer be about written laws.

“The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.

It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord.

“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

- Jeremiah 31:31-34

The question then is, if Jesus came to give us new teachings that are not based on ‘scriptures’, why did we go back to a religion of the Book (Bible)? I will discuss this in my next section about the start of Christianity.

Christianity and the Church

Christianity is a broad and somewhat ambiguous term, as Evangelicals often do not recognize Catholics, Mormons, or Jehovah’s Witnesses as Christians, despite their self-identification as such. Personally, I am not particularly concerned with the label ‘Christian,’ given that Jesus and his disciples did not use the term. Christian means ‘follower of Christ’ and I am a follower of the teachings of Jesus - so in that sense, I am definitely a Christian.

Most Christians believe you can only call yourself a Christian if you hold certain beliefs, specifically the ones listed in the Nicene creed. Christianity however had survived brutal persecution and flourished for generations - even centuries - *before* Christians formulated what they believed into creeds. It was only in the fourth century when Roman emperor Constantine decriminalized Christianity and ordered bishops to convene in Nicaea to formulate a common statement of belief - the Nicene creed. The Nicene creed defines the faith for most Christians to this day.

In ‘Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas’, historian Elaine Pagels highlights how early Christians amazed the world with their generosity, compassion, and care—not only for fellow believers but also for those outside their community. This period predates the establishment of formal creeds defining Christian faith.

Following the discovery at Nag Hammadi, historians have gained deeper insight into the diversity of early Christian thought. Various groups held widely different views on God and Jesus. Some followed Paul, while others rejected him. Some believed only the Gospel of

Matthew was the true gospel (like the group called Ebionites) while others believed only Luke was the true gospel (like the followers of Maricon). Certain groups accepted Mark, Matthew and Luke (the synoptic gospels with earlier dates) and dismissed the Gospel of John as heretical. There are also those who embraced the Gospel of Thomas. The doctrine of the Trinity, now central to mainstream Christianity, was rejected by many early groups that held contrasting theological perspectives.

Seeking to unify Christianity, Emperor Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea, aiming to establish a universal church—hence the term *Catholic*, meaning "universal." The faction advocating for the Trinity ultimately prevailed, leading to the enshrinement of the Gospel of John in the New Testament while the Gospel of Thomas was condemned as heretical. This outcome did not reflect the marginalization of other Christian groups but rather the alignment of the winning faction's ideology with Constantine's vision for a unified church. To enforce doctrinal unity, Constantine instituted rewards for those adhering to the Nicene Creed and penalties for dissenters. Over time, this escalated into outright persecution, including the systematic destruction of texts deemed heretical, such as the Gospel of Thomas.

The portrayal of the early church in the book of Acts largely centers on Pauline Christianity, yet this was only one of many Christian movements. As scholarship has shown, Acts is more theological narrative than historical record. The prevailing modern understanding of Christianity's origins and early history is, therefore, deeply flawed.

Christians that followed the teachings of the historical Jesus, holding on to what is taught in the earlier gospels (Mark, Matthew and Luke) as well as the Gospel of Thomas did not fade away, they were actively resisted and persecuted. Thomas was seen as heretical because it did not align with the idea of a universal church. All copies of the gospel were destroyed ... except for one that remained undiscovered for centuries.

The importance of the Gospel of Thomas



Most Christians think there are only four gospels, the ones we have in the Bible (canonical gospels). There are actually a lot more. Most of them are not in the Bible for good reason, they have very late dates of composition. Meaning they were written by sects of early Christianity that added their own ideas and therefore are not reliable. The Gospel of Thomas however is the exception. Not only should it have been included in the Bible, it might even be our most reliable gospel. I will show you why I say that in a moment, but first, let's just get a bit of background.

The Gospel of Thomas was originally written in Greek, but the most complete surviving version is in Coptic, discovered as part of the Nag Hammadi library in Egypt in 1945. The Coptic text is a translation from the earlier Greek version. Some fragments of the Greek text have also been found, providing additional insights into its origins. When the Greek fragments were originally found, scholars did not know it was fragments of Thomas. They knew of the Gospel of Thomas as it was discussed by early church fathers in the 3rd century. It was only when they discovered the complete Thomas in 1945, that they realized the Greek fragments they had were actually sayings of the Gospel of Thomas.

Andrew Harvey had the following to say about Thomas:

It has always seemed to me a far more than a vivid coincidence that in 1945 should occur both the first lethal explosions of nuclear bomb at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the discovery in a small desert cave near Nag Hammadi, in upper Egypt, of a lost gospel, now known as the Gospel of Thomas. It is as if, at the very moment when humanity was brought face to face with its most extreme capacities of horror, evil and destruction, so also, in Thomas, humanity was shown what it could still achieve if only it woke up and realized the splendor of its divine secret identity.

- Stevan Davies, Gospel of Thomas Annotated and Explained, foreword by Andrew Harvey

The Gospel of Thomas contains 114 sayings (depending on how you count them). More than half of the sayings in Thomas are also found in the synoptic gospels (Mark, Matthew, Luke).

The importance of dating the Gospel of Thomas

An early date for The Gospel of Thomas, possibly earlier than the canonical gospels, could mean that the author could be a possible witness and window to Jesus' actual sayings. The gospel of Thomas claims to be written by Didymus Jude Thomas, a disciple of Jesus. It is important to note that none of the gospels in the bible claims to be written by an apostle.

Scholars have proposed dates of composition as early as 60 AD and as late as 250 AD. During the last couple of decades, more and more scholars are leaning toward an earlier date of composition, with some like Professor Helmut Koester of Harvard University suggesting a date much earlier than the canonical gospels, with a date as early as 50 AD.

Keep in mind that the canonical gospels are dated by most scholars between AD 66-110. If Thomas is dated in this period, it means it is as reliable as the canonical Gospels, if it is dated in the 60s, it will be as reliable as Mark, if it is dated between 50-66, it will mean it is the most reliable gospel we have!

The main reason the early church saw it as heretical is because in Thomas Jesus is openly against organized religion (the church). If Thomas turns out to be reliable, it would be disastrous for mainstream Christianity.

Reasons most Christians believe in a late date

There is no evidence for a late date. The main reason some scholars suggest a late date is because they believe that Thomas is gnostic in nature.

Gnosticism ('having knowledge') is a collection of religious ideas and systems that coalesced in the late 1st century AD among Jewish and early Christian sects. These various groups emphasized personal spiritual knowledge (gnosis).

Gnostics considered material existence flawed or evil, and held the principal element of salvation to be direct knowledge of the hidden divinity, attained via mystical or esoteric insight. Many Gnostic texts deal not in concepts of sin and repentance, but with illusion and enlightenment.

- [Wikipedia](#)

The idea of secret knowledge is not uncharacteristic of Jesus (Mark 4:11-12, Mark 4:34) and is not evidence that Thomas is gnostic in nature. Jesus, in the gospel of Thomas teaches us the

exact opposite of 2nd century gnostics. The world and your body is not something that is evil and something that should be avoided.

- Thomas 3 - The kingdom of the Father is inside of us and outside of us - in this world! The world is not something evil that should be avoided.
- Thomas 7 - Even emotions like aggression and sexual desires are something created by God and should be embraced.
- Thomas 22 - You should make the upper (spiritual) and the lower (body) into one.
- Thomas 29 - Your body can build up your spirit, and your spirit can build up your body.
- Thomas 77 - You will find Jesus in nature, under a stone, inside a piece of wood.

The gnosticism that became popular in the second century was extremely difficult to understand with complex ideas of cosmology and the spiritual realm. In contrast, Jesus teaches in the gospel of Thomas that we should not focus on mystical teachings about heaven and earth but rather focus on the present moment (Thomas 91).

The argument that Thomas is gnostic in nature and must therefore be from the second century, is completely baseless and wrong.

Even Bart Ehrman, who I agree with most of the time, gives Thomas a date of late first century or early second century (when John was composed in any case). He however explains that there is a lot of evidence that points to a date earlier than the canonical gospels (that I will get to in a moment) and he then clearly states the only reason he gives it a later date is because he thinks some of the sayings are gnostic in nature. As I have just pointed out above, and as you will see in my interpretations of Thomas later in this book, that is not the case.

Most Christians and Christian biblical scholars tend to favor a later date for the Gospel of Thomas. This bias stems from the fact that if the Gospel of Thomas were proven to have an early date of composition, it could profoundly challenge traditional understandings of Christianity.

Early date for the Gospel of Thomas

There is overwhelming evidence for an early date for the Gospel of Thomas, as early as the synoptic gospels, or even earlier than Mark. Making it the earliest and most reliable gospel. Lets have a look at the evidence.

Thomas, independent and linked to Q

In Hidden Gospels, Philip Jenkins suggests that because the format of Thomas so closely resembles the hidden gospel Q1, which is the core collection of the hypothesized gospel Q, then it must have been written during the same time period:

The task of dating is difficult because Thomas has obviously gone through several stages of composition and editing, but the logic proceeds as follows:

Q in its final form can be no later than 70 or 75.

Q1, the core collection, must be earlier still, perhaps as early as 45 or 50.

Thomas closely resembles the hypothetical Q1, and at least in its original version, probably stems from the same period.

Therefore a core of Thomas may date from the 50s, which would make it actually older than any of our existing four gospels, and close to Jesus himself. (Jenkins, 61-62)

Also concurring with Jenkins and Cameron, the members of the Jesus Seminar -- Robert W. Funk, John Dominic Crossan, Burton Mack, Stevan L. Davies, Stephen J. Patterson, and John Kloppenborg -- suggest that the "work is wholly independent of the New Testament gospels; most probably in existence before they were written. It should be dated AD 50-70"

Sayings in Thomas are more primitive

Over half of the sayings in the Gospel of Thomas are similar to sayings found in the gospels in the New Testament. Most of these sayings in Thomas have a more primitive form. More primitive forms of logia usually represent a closer approximation of the way Jesus originally uttered the sayings.

The fact that a lot of logia in Thomas are more primitive than even the Gospel of Mark, suggests a date even earlier than the Gospel of Mark.

I will list one example (there are many) to demonstrate how Thomas differs from Mark.

Jesus says: "See the sower went out. He filled his hand and scattered <the seed.> Some fell on the path: birds came and gathered them. Others fell on rocky ground: they found no means of taking root in the soil and did not send up ears of corn. Others fell among thorns; <these> stifled the grain, and the worm ate the <seed.> Others fell on good soil, and this <portion> produced an excellent crop: it gave as much as sixty-fold, and <even> a hundred and twenty-fold!

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 9

Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundred-fold.

- Mark 4:3-9

This difference may seem arbitrary, but it is actually quite notable because most if not all of the logia found within Thomas begins with "Jesus says" or something very similar to that phrase.

Many scholars suggest that Thomas is indeed the more primitive text because of this simple dialogical structure. The additional explanation of how the seed took root but had no depth of soil and was scorched by the sun in Mark may suggest that the simpler version found within Thomas is preserved in a more primitive form.

There are many more examples. The logia from Thomas are consistently shorter and more succinct than those narratives in Mark. There is a distinct possibility that they represent a more primitive - and earlier - form of the similar verses found in Mark.

Go to James

In Thomas Jesus says to the disciples to go to James after he has been taken away (Thomas 12). James died in 62 AD. Why would this instruction be recorded after James has died? James as a prominent 'elder' in the church before 70 AD is confirmed by Galatians 2 that pre-dates the gospels.

John was possibly written to refute Thomas

Elaine Pagels makes a very compelling argument in her book 'Beyond Belief, The Secret Gospel of Thomas' that the Gospel of John was written to refute what Thomas teaches.

I was amazed when I went back to the Gospel of John after reading Thomas, for Thomas and John clearly draw upon similar language and images, and both, apparently, begin with similar 'secret teachings'. But John takes this teaching to mean something so different from Thomas that I wondered whether John could have written his gospel to refute what Thomas teaches. For months I investigated this possibility, and explored the work of other scholars who also have compared these sources, and I was finally convinced that this is what happened. As the scholar Gregory Riley points out, John - and only John - presents a challenging and critical portrait of the disciple he calls 'Thomas, the once called Didymus', and, as Riley suggests, it is John who invented the character we call Doubting Thomas, perhaps as a way for caricaturing those who revered a teacher - and a version of Jesus' teachings - that he regarded as faithless and false. The writer called John may have met Thomas Christians among people he knew in his own city - and may have worried that their teaching would spread to Christian groups elsewhere. John probably knew that certain Jewish groups - as well as many pagans who read and admired Genesis 1 - also taught that the 'image of God' was within humankind; in any case, John decided to write his own gospel insisting that it is Jesus - and only Jesus - who embodies God's word, and therefore speaks with divine authority.

- Elaine Pagels, Beyond Belief, The Secret Gospel of Thomas (p.57-58)

In her book, Pagels delves into the historical context and the process by which the Gospel of John was ultimately included in the biblical canon. She explores the argument that John was composed as a response to the Gospel of Thomas, reinforcing this perspective through detailed analysis. If this assertion holds true, then the Gospel of Thomas must have been written significantly earlier than John, which scholars date to approximately 90–110 CE.

Teachings of James is similar to Thomas

Most scholars agree that James probably wasn't written by James himself, but probably by some of his followers. James, the brother of Jesus is someone that was taught by Jesus (unlike Paul). Some of the ideas that we see in James are very similar to what we see in Thomas.

- James 1:1-5,12 - Personal growth from hardship (Thomas 58), lacking in nothing (Thomas 67), and wisdom is important (Thomas 1).
- James 1:6-8 - The power of faith when you make the two into one, do not be divided/double minded (Thomas 21, 106)
- James 1:10 - Rich can be rich but should stay humble (Thomas 110).
- James 1:26-27 - Religion is to keep your tongue in check, help those in need and not be polluted by this word - It is not about religious practices or being religious (Thomas 6)
- James 4:8 - Again James warns about being double minded. Making the two into one, being whole and undivided, being a 'single one' is something that is frequently repeated in Thomas (Thomas 21, 106).
- James 4:13-17- About planning for the future - Thomas 63, 42.

Did Paul quote the Gospel of Thomas?

One reason the canonical gospels are dated after 65 CE is because Paul, who was well traveled and well educated never quoted any of the canonical gospels. There is however a possibility that he did quote the Gospel of Thomas.

But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him"
- 1 Corinthians 2:9

Paul states 'as it is written'. In most Bibles there will be a footnote that he is referring to a passage in Isaiah.

*From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for him.*
- Isaiah 64:4

Either this is not what Paul has quoted or he quoted it wrong. The passage does not say that God will do things (works) for us that no eye has seen or ear has heard of, it says no one has heard of or seen a god besides that God. There is also no mention of the heart.

There is however a saying in the Gospel of Thomas that is almost identical to what Paul is saying with the same message.

Jesus said, "I will give you what no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, what no hand has touched, what has not arisen in the human heart."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 17

That is the only verse that I am aware of where Paul possibly could have quoted a saying from the Gospel of Thomas. There is however another example where there is a radically different idea that he also could have borrowed from Thomas.

...there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

- Galatians 3:28(b)

The idea that there should no longer be male or female as we should be one in Jesus is nowhere else in the Bible, but it is in Thomas.

Jesus saw some babies nursing. He said to his disciples, "These nursing babies are like those who enter the kingdom."

They said to him, "Then shall we enter the kingdom as babies?"

Jesus said to them, "When you make the two into one, and when you make the inner like the outer and the outer like the inner, and the upper like the lower, and when you make male and female into a single one, so that the male will not be male nor the female be female, when you make eyes in place of an eye, a hand in place of a hand, a foot in place of a foot, an image in place of an image, then you will enter [the kingdom]."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 22

I will give my interpretation of this saying later in this book. For now we can see that Paul's idea that there should no longer be male and female could also have come from Thomas. I don't think this was Paul's own idea, because he didn't really believe a man and woman should be equal. He believed the man is the head of the woman, the woman should be submissive to her husband and she is not allowed to teach men.

It is of course possible that it is just something that Jesus said and that was orally transmitted and Paul heard the idea. However, in the first example, Paul clearly states, 'as it is written'. Now, if Paul really did read it somewhere, it means it must have been written well before 68 CE.

Does that mean Paul believed everything that is in the Gospel of Thomas? Obviously not if we look at 'Paul's Gospel'. Paul only focused on the idea of Jesus, not on what he taught. Paul hardly mentions any of the teachings of Jesus. But if Paul wanted to use the idea of Jesus, he probably would have read anything that was written about him seeing that he was well traveled and well educated. Possibly Paul did get a glimpse of Thomas, even if he didn't think much of it. In the same way he eventually (three years after converting) did end up spending a couple of days with the apostles of Jesus, who were taught by Jesus, but wasn't really impressed with them or what with what they were taught (Galatians 2:6).

Old Testament progressively becomes more important

It is widely acknowledged that references to the Old Testament became increasingly significant in the gospels over time. For instance, one can compare Mark's gospel to Matthew's, noting the progressive emphasis on Old Testament citations. This trend reflects the fact that the earliest followers of Jesus were Jewish and sought to integrate his teachings within the framework of their existing religious tradition.

If this observation holds true, it suggests that the Gospel of Thomas could indeed be the earliest gospel. Unlike the synoptic gospels, it contains no references to the Old Testament. In fact, Jesus explicitly expresses disinterest in referencing it.

His disciples said to him, "Twenty-four prophets have spoken in Israel, and they all spoke of you."

He said to them, "You have disregarded the living one who is in your presence, and have spoken of the dead."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 52

Sayings in Thomas makes more sense

Some of the sayings attributed to Jesus in the canonical gospels don't make sense or seem contradictory. That is because some of the stories of Jesus were given a different spin to suit the beliefs that developed at a later stage.

The counterparts in the Gospel of Thomas often provide a clearer, more coherent meaning. I believe this strongly suggests that the versions in Thomas are closer to what Jesus actually said, as it is unlikely that Jesus would have contradicted himself.

Below, I have compiled a list of sayings from the Gospel of Thomas that make sense in contrast to their counterparts in the canonical gospels. I will provide an interpretation of each, explaining why the Thomas version offers a more plausible understanding.

- Thomas 30 - Two or three
- Thomas 21 - Thief in the night
- Thomas 104 - The bridegroom
- Thomas 107 - The lost sheep

More reasons

- If we were to discover more teachings of Jesus - it would be more parables (Mark 4:33-34). Thomas is full of parables.
- The teachings of Jesus in Thomas are compatible with the historical Jesus. No virgin birth or atonement. Focus on entering the kingdom of the Father and personal growth.

- Salome is identified in the Gospel of Mark (earliest canonical gospel) as someone that ministered (took care of him - giving him food) to Jesus (Mark 15:41). This is confirmed in the Gospel of Thomas in saying 61 as Jesus was sitting in her house on her couch. Salome becomes less important in later gospels (later stories about Jesus).

The Historical Jesus

To truly understand the historical Jesus, we must strive to uncover who he really was and what he genuinely said. I won't attempt to cover everything Jesus spoke about or address every topic he discussed. Instead, I want to focus on a couple of ideas about Jesus that I believe many people misunderstand, along with a couple of crucial points I think are particularly important in understanding the real Jesus.

Jesus as a Jew and the Jewish Laws

Many people believe that Jesus was a Jewish Rabbi who taught his followers to observe Jewish laws. They get this idea mainly from a couple of verses in Matthew 5.

"17 Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. 18 For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. 19 Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

- Matthew 5:17-19

Most Christians explain these verses mean that Jesus came to fulfill and end the law. They are however ignoring verses 18 and 19. Others will say that this message was only intended for Jewish Christians. Jesus however never made that distinction. Some Christians will say that the distinction was made in Acts 15, but as I will demonstrate in a moment, that is false.

A more compelling explanation is that the historical Jesus may never have said this, as suggested by two methods of textual criticism. The first is the criterion of dissimilarity. The laws and prophets of the Old Testament were of great importance to the Jews, including the earliest followers of Jesus. It is plausible that they incorporated this element into the teachings of Jesus to align them with their existing religious beliefs. Earlier in this document, I noted how the Old Testament held particular significance for the author of Matthew—who was not an eyewitness to Jesus' teachings—and how he occasionally went to great lengths to connect Jesus to Old Testament scripture.

Alternatively, this addition might not have been made by the author of Matthew himself but by later scribes copying the Gospel of Matthew. Although no manuscripts exist to substantiate this

claim, it is worth noting that we lack manuscripts from the first three centuries, during which most textual modifications likely occurred (as argued by Ehrman).

The second method is the criterion of multiple attestation. This particular saying of Jesus appears only in the Gospel of Matthew, further raising doubts about its authenticity.

I am certain that these verses were added to what Jesus actually said, because it simply does not make sense. In Matthew 5:18 Jesus says not one letter, not even the stroke of a pen (part of a letter) must be removed - but then a couple of verses later he throws out a complete law - not just part of a letter! Matthew 5:38 (An 'eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth') is part of the Torah (Exodus. 21:24, Leviticus 24:20, Deuteronomy 19:21) but is rejected by Jesus. Some argue that the law was about justice and Jesus made the law more strict. There is no justice in turning the other cheek. Jesus rejected the law - plain and simple. But even if he did make some laws more strict, that means he was adding to the law. That in itself was prohibited by Jewish law.

You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God with which I am charging you.

- Deuteronomy 4:2

Jesus was rejecting Jewish laws left and right, and this was a bit much for either the author of Matthew or a later scribe that had to point out that the Jewish laws are from God and are important.

While Jesus was born and raised as a Jew and naturally followed Jewish laws and customs to an extent, he did not instruct his followers to strictly observe these laws and customs.

There are multiple instances where Jesus challenged the adherence to Jewish laws. The most notable example involves the Sabbath. Some scholars argue that Jesus did not violate any Sabbath laws but rather the oral traditions of the Pharisees, as his disciples were merely plucking heads of grain (Mark 2:23-28). I would argue that the Pharisees had a point that it was against Jewish law. Picking up sticks on the Sabbath was punishable by death (Numbers 15:32-36), and gathering food on the Sabbath was also prohibited (Exodus 16:23-29). Intriguingly, when Jesus defended his disciples for breaking the laws regarding the Sabbath, he gave the example of David and his companions eating the bread reserved for priests (Mark 2:23-28) which was a different law (Leviticus 24:5-9). Through this defense, it becomes evident that Jesus did not just think following Sabbath rules were not important, but other Jewish laws as well.

Moses gave laws regarding divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1-4), but Jesus again clearly states that is not God's will (Mark 10:4-9). There are many rules regarding food in the Old Testament that Jesus also clearly did not agree with (Mark 7:18-19, Thomas 6, Thomas 14). Circumcision (Leviticus 12:3), was not rejected by Jesus as something that he came to end, but something that was not useful to begin with.

*His disciples said to him, "is circumcision useful or not?"
He said to them, "If it were useful, their father would produce children already
circumcised from their mother. Rather, the true circumcision in spirit has become
profitable in every respect."*

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 53

Circumcision was and is the ritual to initialize babies into the Jewish religion that required strong adherence to the Torah. By rejecting circumcision, Jesus also rejected the idea that every law in the Torah should be followed.

When responding to the scribe's question about the most important laws (Mark 12:28-34), Jesus highlights two commandments that are not part of the Ten Commandments: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength," and "Love your neighbor as yourself." He concludes, "There is no commandment greater than these."

This response makes it clear that Jesus viewed some laws as more foundational than others. By prioritizing love—both for God and for others—above all else, he implicitly distinguishes between essential moral principles and lesser legalistic requirements.

Jesus said that the scribe was close to the kingdom because he understood what was important. This scribe was the exception, most of the Pharisees and scribes completely missed what was important.

*Jesus said, "The Pharisees and the scholars have taken the keys of knowledge and
have hidden them. They have not entered nor have they allowed those who want to
enter to do so.*

As for you, be as sly as snakes and as simple as doves."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 39

The Pharisees and scholars do not have *'the knowledge'* of how to truly become a child of the living Father, what they had were keys to get to that knowledge. With other words, the scriptures the scholars had access to was not the *'knowledge'*, but it did contain key pieces and principles to it.

When responding to the rich man's question on how to inherit eternal life, Jesus lists a couple of laws (Mark 10:17-20). The ones he lists all have to do with love.

We can now see a Jesus that taught that some laws and principles regarding love in the Old Testament were important, while others that had to do with religious laws and practices were not.

*His disciples asked him and said to him, "Do you want us to fast? How should we pray?
Should we give to charity? What diet should we observe?"*

Jesus said, "Don't lie, and don't do what you hate, because all things are disclosed before heaven. After all, there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed, and there is nothing covered up that will remain undisclosed."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 6

It is not about cherry-picking what we like in the Old Testament, it is about understanding - through the Holy Spirit - what is important to God and what is not. From everything we just looked at, it is very clear that it is definitely not everything in the Old Testament.

Loving your neighbor is important, laws on slavery should be rejected. The law that you should love God is important, the law that you shouldn't mix two types of fabric (Leviticus 19:19, Deuteronomy 22:11) is not. I can fill pages of silly, unimportant and simply wrong laws in the Old Testament that we should reject. We have to discover what is important, and throw the rest away.

And he [Jesus] said, The person is like a wise fisherman who cast his net into the sea and drew it up from the sea full of little fish. Among them the wise fisherman discovered a fine large fish. He threw all the little fish back into the sea, and easily chose the large fish. Anyone here with two good ears had better listen!

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 8

We find more clear evidence that Jesus wasn't this Jewish Rabbi that taught his followers to uphold the Jewish laws if we look at what the followers of Jesus said and did - not the followers of Paul, the actual apostles of Jesus.

Earlier I mentioned that the idea that the Jewish Christians should follow the Jewish Law but pagan Christians don't have to, is false. The real followers of Jesus didn't follow the Jewish laws. As I have demonstrated, Acts is not reliable. During the council of Jerusalem in Acts, there was a decree issued that the Christian gentiles should still follow some Jewish laws regarding food (Acts 15:19-21) and the idea is given that Jewish Christians should follow all. However, in Paul's account (that was written decades earlier by an actual eyewitness to the 'council'), there was just one thing asked by the apostles.

They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do

- Galatians 2:10

Not only did the real followers of Jesus not require gentile Christians to follow any Jewish laws, they themselves didn't. This is clear if we look at what else Paul wrote.

11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood self-condemned, 12 for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. 13 And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even

Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the gentiles to live like Jews?"

- Galatians 2:11-14

At first glance, verse 14 seems to suggest that Peter (Cephas) was compelling Gentiles to adhere to Jewish laws. However, a closer reading of the context reveals that this was not the case. Paul had already stated that only one rule had been agreed upon: to help the poor (Galatians 2:10). Additionally, Peter himself was not adhering to Jewish customs, as he freely ate with Gentiles. It was only when a group of Jews sent by James arrived that Peter stopped doing so and began following Jewish customs again (Galatians 2:12).

The reason for Peter's actions in this instance is unclear, as we lack his version of events and have only Paul's account, which may reflect a personal bias due to their strained relationship. Perhaps Peter was following a similar principle to Paul's own approach: "To the Jews, I became like a Jew in order to win the Jews" (1 Corinthians 9:20). It is possible that the group sent by James consisted of newly converted Jews, and Peter might have adjusted his behavior to gently guide them toward understanding that faith in Christ transcended Jewish law. Alternatively, Peter may have felt the pressure of social rejection and acted out of weakness.

Without an explanation directly from Peter, we cannot know his motivations with certainty. Yet one fact is clear—Peter was no longer living as a Jew, as Paul accused him of living like a Gentile rather than a Jew (Galatians 2:14).

Jesus was clear, we need to choose between following the Old Testament laws or following him.

Jesus said, "A person cannot mount two horses or bend two bows.

And a slave cannot serve two masters, otherwise that slave will honour the one and offend the other.

"Nobody drinks aged wine and immediately wants to drink young wine. Young wine is not poured into old wineskins, or they might break, and aged wine is not poured into a new wineskin, or it might spoil.

An old patch is not sewn onto a new garment, since it would create a tear."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 47

Jesus did not teach Judaism. He did not teach a rehash of Judaism. What he taught was radically different.

In Mark's version, it is clear that Jesus is talking about Old Testament rules and rituals as he talks about fasting (an Old Testament practice) before saying we shouldn't mix the old and the new.

18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting, and people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" 19 Jesus said to them, "The wedding attendants cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day. 21 "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. 22 Similarly, no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins, but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."

- Mark 2:18-22

Fasting was important in the Hebrew Bible.

- Exodus 34:28 – Moses fasted for 40 days and nights while receiving the Ten Commandments.
- Leviticus 16:29-31 – The Day of Atonement includes a command to "afflict your souls," traditionally understood as fasting.
- 1 Samuel 7:6 – The Israelites fasted at Mizpah as a sign of repentance.
- 2 Samuel 12:16 – David fasted and prayed for his sick child.
- Ezra 8:21-23 – Ezra proclaimed a fast to seek protection for their journey.
- Nehemiah 1:4 – Nehemiah fasted and prayed upon hearing of Jerusalem's broken walls.
- Esther 4:16 – Esther called for a three-day fast before approaching the king.
- Psalm 35:13 – David humbled himself with fasting.
- Psalm 69:10 – Fasting is mentioned as part of mourning and humility.
- Isaiah 58:3-7 – A powerful critique of empty fasting, emphasizing justice and compassion.
- Joel 2:12-13 – A call to return to God with fasting, weeping, and mourning.
- Daniel 9:3 – Daniel sought God with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.
- Daniel 10:2-3 – Daniel fasted for three weeks, abstaining from rich food and wine.

But Jesus ended the practice of fasting.

They said to Jesus, "Come, let us pray today, and let us fast."

Jesus said, "What sin have I committed, or how have I been undone? Rather, when the groom leaves the bridal suite, then let people fast and pray."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 104

In my interpretation of Thomas 104 I give an explanation of the bridal suite and go into detail explaining why I think Jesus came to end the practice of fasting and that he never fasted.

I have now given a lot of evidence showing that the real Jesus was not this religious Jewish Rabbi. He did not teach that his followers should follow all Old Testament rules. It is his first

Jewish followers that didn't want to let go of the old, but wanted to combine the two. Even his disciples wanted to link Jesus to the Old Testament.

His disciples said to him, "Twenty-four prophets have spoken in Israel, and they all spoke of you."

He said to them, "You have disregarded the living one who is in your presence, and have spoken of the dead."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 52

On a final note, remember what Jesus said...

Jesus said, "Come to me, for my yoke is comfortable and my lordship is gentle, and you will find rest for yourselves."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 90

Old Testament rules and regulations were everything but comfortable or gentle. Jesus came to give us a new way to connect with God, our Father.

The Hebrew Bible contains divine principles and laws, but this is not unique to Judaism—most religions incorporate foundational moral teachings. Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam all emphasize compassion, charity, and social responsibility as core ethical values. This universal moral thread exists because all humans are created in the image of God and carry His light within them.

However, not all people act with goodness. The pure moral principles given by God are often reshaped into religious systems used for control and power. Over time, human-made rules are added—not to uplift, but to serve self-interest, enabling authority over others. True spiritual wisdom lies in discerning what is divinely inspired and what has been manipulated for earthly gain.

Jesus was against organized religion

In the previous section where we saw that Jesus was against religious rituals and regulations. In this section, I just want to cover a couple of things regarding organized religion that didn't come up in the previous section.

Jesus wants us to move past our religions, and connect with God simply as our Father. James / (who was taught by Jesus) had the following to say about religion.

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

- James 1:27

Although the letter of James was likely not authored by James himself, it was probably written by his followers. Interestingly, it aligns with what Paul reported Peter and James emphasized to him as being important—caring for those in need - nothing else.

Religion can however simply mean to believe in a higher power. I will therefore be more specific and say that Jesus was against organized religion.

Organized religion, also known as institutional religion, is religion in which belief systems and rituals are systematically arranged and formally established, typically by an official doctrine (or dogma), a hierarchical or bureaucratic leadership structure, and a codification of proper and improper behavior.

- [Wikipedia](#)

We covered religious rituals and doctrine. I now want to focus a bit more on the last part of the definition: *a hierarchical or bureaucratic leadership structure, and a codification of proper and improper behavior.*

Jesus could not have been any clearer on the subject of leadership.

42 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

- Mark 10:42-45 (NIV)

But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers and sisters. 9 And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father, the one in heaven. 10 Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. 11 The greatest among you will be your servant.

- Matthew 23:8-11

Do not appoint leaders, and do not call anyone rabbi or teacher. It's not about the specific word 'rabbi,' but the concept of recognizing any spiritual leader other than Jesus. Pastor or priest—anything that elevates someone to a position of spiritual authority is wrong. Even if your pastor claims to be a 'servant leader,' it doesn't change the reality that they are in a position of leadership over you. If they hold any authority over you, then it is contrary to the teachings of Jesus (Mark 10:43).

As you know, Paul and his followers had their own version of the gospel, 'Paul's gospel'. Jesus said don't appoint leaders while Paul gave requirements when appointing leaders. We need to follow Jesus, not Paul. But weren't Peter and James the leaders of the early church? No, they

weren't. Remember Acts is a fabrication and cannot be trusted. Paul however did write about the 'leaders' of the church. Let's have a look at what he had to say.

And from those who were supposed to be acknowledged leaders (what they actually were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those leaders contributed nothing to me.

- Galatians 2:6

From what Paul says above, it is clear that he wasn't sure exactly what their position was. He says 'acknowledged leaders', with other words people saw them as leaders because of what they said and how they lived, but they were not 'appointed leaders'. It is also clear that Paul wasn't impressed. What he expected was a big organized church with a clear leadership. What he found was a group of friends, brothers and sisters, sharing the teachings of Jesus as equals. Looking to the apostles for guidance, as they were taught by Jesus, but there was no leadership, no organization, no 'church'. That was not the type of 'church' Paul was interested in.

It is not about religious practices, rituals or rules as we have seen in the previous section. We now see that the true followers of Jesus do not choose leaders for themselves, they do not allow others to take positions of authority over them nor do they take positions of authority over others. We are all equal and we have ONE spiritual Leader - Jesus.

It's not about a church or an organization; it's about your personal relationship with your Father. I once attended a church service where the pastor claimed that Jesus taught nothing about a personal relationship with God. At first, I thought he was being sarcastic, but as he continued, it became clear he was serious. I couldn't help but wonder—don't they require pastors to read the Bible, or at least the New Testament, as part of their studies? Since that day, I've come across several YouTube videos making similar claims. This is utterly false. Everything they quote comes from Paul, not Jesus. In truth, Jesus spoke extensively—extensively!—about having a personal relationship with God, while saying nothing about church institutions, church services, or organized religion. That was all Paul.

Jesus explicitly uses the word 'church' (translated from the Greek ekklesia) in only two verses in the New Testament:

1. Matthew 16:18 – 'And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.'
2. Matthew 18:17 – 'If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.'

The term ekklesia can simply mean a gathering or a 'calling out.' If Jesus used this word in the first instance, He may have been referring to His followers rather than a formal institution. The second usage, however, is almost certainly a later addition by Matthew and not something Jesus actually said.

Jesus never taught about church services or how leaders should be appointed; in fact, He explicitly discouraged the appointment of leaders. So, could the only thing Jesus said about the church really be related to church discipline? I explore this further in my interpretation of Thomas 30.

I believe Jesus likely never used the word 'church' (ekklesia). Of all our sources, only Matthew (M source) records this term. Using the criterion of multiple attestation, it is improbable that Jesus said this, as it is not corroborated by other accounts. Furthermore, the criterion of dissimilarity suggests it is unlikely Jesus made these statements, as they reflect ideas the institutional church would have wanted Him to say.

Jesus does say we should love our friends (Thomas 25), that we should be like brothers and sisters and help each other. But it is never in any organizational or 'church' format. He doesn't talk about 'church', but he says a lot about a personal relationship with God.

Jesus might never have used the phrase 'personal relationship,' but I've also never used those exact words to describe my relationship with my daughter. Yet, our relationship is undeniably personal. Similarly, in both the canonical gospels and the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus repeatedly emphasizes the idea that we should become like children and that God is our Father. There is no relationship more personal or intimate than that between a child and a loving parent.

And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

- Matthew 6:5-7

Go to your room, shut the door behind you, and talk to your Father in secret - you do not get more personal than that!

In Thomas, the idea of standing alone comes through a lot (as you will see later in this book). Standing alone does not mean we should be alone, it has to do with standing before God as a single one. Not relying on a church, organization or even a spouse. It is about *your* relationship with *your* Father.

Is Jesus God?

You probably believe in the Trinity and that Jesus is God (most Christians do). The concept of the Trinity began to take shape in the 2nd century CE as early Christians sought to understand the relationship between Jesus, God the Father, and the Holy Spirit. However, it was not until the 4th century CE that the doctrine was formally established. The Council of Nicaea in 325 CE

played a pivotal role in defining the Trinity, affirming that Jesus is of the same essence as the Father. This doctrine was further refined at the Council of Constantinople in 381 CE, solidifying the idea of the unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three coequal and coeternal persons in one Godhead.

These ideas, however, were not universally accepted. Many early Christian groups opposed the concept of the Trinity, leading to intense theological debates. In these debates, the Trinitarian view narrowly prevailed, and the councils convened under Emperor Constantine established it as the official stance of Christianity.

By now, it should be clear that I do not consider John a reliable gospel. The 'proof' of the Trinity mostly comes from John, even though the Trinity or what it means is not in John or any other book in the Bible.

I won't spend too much time on this, as it could easily warrant an entire book. If you're interested in exploring the topic further, Bart Ehrman's *How Jesus Became God* is an excellent resource. In it, Ehrman delves into the early church's beliefs and demonstrates that even those who saw Jesus as divine did not necessarily view Him as the same God as God the Father.

In the Greco-Roman world of Jesus' time, the prevailing worldview was quite different from the one we hold today. Instead of a strict division between one God and humanity, there was a perceived hierarchy of gods, with one supreme god ruling over all. Ehrman also highlights how traces of this concept appear in the Old Testament. While these beings were not explicitly called 'gods,' they were understood to possess a divine status—existing above humans but below God.

Bart Ehrman explores the diverse ways in which figures were deified in the ancient world. Some were believed to be pre-existent gods, while others were extraordinary human beings who, through their remarkable lives, attained divine status. During Jesus' time, even Roman emperors could be elevated to divine status, further illustrating the fluidity of divinity in ancient thought.

Ehrman also highlights the varying perspectives on Jesus within the Bible, ranging from a low Christology, where Jesus is seen primarily as a human teacher, to a high Christology, where he is portrayed as pre-existent and fully divine. Additionally, he discusses adoptionist Christology, which presents Jesus as a human who was granted divine status but was not born as God.

So then, to answer the question - Is Jesus God - I believe that Jesus is divine. If he has the status of God, it is not the same god as God the Father (not the same being). He is not on the same level as God the Father. That is very clear if we look at things the historical Jesus said. For example, in Mark 10:18, Jesus responds:

"Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone."

This passage reinforces the idea that Jesus saw himself not as God but as someone pointing others toward God. There are also things that only God the Father knows and that Jesus doesn't (Mark 13:32). It is also clear when we look at things he never said - Jesus never said he was equal to God the Father.

So who is Jesus then? That is actually a question that Jesus asked his disciples.

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi, and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

- Mark 8:27-30

The same question was also asked in Matthew and Luke with the same response - for all Jesus was the Messiah. Matthew just added 'Son of God' that we will get to in a moment. As Matthew and Luke copied Mark, we basically just have one source where Peter says Jesus is the Messiah. Even if Peter did say 'Messiah', Jesus did not confirm that Peter was correct. I am not sure if Jesus is the Messiah - I am undecided at this point.

The Messiah was going to bring in a time of peace (Isaiah 9:6-7, Isaiah 11:1-10, Micah 4:1-4, Zechariah 9:9-10) while Jesus clearly says He did not come to bring peace (Mark 13:12, Matthew 10:34-36, Luke 12:49-53, Gospel of Thomas, Saying 16) - almost making it clear he is not the Messiah. The Messiah will also restore Israel and rebuild the Temple (Jeremiah 23:5-6, Ezekiel 37:24-28). Jesus did not restore Israel and came to destroy the temple (Thomas 71).

I think it is very likely that 'Messiah' was added because some early Christians started to see Jesus as the Messiah from the Hebrew Bible. As Mark was written decades after Peter actually answered the question, he then added this idea to Peter's answer. It could also have been added by later scribes. I think the gospel of Thomas has a version that is closer to what actually was said. It is possible that both versions are correct, as there is a link between Messiah and Messenger. As stated above - for me the jury is not out yet on the point of whether Jesus is the Messiah predicted in the Hebrew Bible. Let's have a look at Thomas' version.

Jesus said to his disciples, "Compare me to something and tell me what I am like."

Simon Peter said to him, "You are like a just messenger."

Matthew said to him, "You are like a wise philosopher."

Thomas said to him, "Teacher, my mouth is utterly unable to say what you are like."

Jesus said, "I am not your teacher. Because you have drunk, you have become intoxicated from the bubbling spring that I have tended."

And he took him, and withdrew, and spoke three sayings to him. When Thomas came back to his friends they asked him, "What did Jesus say to you?"

Thomas said to them, "If I tell you one of the sayings he spoke to me, you will pick up rocks and stone me, and fire will come from the rocks and devour you."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 13

In Thomas, Jesus does not give an answer - it is not about who Jesus is but about who you should become. It is about your transformation. We are called to become like Jesus - Jesus is the Son of God, but we are also children of God. We are also born in the image of God, so in a sense, we are also divine.

That said, I still believe Jesus was and is so much more than what we can ever be or even imagine - even if we are called to be like Jesus. The following sayings just shows that Jesus was more than just a wise philosopher, messenger or prophet.

Jesus said, "I took my stand in the midst of the world, and in flesh I appeared to them. I found them all drunk, and I did not find any of them thirsty. My soul ached for the children of humanity, because they are blind in their hearts and do not see, for they came into the world empty, and they also seek to depart from the world empty. But meanwhile they are drunk. When they shake off their wine, then they will change their ways."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 28

Jesus said, "I am the light that is over all things. I am all: from me all came forth, and to me all attained.

Split a piece of wood; I am there.

Lift up the stone, and you will find me there."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 77

Jesus said, "Whoever drinks from my mouth will become like me; I myself shall become that person, and the hidden things will be revealed to him."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 108

The above sayings shows to me that Jesus was so much more - but at the same time, there are also many sayings where Jesus calls us to be so much more.

If Jesus wanted us to know exactly who he was, he would have said so plainly—he would have explained his identity in clear terms. But he didn't. Neither in the canonical gospels nor in Thomas do we find a direct, unequivocal declaration. In Mark, there are multiple instances where Jesus instructs his disciples and others to keep his identity secret—an element scholars refer to as the Messianic Secret. This deliberate ambiguity suggests that Jesus' identity was meant to be understood gradually rather than proclaimed outright.

We often try to categorize and define everything in precise terms—whether it's the software we use, the food we eat, or the philosophies we follow. But Jesus is not a product to be labeled. His identity carries an inherent mystery, defying rigid classification. Understanding him requires a deeper, more personal exploration—one that transcends simple definitions.

As Jesus himself said:

Jesus said, "I disclose my mysteries to those [who are worthy] of [my] mysteries. Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 62

I like how Thomas answered the question.

...Thomas said to him, "Teacher, my mouth is utterly unable to say what you are like."...

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 13

Atonement

What is Atonement?

Atonement in Christian Theology is the idea that human beings can be reconciled to God through Christ's sacrificial suffering and death. With other words, it is the belief that Jesus died on the cross for your sins.

Is atonement in line with a loving God?

Do you believe God forgives sins? If you are a Christian that believes Jesus died for your sins, then no, you don't really believe God forgives sins. When someone owes you money, you can choose to write off the debt (forgiveness). If however, you do not want to write off the debt, but demand payment, and someone else pays the debt for the person owing you the money, then you did not write off the debt, you demanded and received payment in full. There was no forgiveness.

God forgives sins because He is a loving God. If forgiveness required Him to demand payment by sacrificing His own Son, how could that align with love? Consider this: if my daughter does something wrong and feels genuine remorse, I forgive her because I love her. Now imagine if I told her, 'I want to forgive you, but I'm so angry that someone must pay for what you've done. Bring me your Jack Russell so I can slit its throat. After that, I'll feel better and forgive you.' What kind of father would I be? What kind of person could justify such an act? Love and forgiveness don't require payment—they flow freely from compassion and mercy.

Christians often say that God is not only supremely merciful but also supremely just, and that His justice requires the punishment of sins. My response to this is: Why? Why can't He simply forgive? He is God, after all. But let's examine this idea of 'justice' more closely.

If you're a parent, think about your children. They've surely done things wrong—what punishment do you think they deserve? Should they go to prison for a week? A month? What about the death penalty? Or burning in hell for eternity? Now, consider yourself. You're no angel, right? What punishment do you deserve? Maybe a week in prison? If you've been particularly

bad, perhaps a month? But do you truly believe that anything you've done, even all of it combined, warrants the death penalty or eternal punishment?

Some might respond, 'If you break one law, you break them all'—a concept not taught by Jesus. Let's think about that for a moment. Is that justice? Would you want to live in a country where slightly exceeding the speed limit carries the same penalty as someone who brutally raped and murdered 20 women? Is that truly justice?

Another common response is that it's about original sin—again, not something Jesus taught—and the inherent sinfulness of all humans. Really? Are you saying my daughter should pay for the sins of Ted Bundy or John Wayne Gacy? Is that justice?

A God that kills His own Son, that is not who our God is. A God that loves and forgives, that is who our God is.

Did Jesus believe he died for our sins?

As you know by now, I believe Thomas is our earliest and most reliable source for what Jesus really said. In Thomas there is nothing about atonement.

A lot of biblical scholars like Bart Ehrman do not believe that Jesus taught atonement and believe things that Jesus said to this regard in the canonical gospels were added by his followers after his crucifixion and before the gospels were written.

I will be looking at everything Jesus said about atonement, focusing on Mark as it is our most reliable gospel.

Jesus taught forgiveness of sins and repentance, not atonement. It is not the same thing. When you forgive, you write off a debt. With atonement the debt is not written off, the debt is paid in full by someone else. There is no forgiveness with atonement.

In Mark 1:15, when Jesus commands, "repent, and believe in the good news," the word "repent" (from the Greek *metanoeite*) essentially means **to undergo a radical change of mind and heart**—a complete turning away from former ways and a reorientation toward God. This isn't just about feeling remorseful for past sins; it's about committing oneself to a new course of life that aligns with the principles of God's kingdom.

Jesus preached repentance, not atonement. In the synoptic gospels (our earlier and more reliable gospels), Jesus never said that you need to accept him as your saviour and be washed by his blood. The idea with atonement is that we are utterly unable to pay for our own sins or to do anything to be forgiven, that is why we need the blood of Jesus. Jesus however said several things that directly contradicts that idea.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,

- Matthew 6:14

When will the Father forgive you? When you are washed in the blood of Jesus? No, when you forgive others. No need for payment (the life of Jesus) as God can, and do, simply forgive if we repent (change our hearts and minds).

There are many examples where Jesus said to someone *your sins are forgiven*, never does he say because of my sacrifice (looking at the earlier gospels, the synoptic gospels). So why did Jesus have to die? He didn't, but He knew He was going to die, because people can be evil.

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again.

- Mark 8:31

Jesus knew he would suffer - his message will be rejected by elders and leaders and then he will be killed. He will be killed because of his message, not because he needed to die for our sins. Jesus later even told a parable explaining this point in great detail.

12 Then he began to speak to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit for the winepress, and built a watchtower; then he leased it to tenants and went away. 2 When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants to collect from them his share of the produce of the vineyard. 3 But they seized him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 4 And again he sent another slave to them; this one they beat over the head and insulted. 5 Then he sent another, and that one they killed. And so it was with many others; some they beat, and others they killed. 6 He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 7 But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' 8 So they seized him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. 9 What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.

- Mark 12:1-9

Jesus was killed because people rejected His message. He did not die for the sake of those who killed Him; rather, God will hold them accountable for rejecting and killing Him. It was not God's desire to kill Jesus. Instead, God sent Jesus to guide us and to reveal what is required of us. Both God and Jesus knew that humanity's wickedness would ultimately lead to His death, yet Jesus was willing to come anyway.

Although God allowed it to happen, it was not His will. Jesus did not want to die, but He was prepared to do so in order to spread His message. His death was not necessary, but it was inevitable because humans can be wicked. Jesus did sacrifice His life for us, but not for our sins. If Jesus did believe he had to die for our sins, He would have told a completely different parable.

As you have now seen, there is a lot that Jesus said that goes against the idea of atonement. Let's now have a look at the only two verses in Mark that can be seen as pointing to atonement.

The first is Mark 10:45 - *'For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many'*. So the first obvious point is that ransom for many does not necessarily mean a sacrifice for sins. If I come home and see intruders breaking into my house while my wife and daughter are at home, I can just run away or I can run inside to protect them, knowing I might be killed. If I am then killed, I sacrificed my life for them, I gave my life as a ransom. In the same way, Jesus gave his life so that we can know the good news .. even if he knew he would be killed. Secondly, if we look at this verse in context, Jesus was simply talking about how we should serve one another (read Mark 10:42-45). It wasn't a conversation where he was explaining why he had to come and die for us.

The second verse is part of the last supper.

22 While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." 23 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. 24 He said to them, "This is my blood of the[covenant], which is poured out for many. 25 Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

- Mark 14:22-25

I think Jesus could very well have said 'take, this is my body'. There is however a difference between 'eating' the body of Jesus and being washed by his blood. In Thomas 13 and 108, Jesus tells his disciples to drink from him so that they can become like he is. With other words Jesus gave his life so that we can have knowledge on how to live.

I think *"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."* is not something that Jesus said but an idea that started circulating in the four decades after the last supper actually happened and Mark wrote the words of Jesus down. Luke that was written after Mark and that used Mark as a source, also has the last supper. Luke however removed the verse about the blood of Jesus. In fact, Luke removed all the verses that might be seen as atonement verses. Luke did not believe Jesus died for our sins. It is also possible that Luke did not remove them, but that the version of Mark he was reading did not have those verses yet as they were added later.

Even if the original Mark did have Mark 14:24 and Mark 10:45 that could also be argued points to atonement, you have to ask, why did Luke remove them?

More importantly, if Jesus really died for our sins, and we can only achieve atonement if we accept his sacrifice by believing that he died for our sins (as the Gospel of John claims), then you have to ask yourself this question: That would have been the most important message.

Jesus would have made sure we understood that message because without it we will all be lost. When the Gospel of Mark was written, decades before the Gospel of John, the author of Mark did not know John or Matthew would eventually be written. Mark was telling his story of Jesus. Would he have omitted the most important message? Would he have added only two verses that might or might not point to atonement, without giving any explanation of the importance of the blood of Jesus and the importance of believing in it. Would Jesus have said the contradictory statements mentioned earlier. Does it make any sense? It does not.

The historical Jesus did not teach atonement.

I think I have proven my point. I will just add my thoughts on one more verse that apologists might use to say that the Gospel of Mark teaches atonement.

37 Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. 38 And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. 39 Now when the centurion who stood facing him saw that in this way he[a] breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"[b]

- Mark 15:37-39

This was obviously added by a later tradition. How would the author of Mark possibly know that the curtain in the temple was torn from top to bottom at the exact time Jesus was crucified. These must have been stories that were circulating after the crucifixion that Mark added to his gospel - or possibly a later scribe copying the gospel.

Again, the historical Jesus did not teach atonement.

Did the Old Testament say Jesus will die for our sins?

Surely if it was God's plan to send His Son to die for our sins to save us from hell, there would have been prophecies about that in the Hebrew Bible. The famous Isaiah 53 would come to mind.

*But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.*

*because he poured out himself to death
and was numbered with the transgressors,
yet he bore the sin of many
and made intercession for the transgressors*

- Extracts from Isaiah 53

The thing is, Isaiah 53 is not about Jesus and it is not about us either. When you read Isaiah 53 in its proper context, you'll see that the 'servant' Isaiah refers to is not Jesus, but Israel. At the

beginning of their history, the nation of Israel experienced the wrath of God, allowing the Israelites in Isaiah's time to reflect and say, "Israel was punished for our sins." This passage is about the collective suffering of Israel, not a foretelling of Jesus.

Don't just take my word for it—read Isaiah, starting a few chapters before chapter 53. You'll see that the servant consistently represents Israel, not Jesus.

After the crucifixion of Jesus, people wanted to make sense of His death. Paul (and probably others) came up with the idea that Jesus was sacrificed for our sins. They then went to the Hebrew Bible and looked for passages referring to it. But there are none—not a single one! Every single passage that they found, if you read it in context, is not about Jesus and it is not about atonement.

There is a lot about animal sacrifices in the Hebrew Bible, but there are also prophets in the Old Testament that said God doesn't want sacrifices (Isaiah 1:11–31, Hosea 6:6, Psalm 51:16) and there was a lot of forgiveness of sins without any sacrifice that was required. That is the reason Jesus came, to tell us that we do not serve an angry God that requires animal sacrifices, our God is a loving God that will forgive if you repent.

The problem with atonement

As I already explained, a big problem with atonement is that I don't believe it will come from a loving God. That however is not the only problem. You might think that the only thing that matters is believing that God forgives sins—whether you believe it's through the sacrifice of Jesus' life or simply because God is a loving God—as long as you believe in forgiveness. And you may be right to some extent. But here's the problem: the idea that we are utterly incapable of pleasing God and can only be forgiven and reconciled to Him through the blood of Jesus does more harm than good.

Think about it. How often do we hear stories of pastors caught in adultery, standing before their congregations saying, "I am a sinner just like you, but I am washed in the blood of Jesus," only to fall into the same sin a few months later? This mindset—the belief that we are helpless sinners—becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you truly believe you are incapable of living righteously, then you will inevitably act in line with that belief.

But here's the truth: it is possible to live a life free from adultery, free from hatred toward those who are different, free from theft and dishonesty. This doesn't mean we are perfect—Jesus Himself said, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone" (Mark 10:18). It doesn't mean we will never sin again. But when we do fall short, God forgives us if we are genuinely sorry and committed to never repeating the same mistake. True repentance means change. It means turning away from sin, not embracing it as an inevitable part of who we are.

Over and over, Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven, go and sin no more!" He never said, "Your sins are forgiven, but you'll keep sinning, and it's fine because I paid the price." This doctrine of atonement has created generations of people who believe they are doomed to sin, who live in a

perpetual cycle of failure and excuse-making: "We are all sinners, after all." It fosters a world of people who justify hurting one another, all the while hiding behind a smile and a false sense of absolution.

The biggest problem with atonement is the idea that you can be forgiven, all you need to do is accept this free gift - pray this magical prayer where you accept Jesus and you are then washed in the blood of Jesus. What's the problem with that (apart from the ones I just mentioned)? To demonstrate the problem we will look at two different persons.

The one is a murderer that killed his girlfriend. Because of our flawed justice system he could only be convicted of manslaughter and served 5 years in prison. He never showed genuine remorse and continued to be arrogant. He however did join a church and is a 'born-again' Christian even if he doesn't follow any of the real teachings of Jesus and even if he is an arrogant person who treats others with disrespect.

The other one is from another religion, maybe he is a muslim or a Buddhist, or maybe he isn't religious at all but he does seek God in his own way. He might have heard of Jesus, but because of his culture or upbringing, he never really had the opportunity to have discovered Jesus as his saviour. Because he was also born in the image of God, like all of us he instinctively knew what was the right thing to do. He seeks to be closer to God (as he understood God), he forgave others and helped others. He was a good person.

Who deserves to be saved? You might argue that being a good person is not good enough. According to who? If we look at what the historical Jesus taught, Jesus in the synoptic gospels (the earlier gospels), he will be saved. He forgave others and that is all that is needed to receive forgiveness (Matthew 6:14). He helped others, even if he doesn't know who Jesus is, he helped Jesus (Matthew 25:31-46) and therefore will be grouped with those who will be saved.

It is not about simply believing in Jesus or saying a magical prayer. It is about moving past your religion, whatever it may be, about seeking God on a deep and personal level, and following the teachings of Jesus, even if that is on an instinctive level if you don't know his teachings.



I am not suggesting that all religions are correct. What I am emphasizing—and what will become evident throughout this book—is the need to move beyond the confines of religion, any religion, including Christianity, and to focus instead on cultivating a personal relationship with the Father. This relationship is nurtured by embracing and living according to the teachings of Jesus. These teachings are imprinted within us through the Holy Spirit, guiding each of us with an innate understanding of what is right.

Jesus as our Saviour

Jesus is my Saviour, because he laid down His life for us so that we can know the truth. His teachings changed my life. He taught us that God is our loving Father. I follow the teachings of Jesus, He is my King. However, it is about following His teachings and not simply accepting Him as your Saviour or believing in Him.

Ron Miller said it beautifully. He started by quoting a saying in Thomas.

Jesus said: Blessed is one who has labored and has found life.

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 58

This saying is crucial for its reiteration of a central theme of the Gospel of Thomas. We must labor to find life. We must be adults. We must take responsibility for our spiritual

growth. Our salvation is not going to happen without us. For far too long, Christians have been obsessed with the notion that “all is grace” and “all is faith” and there’s no room for works. That is one of the most damaging pieces of nonsense ever foisted on spiritual seekers. Ignatius of Loyola admonished his companions to pray as if everything dependent on God but to work as if everything dependent on them. In the spiritual life there is far too much laziness passing itself off as trust in God.

- Ron Miller, *The Gospel of Thomas a Spiritual Guidebook* (p.5).

A recurring theme in the Gospel of Thomas, as you will see later in this book, is the disciples' desire to cling to Jesus. However, Jesus consistently emphasizes the importance of looking inward to discover the Kingdom of God within themselves.

A bit later in this book I will briefly discuss what Jesus taught regarding faith, healing and miracles. As we will see again, it is not just about praying and begging God for help.

The apocalyptic view of Jesus

Was Jesus a failed apocalyptic prophet?

Some biblical scholars like Bart Ehrman think so because according to them, Jesus thought the end of the world, and the new Kingdom of God was very near, maybe not within His lifetime, but definitely in the lifetime of some of the people He was talking to. Paul also had this idea. I am not concerned about what Paul thought, but did Jesus really think the end was near. Let's take a look at what Jesus had to say.

And he said to them, “Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.”

- Mark 9:1

In Mark 13, Jesus seems to describe apocalyptic events, often interpreted as the end times, and then He states:

30 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

- Mark 13:30-31

Christians come up with all sorts of explanations that simply don't make sense. The most common explanation suggests that “this generation” refers to the generation alive during the end-time events. Seriously? That would be an absolutely useless statement to make. It's like me predicting, “The person holding the winning lottery ticket will win the lottery.” Let's be honest—this cannot be what Jesus meant.

Another explanation is that Jesus genuinely believed the end was imminent, but God the Father later decided to grant humanity more time. However, this raises a significant issue. Jesus was

unequivocal in His statement, underscoring His certainty with the words: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (verse 31). To suggest that God changed His mind after such a definitive proclamation from Jesus undermines the entire message. For me, that would be a deal-breaker.

To understand what Jesus really meant, we need to look at what the historical Jesus said about the end times. In order to do that, we first need to look at some well known, and well believed, ideas that didn't come from Jesus.

When we talk about end times, two books in the Bible come to mind - Revelation and Daniel - both have prophecies about what will happen during the end times.

The Rapture

I want to briefly examine the concept of pretribulation rapture, a widely known and accepted belief, largely popularized through books and movies about the rapture. Despite its widespread acceptance, this idea is not found in the Bible—even for those who uphold Scripture, including Revelation, as the Word of God. In fact, the notion did not exist before the 1830s, when John Nelson Darby introduced it. He constructed this doctrine by extracting various verses from their original context and by fragmenting a prophecy in Daniel to suit his interpretation. Notably, neither Jesus, Paul, nor the author of Revelation ever described such an event, and the term "rapture" itself does not appear anywhere in the Bible.

For a more detailed explanation of why the rapture verses are taken out of context, you can read *Armageddon* by Bart Ehrman (p.8-14).

The Book of Revelation

The book of Revelation was not written by the same author as the Gospel of John. It was only in the fourth century that it was decided to add the book to the Bible and part of the reason was because it helped with the idea that Jesus is God. Before that, a lot of Christians did not believe Revelation was inspired by God. It is not difficult to see why. The God that Jesus describes in the gospels, and Jesus Himself, is completely different to the God and Jesus we find in Revelation.

The Book of Revelation is interpreted in several ways, but two of the most prominent views are:

1. Preterist View – This interpretation sees Revelation as primarily addressing events that occurred in the first century, particularly the struggles of the early church against Rome or Jerusalem. Preterists argue that the book was meant to provide hope to its original audience by symbolically depicting their contemporary challenges.

2. Futurist View – This perspective holds that Revelation describes events that will unfold in the future, including the end times, the return of Christ, and the final judgment. Futurists interpret the book as a prophetic vision of what is yet to come.

Both of these interpretations are wrong. For a very long time I had a futuristic view of Revelation. It was very difficult for me to let go of this, but if you really honestly read Revelation and compare it to what Jesus taught, it will become clear that Revelation is not inspired by God and goes against almost everything Jesus taught.

For many years, even when I still believed the Bible was the Word of God—including Revelation—I struggled with certain aspects of its final book. One example is Jesus' condemnation of those who eat meat offered to idols (Revelation 2:20), which appears to contradict his earlier teaching in Mark that food does not make a person unclean (Mark 7:19). While I once saw this as a minor inconsistency, I failed to recognize a much deeper issue—the fundamental depiction of Jesus and God in Revelation.

Unlike the compassionate and loving God Jesus spoke of in the gospels, Revelation presents a vision of vengeance and wrath. Here, God's servants are not humble followers of righteousness but rather power-seeking figures, longing for dominion in a city of gold. This portrayal starkly contrasts the values Jesus taught—love, humility, and a kingdom not built on earthly wealth or status, but on grace and mercy.

Jesus of the gospels taught us to love even our enemies and those who persecute us. He told us that is how we will be children of the Father because that is who our Father is - He loves those that do not love Him.

But I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.

- Matthew 5:44-45

We are also told to see those with a different view of God as our neighbour and to love them (Luke 10:25-37).

In Revelation we see a something completely different:

- If you eat food offered to idols (that Jesus said was okay to eat), not only will you be killed, but your children will also be killed! - Revelation 2:20-23
- Non-believers will face being tortured for 5 months to the point that they want to die! - Revelation 9:4-6
- In Revelation 18:4-7 the followers of 'people of God' are instructed to torment those who are not Christians.

- All the catastrophes - the wars, famine, economic collapse, natural disasters, tortures - are sent from heaven. Revelation is about the wrath of God (Revelation 6:16-17, 11:18, 14:10, 16:19, 19:15).
- There is a lot more horror in Revelation, but also an ideology of dominance, wealth and power that goes completely against who Jesus is and what he taught in the gospels.

Revelation was not written for us, nor is it a prophecy of events yet to come. It was composed in the late first century, or possibly the second century, by a Christian addressing the concerns of his contemporaries. These early Christians suffered greatly under Roman oppression, particularly during Nero's reign. They harbored deep resentment toward their oppressors and found solace in the belief that their God would one day enact vengeance on their behalf.

Letting go of Revelation was not easy. I once found excitement in unraveling its mysteries—speculating about the identity of the Antichrist, deciphering the meaning of the number of the Beast, and piecing together the apocalyptic imagery. However, there are well-grounded historical explanations for these symbols, all closely tied to the struggles of early Christians under the Roman Empire and Emperor Nero.

Bart Ehrman provides a detailed analysis of Revelation's primary imagery—the Whore of Babylon, the Beast of the Sea, and more—in his book *Armageddon* (Chapter 5, *How to Read the Book of Revelation*). His research makes it clear that these visions were deeply rooted in the realities of the Roman Empire and its capital, Rome. Below is an excerpt from his blog discussing one of Revelation's most famous symbols: the Mark of the Beast.

The entire world follows this beast, which is empowered by the dragon (i.e., the Devil, 12:9). The beast makes war on the saints and conquers them (13:7). It has power over all the nations of earth (13:7-8), exploiting the nations of the world economically (13:17) and demanding to be worshiped (13:15). The author concludes his description of this mortal enemy of God with a final identifying mark, given for those "with understanding." The number of the beast is 666 (13:18).

Interpreters have offered numerous conjectures over the years to explain this number (probably more than six hundred and sixty-six of them). Most of these interpreters have been concerned to show that the beast had finally arisen in their own day. Rarely are these interpretations put forth as conjectures, of course, but almost always with the confidence of those who have the "inside scoop." Just since the middle of the past century, for example, Christian preachers, televangelists, and authors over the years have suggested such tantalizing and diverse candidates as Adolph Hitler, Mussolini, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and Pope Paul VI (!). More recently we have seen interpretations that took the number to refer to Saddam Hussein, Osama Bin Laden, or, on the home front, some other figure on the political horizon who may seem the embodiment of evil – including both our current president and the one before him!

The author of this book, however, was writing for his own day, not for the twenty-first century, and he may have had something specific in mind. Anyone conversant with gematria would have understood what the author meant by saying that the number of the beast was 666. He was indicating that this was the numerical value of the person's name. Just to throw an interesting wrinkle into the matter, I should point out that some of the ancient Greek manuscripts of the book of Revelation give a different number for the beast. In these documents, it is 616, rather than 666.

How can we make sense of all this? The beast is described as God's enemy who controls the world, exploits its people, and kills the saints. Given the similarities to the beast in chap. 17, we may not be too far afield to assume that this again may be an image of the Roman empire. If so, then the heads would presumably be the rulers of the empire, some of whom demand to be worshiped (as indeed did some of the emperors). One of these heads was mortally wounded, but then healed. What might this mean? Historians have long known of a group of ancient Jewish books called the Sybilline Oracles, which predict that one of the most hated of the Roman Emperors, Caesar Nero, will return from the dead to wreak havoc on the earth — comparable to one who recovers from a death-inflicting wound. This popular belief may have something to do with the number of the beast. It should be recalled that Nero was seen as the archenemy of the Christians, whom he ruthlessly and unjustly persecuted for setting fire to the city of Rome. Could he have been the beast described in Revelation 13?

Intriguingly enough, when the name "Caesar Nero" is spelled in Hebrew letters, their numerical total is 666. More intriguingly still, the name can be spelled in another way, without a final "n" at the end "Nero(n)." The "n" is worth 50 in the Hebrew numerical system. When the alternative spelling is employed, the name adds up to 616.

The author of Revelation was not referring to Hitler or Mussolini or Saddam or anyone else in even more modern times. His enemy was Rome and its Caesars. It was Rome that had dominated the other nations of earth, exploited their native populations, and oppressed the people of God; it was the Roman emperor who was worshiped as divine, who persecuted Christians and sometimes put them to death. This book was about how God was going to overthrow this emperor and his empire at the end of time (see especially chaps. 18-19) prior to rewarding his saints with the kingdom in a new heavens and a new earth (chaps. 20-22).

*That's maybe not as exciting as figuring out how the beast is our *next* president, or some foreign leader who is causing problems. But history is like that. It can be interesting without being sensationalist, intriguing without being alarmist.*

- Bart Ehrman (from his blog).

Revelation is not a prophecy about the end times, nor is it a text meant for modern readers. It is not divinely inspired, but rather a reflection of the author's personal grievances and apocalyptic

desires. The God depicted in Revelation is vengeful, inflicting suffering and death upon those who do not follow Him. The Christians in Revelation bear little resemblance to the compassionate, merciful followers of Jesus portrayed in the synoptic gospels. Instead, the book appears to be written by someone deeply resentful of the Roman Empire, which had previously persecuted Christians. It reads more like a manifesto of divine vengeance, expressing a yearning for God to unleash punishment upon unbelievers.

Daniel's Prophecy

Daniel's prophecy was once very important to me for two reasons:

- Jesus referred to the book of Daniel.
- Daniel's predictions, spanning four centuries, came true.

However, both of these claims turn out to be false. Matthew, who relied on Mark's account as a source, inserted the phrase "as spoken by the Prophet Daniel"—a detail absent from Mark's original narrative (compare Mark 13 with Matthew 24).

Furthermore, the prophecies attributed to Daniel were not written by him, but by someone four centuries later who claimed his name. What appeared to be prophetic visions were, in reality, a retrospective account of past events. There is substantial evidence supporting this conclusion, though I won't explore it in depth here. If you're interested, Bart Ehrman discusses it extensively in *Armageddon* (pages 113-119).

End-Time Prophecies causes harm

In *Armageddon*, Bart Ehrman provides a detailed examination of the harm caused by end-time prophecies—not only in convincing people that the world's end is imminent, leading them to abandon long-term plans, but also in perpetuating the belief that Christians are an oppressed group. While this may have been true for a brief period centuries ago, it is no longer the case in most parts of the world.

Despite this, interpretations of Daniel and Revelation have led some Christians—who no longer face oppression—to actively seek out oppressors. This mindset often comes with the same sense of resentment and desire for vengeance vividly depicted in Revelation. Ehrman takes his analysis even further, demonstrating how end-time prophecies continue to shape U.S. foreign policy, particularly in relation to Israel, and how they influence broader issues like global warming.

What Jesus actually said about the end-times

To understand what Jesus said, we have to understand what He didn't say. Jesus didn't say anything that we read in Revelation, He did not reference the prophecy of Daniel and said nothing about a Rapture. So what did Jesus say about the end times?

Not much - Jesus was more focused on the present (Thomas 5, 91).

The disciples said to Jesus, "Tell us, how will our end come?"

Jesus said, "Have you found the beginning, then, that you are looking for the end? You see, the end will be where the beginning is.

Congratulations to the one who stands at the beginning: that one will know the end and will not taste death."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 18

What then about Mark 9 and 13? What Jesus talked about in Mark 9 and Mark 13 did come true, is busy coming true and will continue to be true. Let's start with the idea that Jesus believed the kingdom of God would arrive for some of the people he was talking to.

And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power."

- Mark 9:1

Jesus didn't mean some people will live long enough to see the kingdom coming but it might come too late for others that are maybe a bit older. Jesus meant that some standing there will see the kingdom coming as they will find the kingdom.

His disciples said to him, "When will the kingdom come?"

"It will not come by watching for it. It will not be said, 'Look, here!' or 'Look, there!' Rather, the Father's kingdom is spread out upon the earth, and people don't see it."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 113

Luke also said something similar, that the kingdom is not something to wait for but already in our midst (Luke 17:21). Matthew also says we should seek the kingdom (Matthew 6:33), not wait for it. The kingdom is not a golden city that will come down from heaven, the kingdom of God is inside of us and outside of us.

Jesus said, "If your leaders say to you, 'Look, the (Father's) kingdom is in the sky,' then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. Rather, the kingdom is within you and it is outside you. .."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 3(a)

Inside of us, because we become children of the living Father and understand what it means to be a child of God, having a personal, intimate relationship with our Father. Outside of us

because we experience God in nature, in our friends and family, and when we show love and compassion to others.

Let's have a look at what Jesus said the only time He talked about the end-times. Open your Bible to Mark 13 and let's go through it together.

Mark 13	Interpretation
1-2	The destruction of the Temple. I do not believe Jesus was talking about the actual Temple but about what it represents: Organized Religion. It will be destroyed, stone by stone, not for everyone, but for those who follow the teachings of Jesus. Organized religion is bad for you, as will become clear when we get to the sayings in Thomas.
4	The disciples asked Jesus "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?" I do not believe that the question was about the end-times as Jesus told his disciples that is the wrong question (Thomas 18, 113). It is about difficult times that will come - when Nero was in power, when Hitler was in power, when the first strains of Covid-19 started appearing, etc. I believe Jesus was telling his disciples to know what is in front of their eyes (Thomas 5) and be awake, ready and prepared to face those difficult times.
5-6	Many have been led astray over the past two thousand years, and many will continue to follow a 'False Jesus', holding on to church that is not from God.
7-8	There have been many wars in the past, and there will be many in the future. The same with earthquakes and pandemics. With global warming, this will probably all get worse.
9-13	There will be persecution, but take note, the persecution will mainly come from synagogues (the church) and siblings (family that want to tell you what you should believe), not from other nations.
14	<i>'the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be'</i> simply means someone in charge of the church, that is not Jesus, for example the pope. It can also refer to a leader that is in control that should not be, like Hitler. Jesus did not refer to a prophecy in Daniel, He simply might have used the same wording as He was a Jew and was familiar with the wording, or the author of Mark or later scribe simply changed the words of Jesus to use the wording in Daniel. When Nero was in charge, when the Pope started the inquisitions, when Hitler was in charge, people had to run. Bad people getting positions of power is something that will keep on happening, we need to look out for it and be prepared for it.
15-18	The historical Jesus was concerned with our physical well being and was very practical. This becomes clear when we see how he healed people, how he was concerned with people needing to eat (Mark 6:37), instructing people to give a girl that wasn't feeling well, something to eat (Mark 5:43). When Jesus is talking about difficult times coming, He is not trying to scare us, but rather prepare us. In this world, things will happen where you will not have time to go into your house to

	grab the things you need (15) - have a 'go bag' ready. You might be out in the field and unable to get things from your home (16) - think about your EDC (Everyday carry items). Jesus <i>was being that practical</i> - what is the alternative, He is telling scary end of days stories around a camp fire to His disciples. He is telling us to be prepared against this world because shit really does happen all the time. In Thomas 21 Jesus tells us to work hard to be prepared against this world, not the devil, not some evil force, but simply the world.
19-20	Jesus did correctly predict that there will be a period when the followers of Jesus will be prosecuted more violently, but that period will not last. There was a period when the Roman Catholic church tortured people who did not want to believe in the pope. That no longer happens and will never again. That does not mean all the persecution, wars, earthquakes will end. This world will continue to be a dangerous place to live in.
21-22	Again, there will be false prophets - false ideas of Jesus, false churches. Look for the truth.
23	Jesus <i>just</i> told us <i>everything</i> we need to watch out for. That is it! There is no 'number of the beast', no 'anti-christ', no rapture. This is it. We need to be prepared for an unforgiving world that will try and take everything from us (Thomas 21).
24-27	For each one of us, those that were standing in front of Jesus while He spoke these words (maybe not these exact words!), our grandparents and parents, you reading this document, and your children, every single one of us, will live in this harsh and unforgiving world. Then, after those days of weathering the storms, fighting to stand up for the truth even amidst persecution, and working hard to be prepared against this world, the sun will darken and the moon will stop giving its light. We will close our eyes for the final time. That moment might be scary, but then, in that very next moment, we will see the Son of Man in the clouds that will send out His angels to come and fetch us. Jesus was describing the end of the world, but the end of <i>your</i> world before you pass on to be with Him. Remember that Mark 13 are not the exact words of Jesus, but how the author of Mark tells what was orally transmitted to him and how he understands it. As we have seen, even the disciples of Jesus were expecting the 'end of the world' that would have been replaced with an 'actual kingdom on earth' (Thomas 113).
28-29	We need to remain vigilant and prepared, paying close attention to the signs of approaching trouble. Winston Churchill, for instance, warned Congress for years about the growing threat before England declared war on Germany. Despite his repeated cautions, his warnings went unheeded. In Thomas, there are repeated calls to work hard to be prepared for trouble, making sure you have the resources you need (Thomas 21, 103).
30-31	Jesus was not a failed prophet. Everything He said came true, is coming true and will continue to come true. It was true for the generation that Jesus was speaking to, it is also true for our generation.
32-37	The story about the owner coming back is not about the owner, it is about the people working for him that should be busy working and being prepared for when

	he comes. The owner coming back unexpectedly is not Jesus, it is the world, coming to take everything from us. We find a similar story in Thomas 21, but there it is clear the owner is someone bad, the world that will even take the clothes we are wearing, leaving us naked, with nothing. We need to be prepared.
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Mark's version is closer to what Jesus actually said, although I doubt it is spot on. In Thomas (I believe our earliest account) it is clearly trouble coming, in Mark, it could be interpreted both ways, in Matthew (that came after Mark), the owner returning is Jesus.

The owner being Jesus however doesn't make any sense. Why do we need to 'watch out' and be prepared for when Jesus is coming? Doesn't Christianity teach that when you are saved, you will go to heaven, no questions asked? So what do Christians need to 'watch out' for or work to be prepared for so that Christ can find you working? Doesn't Christianity teach it is not 'works' that save you? Again, this points to Mark being closer to what Jesus actually said, and Thomas even more so.

Just on a final note. Matthew and Luke add the two in the field that is missing in Mark. The two in the field, one taken away, have nothing to do with a rapture. Also, you don't want to be the one taken away!

36 "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; 39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

- Matthew 24:36-41

It has to do with being prepared. As with Noah, that was prepared, when the floods came, they were not taken away. Those that were taken away were the ones that didn't prepare. You don't want to be the one that is 'raptured' away.



In Luke's version the disciples even asked Jesus where they will be taken to.

*35 There will be two women grinding meal together; one will be taken and the other left.”
37 Then they asked him, “Where, Lord?” He said to them, “Where the corpse is, there the eagles will gather.”*

- Luke 17:35-37

We find the same idea in Thomas 61, where two are sitting on a couch, in the same circumstances, one will live and one will die. When you follow the teachings of Jesus, when you are prepared, spiritually, but also mentally and physically down to the resources you will need in the time of trouble, then you will be able to stand firm and not be swept away.

Jesus had an apocalyptic view of the future, of difficult times that will come. He was right, there have been very difficult times, just think of the world wars and pandemics. There are more difficult times ahead. As the time of writing this, the Doomsday Clock stands at its closest point to midnight it has ever been —a symbolic representation of global catastrophe — at just 89 seconds away. This unprecedented proximity reflects escalating nuclear risks, the worsening climate crisis, and the rapid advancements in artificial intelligence.

As children of God, we don't need to be scared, but we need to be prepared.

Faith, Healing and Miracles

If we examine the gospels alongside their dates of composition, it becomes evident that the portrayal of Jesus evolved over time. As the accounts progressed, Jesus was depicted as increasingly divine and less human. In Mark, for instance, we see moments where his power

appears limited—he struggles to heal a blind man, requiring multiple attempts before the man sees clearly (Mark 8:22-26). Similarly, there are instances where Jesus is unable to perform miracles due to the people's lack of faith (Mark 6:5-6). These apparent limitations gradually fade in later gospels, where his divinity is emphasized more strongly.

Given that even our earliest canonical gospel, Mark, was written decades after Jesus' ministry, it stands to reason that the number of miracles attributed to him may have been embellished over time. The historical Jesus likely performed fewer miraculous acts than the gospel narratives suggest, as later writers shaped his image to align with theological developments and the growing devotion of his followers.

I firmly believe that Jesus performed miraculous healings—his rapid rise to prominence would be difficult to explain otherwise. However, I don't subscribe to the idea that his ministry was primarily centered on healing, with his teachings merely playing a secondary role. Instead, I see his main focus as spreading the good news and instructing his disciples, laying the foundation for a lasting movement.

This perspective aligns with how his image evolved over time. If healing had been his primary mission, it raises an important question: what would be the purpose of Jesus dedicating most of his time to curing the sick? Such an approach would seem limited in scope, benefiting only those fortunate enough to live in his time and region.

I also don't believe that the disciples of Jesus performed miracles as explained in Acts that people were healed when even the shadow of Peter would overshadow them (Acts 5:15). As I have already explained, the author of Acts grossly exaggerates events. It is also difficult to imagine Paul not being at least slightly impressed with someone healing people when their shadow passes over the sick (Galatians 2:6).

While I believe the number of miraculous healings in the Gospels may be exaggerated, I have no doubt that Jesus did heal people. More than that, he empowered his disciples to heal as well—passing that calling down to us. That calling is however for all of us, not just some healing preacher that has healing services where many are supposedly “healed”.

How we should heal is by being a healing presence. In the Gospel of Thomas, we are instructed to heal other people (Thomas 14), but after we stayed with them and shared meals with them - in other words, after we spend some time with them and let our light shine in the darkness. When we spend time with them, we can share what Jesus taught. The importance of being whole (Thomas 22) and undivided in ourselves, making time to rest (Thomas 27, Mark 6:30-32) seeing ourselves as healthy. If you are sick or injured, see yourself taking a hike in nature, being healthy and strong (Mark 11:22-24, Thomas 19, 29, 84, 106).

It is not about simply praying and hoping for a miracle. You need to know that you are a child of God and you need to understand what that means (Thomas 3), you need to take responsibility for your world (Thomas 77).

In the Gospel of Mark, we find an example where his disciples begged Jesus for help and where He wasn't impressed.



37 A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. 38 But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion, and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" 39 And waking up, he rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Be silent! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. 40 He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" 41 And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

- Mark 4:37-41

They turned to Jesus in their time of need, asking Him for help. Instead of commending them for seeking His help, He was upset with them because of their lack of faith. It doesn't mean we shouldn't ask God for help, but it does mean we should approach God with faith and do our part.

That is not the only example in Mark. Have you ever heard of Jesus getting angry with someone asking Him for help? Read Mark 1:40-42 in your Bible, but then take a look at the footnotes.

Jesus Cleanses a Man with a Skin Disease

40 A man with a skin disease came to him begging him, and kneeling^[a] he said to him, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." **41** Moved with pity,^[b] Jesus^[c] stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I am willing. Be made clean!" **42** Immediately the skin disease left him, and he was made clean.

[Read full chapter](#)

Footnotes

- a. 1.40 Other ancient authorities lack *kneeling*
- b. 1.41 Other ancient authorities read *anger*
- c. 1.41 Gk *he*

Most Bible translations render the term as "pity." Even more accurate translations, such as the NRSV, use the word "pity" but include a footnote indicating that other ancient manuscripts contain the word "anger" instead. Bart Ehrman, in his book *Misquoting Jesus*, presents a compelling argument that the original manuscript likely used the word "anger" (see page 133 of *Misquoting Jesus*). Ehrman suggests that a later scribe, unable to reconcile the idea of Jesus being angry when approached for healing, assumed it was a mistake and replaced "anger" with "pity."

Why would Jesus become angry when someone asked Him for healing? As we've now seen again, we do not have the original words spoken by Jesus or the man who sought His help. However, the phrase "If you are willing" may offer us some insight. Often, people include "If you are willing" when they pray, and while there is nothing inherently wrong with this, it can sometimes reflect an underlying doubt.

In this case, it seems the man approached Jesus with uncertainty, placing the responsibility for his healing entirely on whether Jesus was willing to act. Though Jesus did heal him—which suggests the man's approach was not entirely wrong—it may reveal something about Jesus' response. It portrays a Jesus who grew frustrated with people simply begging for help without taking responsibility for their own lives or demonstrating genuine faith.

That does not mean we will not get sick. We will get sick and all of us will eventually die. There can be illnesses, disabilities or problems that will not go away no matter how much we believe. In Mark 9:29 Jesus says some demons can only be cast out by prayer. The demon in Mark 9 might have been an illness like epilepsy (*and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid* - Mark 9:18) . What is interesting is that some later manuscripts added 'and fasting' to prayer. What if 'by prayer' was also added? What if Jesus originally said some illnesses simply can't be cured? I think it is possible, but even if Jesus did say by 'prayer only', the disciples were unable to cure the boy and 'by prayer only' is a big shift from anything is possible to those who believe.

Then, it is also possible that the disciples of Jesus used medicine. They used oil to anoint the sick (Mark 6:13, James 5:14), but oil in biblical times was also used as medicine. Several historians and professors believe that the oil used in biblical times was infused with cannabis.

- Sula Benet – A Polish etymologist who argued that the Hebrew term *kaneh bosm* (קנה בשם) in Exodus 30:23 refers to cannabis rather than calamus.
- Chris Bennett – A cannabis historian who has written extensively on the subject, linking biblical anointing practices to cannabis use.
- Carl Ruck – A professor of classical studies who has supported the idea that cannabis was used in ancient religious rituals, including those of early Judaism.
- David Bienenstock – An author and cannabis advocate who has suggested that Jesus and his followers may have used cannabis-infused oil for healing.

These scholars point to linguistic evidence, ancient texts, and archaeological findings to support their claims.

I am not advocating the use of cannabis. Rather, I am highlighting that Jesus' disciples might not have relied solely on faith—they also might have used the best medicine available to heal the sick. This reflects a deeper truth: we are created in the image of God, the Creator. Humanity has achieved astonishing feats, from developing software that mimics—and even surpasses—human intelligence to advancing medical science in ways once thought impossible.

We are the only species with the ability to create, and modern medicine is part of that divine gift of discovery and innovation. It is not something to be dismissed but embraced, working in harmony with faith. Through faith, we can enhance the effectiveness of medicine, accelerate healing, and embody the creative power bestowed upon us.

I believe as children of the living Father, we can live longer (in general), be healthier and heal quicker and face death with peace (Thomas 42).

The Sayings of the Gospel of Thomas

As stated earlier, the purpose of this book is not to give my interpretation of all the teachings of Jesus but to show the importance of looking for what the historical Jesus really taught. I will however give my interpretations of the sayings of the Gospel of Thomas in this section. The reason for that is that we have heard interpretations of the parables in the canonical gospels from childhood, but a lot of the sayings in Thomas are new and sound strange in the beginning. I haven't found a book or anything online where I agree with all the interpretations, but I have found some interpretations that helped me to form my own.

These interpretations should not be seen as *'this is what Jesus meant'*. They are my own personal interpretations and maybe they will help you find your own interpretations.

Introduction

These are the secret sayings that the living Jesus spoke and Didymos Judas Thomas recorded.

The actual sayings are not secret because they have been written down. However, they remain elusive as they require interpretation—a form of decryption, if you will.

This is not just the case with the sayings in Thomas, but with the teachings of Jesus in the canonical gospels as well. The reason why Jesus used parables was not to better explain what he was trying to say, but to keep the true meaning hidden from most (Mark 4:10-13).

The name Didymos Judas Thomas is a fascinating blend of Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew influences, and it essentially emphasizes one thing: "the twin."

- Thomas comes from the Aramaic word T'oma (ܬܫܡܐ), which literally means twin.
- Didymos is the Greek translation of the same word — also meaning twin.
- Judas was likely his given name, a common Hebrew name at the time.

So when you see "Didymos Judas Thomas," it's essentially saying: "Judas the Twin, called Twin." The repetition might seem odd to us, but it served to clarify identity across linguistic and cultural lines — especially in early Christian communities where Greek and Aramaic were both in use. As we will see later in Thomas, this could be because Thomas reached the spiritual level of becoming the 'twin' of Jesus (Thomas 13, 108).

Saying 1

And he said, "Whoever discovers the interpretation of these sayings will not taste death."
- Gospel of Thomas, saying 1

And he said: "Whoever finds the correct interpretation of these sayings will never die"

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 1 (Stevan Davies)

You must uncover the interpretations of the sayings for yourself, rather than relying solely on the insights of others. Through this personal search for meaning, you will experience growth, deepen your connection with God, and discover not only the significance of the sayings but also a greater purpose for your own existence. It is this journey of exploration and understanding that draws you closer to God.

Death is something we can 'taste' now, while we are living and when we physically die. Death is void of life. Death is disease, sickness, decay, rot, poverty, lack, fear and despair. Death is dying without hope. Death is physically dying without being prepared. Death is dying before your time (life being stolen from you). Death is leaving 'death' behind instead of life and hope.

We will not die, because death will merely be a doorway to an eternal life with our Father.

Eternal life is not found by believing in the name of Jesus or praying a prayer where we ask to be washed by the blood of Jesus. Eternal life requires that we seek the Father, His kingdom. It requires effort on our side.

Saying 2

Jesus said, "Those who seek should not stop seeking until they find. When they find, they will be disturbed. When they are disturbed, they will marvel, and will reign over all."

- Gospel of Thomas, Saying 2

The Jews of Jesus' time had to confront a difficult truth: their religious system was not the true path to God. Likewise, we must recognize that no institutional religion—including Christianity—can serve as the ultimate gateway to divine truth. To uncover the authentic teachings of Jesus, one must be willing to challenge long-held beliefs and acknowledge that much of what we have been taught is misleading.

This realization can be profoundly unsettling. When I first began to question the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, I felt adrift—uncertain and disoriented. The foundation of my faith seemed to crumble beneath me, leaving me in a state of deep disturbance.

Yet, as I moved beyond the falsehoods I had inherited, I began to encounter the real Jesus—the historical figure whose teachings resonate with clarity and transformative power. The wisdom he imparted was not confined to dogma but was profoundly liberating. I marveled at the simplicity and depth of his message, which made far more sense than the rigid structures imposed by religious institutions.

To "reign over all" does not mean exerting dominance over others. Rather, it signifies a state of personal sovereignty—freedom from external control. No longer bound by the dictates of pastors, spiritual authorities, or societal pressures, one becomes truly autonomous in their spiritual journey. This liberation is not about rejecting community but about reclaiming one's own ability to seek, discern, and live in alignment with truth.

Saying 3

Jesus said, "If your leaders say to you, 'Look, the (Father's) kingdom is in the sky,' then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. Rather, the kingdom is within you and it is outside you. When you know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will understand that you are children of the living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you live in poverty, and you are the poverty."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 3

'If your leaders say to you'

Jesus begins with a warning not to blindly follow religious authorities—those who claim insight into the kingdom of God. He urges us to question

'If they say .. then the birds/fish will precede you'

Jesus is almost making fun of the idea that the kingdom of God is something that still needs to come, that it is something we need to wait for. That it will be some future city of gold coming from heaven. Jesus is saying, think about it, it should make sense to you

'Rather, the kingdom is within you and it is outside you'

The kingdom is within you. The teachings of Jesus are focused on the individual. It is about your personal relationship with your Father. His love and power is within you. The kingdom of God is outside of you - not far away in the future, here and now, around you. You feel and experience God's kingdom with the love and friendships you have with others around you. Not in fake friendships in organized meetings, but genuine relationships with real people. You experience God and His kingdom when you go for a walk in nature, when you see a beautiful sunrise, or when you have dinner with friends.

When you know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will understand that you are children of the living Father.

Know who you are. Know that you are born in the image of God, that you are a child of God. That means on some level you are divine. When you face the world with that belief, everything changes. If you know who you are, you know what you want and what you deserve. You will be known - you will not be a nobody that others can take advantage of or push around.

But if you do not know yourselves, then you live in poverty, and you are the poverty

But if you do not know who you are, then the world will take everything from you including who you are. If you do not know yourself, you will live in poverty and become the poverty. You will lose everything, not just financially. You will be poor when it comes to relationships, health and life in general. Poverty can get so bad that it no longer is just a state that you find yourself in, it infects every part of your life. It becomes part of who you are.

Saying 4

Jesus said, "The person old in days won't hesitate to ask a little child seven days old about the place of life, and that person will live.

For many of the first will be last, and will become a single one."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 4

What is significant about a seven day old child to the audience Jesus was talking to? On the 8th day the child will be circumcised. A seven day old child has not yet been introduced to religion, religion can break you in two (Thomas 11). Jesus was against organized religion (Thomas 6).

A child, seven days old, does not care what others think. He is not concerned about status, religion, race or gender. He will be happy in the most expensive stroller or just as happy being carried on his mother's back with a blanket. He craves only his mother's milk and to experience the closeness and love of his mother. He is not concerned about a budget, tomorrow's meeting or things he did wrong in the past. He lives in the moment.

Many of the first will be last, and will become a single one. The first is not the first to arrive, but the first in line, the important ones. Many of them, who follow the teachings of Jesus, will become last (the least important), and only then will they become a single one (whole, undivided).

When you try to be important, you have to impress people. When you try to impress people you are no longer yourself, who God intended you to be, you try to be something else. You become divided in yourself as you constantly need to put up a front, be something you are not.

Know that you are a child of the living Father and that He loves you. There is no one you need to impress. You are home. You are loved. You are complete. You are whole.

Saying 5

Jesus said, "Know what is in front of your face, and what is hidden from you will be disclosed to you.

For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed. [And there is nothing buried that will not be raised.]"

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 5

Jesus said: "Recognize what is in front of your eyes, and the mysteries will be revealed to you. For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 5 (adapted by Elaine Pagels and Marvin Meyer)

A lot of the teachings of Jesus focus on finding the kingdom of God that is hidden in plain sight (Thomas 113). It will not be found by waiting for it, it is here and now, inside us and outside of us (Thomas 3). Finding the kingdom does not require understanding of complex mystical concepts like what is taught in a lot of Gnosticism. You simply need to focus on what God is teaching you now, at this moment. We will find what is hidden by simply being present and 'seeing' God and His power when we have our first cup of coffee with a grateful heart, when we admire God's handiwork while taking a walk in nature, or while we are busy fighting a battle in the hospital. Also see Thomas 91.

Saying 6

His disciples asked him and said to him, "Do you want us to fast? How should we pray? Should we give to charity? What diet should we observe?"

Jesus said, "Don't lie, and don't do what you hate, because all things are disclosed before heaven. After all, there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed, and there is nothing covered up that will remain undisclosed."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 6

The disciples wanted to know what are the rules or requirements of this new religion. Jesus says it is not about rules, rituals or requirements. Don't lie, and don't do what you hate. Simple. Be yourself and don't allow others to force you to do things you don't want to do.

Jesus was against organized religion (Thomas 4). There is no religion. Jesus came to tell us the good news. The good news is that God is your Father - you are His child. A child does not need rituals to have a relationship with their Father.

How profoundly simple and powerful is this - don't lie, don't do what you hate. Just be your authentic self. Don't try to fit in or be the person Christianity, society or your family wants you to be.

Saying 7

Jesus said, "Lucky is the lion that the human will eat, so that the lion becomes human. And foul is the human that the lion will eat, and the lion still will become human."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 7

Think of a human and a lion standing next to each other, what comes to mind when you think of each?

- Human: Intellectual, reasonable, compassionate, good manners, live by a set of rules, reliable and predictable.
- Lion: Dangerous, violent, aggression, unpredictable, focused on carnal desires.

The human and the lion represent two sides of you. The human is the spiritual intellectual side while the lion is your capacity for violence, your carnal desires. Christianity sees the lion side of you as something bad that we should resist, pretend it is not there and never speak off. In Thomas however, the overall theme is to make the two one, to become one, to become whole and undivided.

God created us with a capacity of violence, with aggression. God invented the flight-or-fight response. God chose to create us with carnal desires. Carnal desire is not only our sexual desires, but our ability to fight for survival, to protect what is yours. You should not see it as something bad, but as something beautiful, part of who you are, who God made you.

Lucky is the lion that the human will eat and the lion becomes human - your lion will be happy if you make it part of who you are, but the human (morally better person, controlled by the spirit) eats the lion, with other words the lion becomes part of you, but your spirit, your intellect, is in control. The lion becoming human means your sexual desires, aggression, willingness to fight is in line with your spirit, following the rule of love that Jesus told us to live by.

Foul is the human that the lion will eat, and the lion still will become human - if however you allow your desires to take control over you, if your anger and aggression is in control, then you will still walk around as a human being, but you will be a foul human being.

Jesus taught something similar when he said we should be as sly as snakes and innocent as doves (Thomas 39, Matthew 10:16). A snake in the Bible is a symbol of something evil. Jesus is saying we should not be all dove.

Don't ignore or shy away from your wild side - embrace it as part of who you are. Train the fighter within you (Thomas 98). Don't be divided in yourself. Be whole - be strong.



Saying 8

And he said, The person is like a wise fisherman who cast his net into the sea and drew it up from the sea full of little fish. Among them the wise fisherman discovered a fine large fish. He threw all the little fish back into the sea, and easily chose the large fish. Anyone here with two good ears had better listen!

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 8

The historical Jesus had very little to say about the Old Testament and the Jewish religion. His teachings were new and different. His followers did not want to let go of their Jewish faith and traditions. This becomes evident when we see how early followers of Jesus after his crucifixion started (incorrectly most of the time) linking Jesus to the Hebrew Bible. They couldn't let go of what they were taught from childhood (Thomas 52). Jesus told them they need to let go of the little fish - all the religious rules and traditions and hold on to what is important. If they didn't, if they 'ate what is dead' it will split them into two (Thomas 11). You cannot serve two masters (Thomas 47).

Most of us do not come from a Jewish family, but we also need spiritual discernment to choose wisely. Don't try to follow the real teachings of Jesus but still hold on to all what mainstream

Christianity teaches. Christianity started with people who didn't want to throw the little fish back and they lost sight of the big fish.

Saying 9

Jesus said, Look, the sower went out, took a handful (of seeds), and scattered (them). Some fell on the road, and the birds came and gathered them. Others fell on rock, and they didn't take root in the soil and didn't produce heads of grain. Others fell on thorns, and they choked the seeds and worms ate them. And others fell on good soil, and it produced a good crop: it yielded sixty per measure and one hundred twenty per measure.

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 9

Unlike some of the other sayings, this saying is well known as we have almost identical versions in the canonical gospels. As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this book is not to interpret all of Jesus' teachings, but to help readers develop their own interpretations for some of the unusual sayings in the Gospel of Thomas. However, there is something significant in this saying, and its parallels in the canonical gospels, that mainstream Christianity seems to overlook.

According to mainstream Christianity, there are just two states: Saved and unsaved. This saying creates a problem with that idea. It depends on how receptive you are to the teachings of Jesus that will determine the percentage of results you will experience in your life. For some it will yield 60% results, for others it can result in 120%.

Saying 10

Jesus said, "I have cast fire upon the world, and look, I'm guarding it until it blazes."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 10

Fire represents a rebellion. A fire destroys. Jesus came to destroy organized religion. A fire spreads randomly driven by the wind. The message of Jesus is spread through His believers driven by the Holy Spirit. Not in an organized manner through an organization.

It is a movement that will be disruptive to the normal way of doing things. A radical way of thinking that will not be controlled by leadership.

Saying 11

Jesus said, "This heaven will pass away, and the one above it will pass away."

The dead are not alive, and the living will not die. During the days when you ate what is dead, you made it come alive. When you are in the light, what will you do? On the day when you were one, you became two. But when you become two, what will you do?"

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 11



'This heaven will pass away, and the one above it will pass away' - I do not believe Jesus is saying that heaven will end (eternal life in whatever form you see it). In the next sentence Jesus says the living will not die - if heaven were to end, they would die. I believe heaven is a reference to the Jewish religion (and all religions) and the one above is a reference to the God of Israel (the false idea that God was the god of one nation, a vengeful God that required blood sacrifices). Religion (this heaven) and the false idea of God (the one above it) will end. This part of the saying is similar to Jesus saying he will destroy the temple (the symbol of the Jewish religion) - Saying 71.

'The dead are not alive and the living will not die' - You can be alive but not really living - your life can be filled with death. Religion will separate you from God. When you are separated from God you are not truly living. When you follow the teachings of Jesus you will not taste death (Thomas 1).

During the days when you ate what is dead, you made it come alive. When you are in the light, what will you do? On the day when you were one, you became two. But when you become two, what will you do? - Throughout the Gospel of Thomas the importance of becoming one, of being undivided is made clear. When we started following Jesus, our old way of thinking about God had to die (Thomas 56). When the old us died we became one and discovered a new united body (Thomas 22, 80). If we however go back to our old ways, go back to religion and what it teaches about God, we will become divided. When the light shines on us, we will not be able to hide who we are - someone that is split into two.

Don't eat what is dead. Don't hold on to the little fish (Thomas 8). Allowing yourself to be spit into two is the sin that cannot be forgiven (Thomas 44).

Saying 12

The disciples said to Jesus, "We know that you are going to leave us. Who will be our leader?"

Jesus said to them, "No matter where you are, you are to go to James the Just, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 12

Jesus was clear that we should not choose leaders amongst ourselves (Mark 10:42-45, Matthew 20:25-28, Mathew 23:10). The disciples asked 'who will be our leader'. Jesus did not respond by saying 'James will be your leader', but simply they must go to James (for some additional guidance).

Jesus must have been speaking to newer disciples that haven't been taught all of the teachings of Jesus yet. Remember that the first gospel was only written about two decades later. Once Jesus was gone, there was no way to learn what Jesus had said (Thomas 38). The only way they could have learned the rest of the teachings was to go to someone who has heard all the teachings and understood them.

In the letter of James this is confirmed as the author of James wrote that there shouldn't be many teachers (James 3:1) - only a few reliable eyewitnesses would be required until we have some written records of what Jesus taught.

'For whose sake heaven and earth were created' - To understand that last part of this saying, see the interpretation of Saying 77.

Saying 13

*Jesus said to his disciples, "Compare me to something and tell me what I am like."
 Simon Peter said to him, "You are like a just messenger."
 Matthew said to him, "You are like a wise philosopher."
 Thomas said to him, "Teacher, my mouth is utterly unable to say what you are like."
 Jesus said, "I am not your teacher. Because you have drunk, you have become
 intoxicated from the bubbling spring that I have tended."
 And he took him, and withdrew, and spoke three sayings to him. When Thomas came
 back to his friends they asked him, "What did Jesus say to you?"
 Thomas said to them, "If I tell you one of the sayings he spoke to me, you will pick up
 rocks and stone me, and fire will come from the rocks and devour you."*

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 13

Mark's Gospel, as with Matthew and Luke that used Mark as a source, has a similar scene (Mark 8:27-30) to saying 13. In the canonical gospels, the disciples compare Jesus to figures from the Hebrew Bible - Elijah, a prophet or the Messiah. This is not the case in saying 13 of the Gospel of Thomas. This again points to the historical Jesus that is not so strongly linked to the Jewish faith or the Hebrew Bible as most Christians believe.

The answers given are all true, but as with so many other sayings in the Gospel of Thomas, the disciples don't really 'get' Jesus. Thomas is the exception, but doesn't give a clear answer. What is clear from his answer is that he believes Jesus is so much more than just a messenger or a philosopher.

Jesus does not object to the idea that he is the one that does indeed pour out the bubbling water, but he wants the focus to remain on what Thomas has done, namely drunk and become intoxicated by the water. This breaks with the idea of a kind of hierarchical religion where there is clergy and laity. God does not want any of His children to have a second-class status. We need to understand that we are all children of God (Thomas 3).

The last part of this saying just shows again the importance of a personal relationship with your Father. Some things God will share with you, are simply for you and not meant to be shared. While other things are meant to be shouted from the rooftops (Thomas 33).

Saying 14

*Jesus said to them, "If you fast, you will bring sin upon yourselves, and if you pray, you
 will be condemned, and if you give to charity, you will harm your spirits.
 When you go into any region and walk about in the countryside, when people take you
 in, eat what they serve you and heal the sick among them.
 After all, what goes into your mouth will not defile you; rather, it's what comes out of your
 mouth that will defile you."*

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 14

Jesus is not suggesting that praying or helping the poor will lead to sin or harm our spirits, as He has instructed us to do these many times. However, what He is saying is that if you fast, pray, and give to charity—essentially practicing a religion—you will harm your spirit.

The rest of the saying gives an example of how our spirit can be harmed by religion. Religions, particularly the Jewish religion, place significant emphasis on dietary restrictions and avoiding food associated with other religions. In the remainder of the saying, Jesus emphasizes that we should not be concerned about what we eat. Food is also deeply connected to culture, and we should not fear exploring other cultures and meeting new people. Religion can be restrictive, but Jesus came to set us free so that we can live fully and discover the world.

We are also instructed to heal the sick among them. To understand this fully, we must consider it in the context of the rest of this saying. Instead of showing up at people's doors like Jehovah's Witnesses or having 'healing services', we should share meals with them, stay with them, spend time with them. As we do, we can be a healing presence. I discuss this more in the section [Faith, Healing and Miracles](#).

Saying 15

Jesus said, "When you see one who was not born of woman, fall on your faces and worship. That one is your Father."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 15

Jesus is instructing us to worship God alone. While Christians are often vigilant about not worshipping other gods, they sometimes fall into the habit of idolizing people. Consider how they hang on every word their pastor says and go to great lengths to impress the pastor and other 'important' individuals in their church.

Worship the one not born of a woman - God and God alone.

Saying 16

Jesus said, "Perhaps people think that I have come to cast peace upon the world. They do not know that I have come to cast conflicts upon the earth: fire, sword, war.

For there will be five in a house: there'll be three against two and two against three, father against son and son against father, and they will stand alone.

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 16

Jesus did not come to bring peace. The statement that Jesus came not to bring peace but a sword, as found in Matthew 10:34, is not explicitly stated in the Gospel of Mark. However, the Gospel of Mark does present Jesus in a way that emphasizes division and conflict, often contrasting him with the idealized image of a messianic peacemaker.

The true teachings of Jesus will cause conflict, but not really with other nations. It is your own family that will have a problem with what you believe as becomes clear in this saying. In the time of Jesus it was Judaism that was the problem. Today, it is mainstream Christianity that will not like what you have to say.

We should love our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48, Luke 6:27-28), but we should not be pacifists either. We should not try and avoid conflict at all costs. We should have a side to us that is ready for conflict (Thomas 7, 98).

Saying 17

Jesus said, "I will give you what no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, what no hand has touched, what has not arisen in the human heart."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 17

Wow! According to this saying of Jesus, if we follow Him, He will bless us with things beyond our wildest imagination.

What makes this saying intriguing is that in 1 Corinthians 2:9, Paul appears to be quoting it! Some suggest Paul's quote comes from Isaiah 64:4, but a close reading of that verse shows it doesn't match what Paul was quoting. If this is accurate, it would support the notion that these sayings were indeed written down by the apostle Thomas very soon after the crucifixion.

Saying 18

The disciples said to Jesus, "Tell us, how will our end come?"

Jesus said, "Have you found the beginning, then, that you are looking for the end? You see, the end will be where the beginning is."

Congratulations to the one who stands at the beginning: that one will know the end and will not taste death."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 18

Again, the disciples are missing the point. We shouldn't be waiting for something that is to come. We should be living for today. If we follow the teachings of Jesus and are focusing on the present, then we will be ready for the end.

Jesus did have a type of apocalyptic view because he thought (new) that there will be apocalyptic events and that we should be prepared for it (Thomas 21). Just think of wars, pandemics, global warning, civil unrest just to name a few. But he was clear that we should not keep ourselves busy with end time prophecies like Daniel and Revelation. More on this in the [Apocalyptic view of Jesus](#).

Saying 19

Jesus said, "Congratulations to the one who came into being before coming into being. If you become my disciples and pay attention to my sayings, these stones will serve you. For there are five trees in Paradise for you; they do not change, summer or winter, and their leaves do not fall. Whoever knows them will not taste death."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 19

What was there before human creating - the creation power of God - the light - Genesis 1. We were created in God's image (Genesis 1:26) so we all come from this light (Thomas 50). The one who came into being before coming into being, is the person who imagined his world, prayed for it, and believed it into existence by believing it already existed before it did. This idea comes through a couple of times in Thomas (19, 29, 84) but also in the Gospel of Mark.

*Have faith in God," Jesus answered. "Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, **believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.***

- Mark 11:22-24

This might sound similar to the Law of Attraction, the idea that your thoughts shape reality. I believe that the author of The Secret and other similar books all saw something in the world that God created. God is a Creator, and He made us in His image. We too should be busy creating our worlds.

Paradise is not heaven as Jesus states there will be summer (good times) and winter (difficult times) in this paradise. Paradise is this world, your world, that you brought into existence. This does not only include your inner spiritual world, but also the physical world around you (Thomas 3). Just before Jesus mentions paradise He says: *if you pay attention to my sayings, these stones will serve you.* The stones around you are the environment around you, the things you typically do not have any control over. Yet, Jesus says the stones will serve you - with other words, the things outside of you, that you have no control over, those things will start to fall into place and obey your commands.

Jesus provided a powerful, practical example of this principle when He calmed the storm (Mark 4:35-41). Not only did He demonstrate authority over nature, but He also expressed disappointment and frustration that His disciples lacked the faith to do the same. Admittedly, the idea of taking control of the weather might seem far-fetched, and I can understand that perspective. However, I cannot dismiss the numerous testimonies surrounding the Law of Attraction as entirely baseless.

I have witnessed firsthand how some individuals thrive, not through extraordinary circumstances or external advantages, but simply by believing in themselves and envisioning their success. In

my own experience, I've seen remarkable changes in my business. Sales started to improve when the only thing that shifted was my mindset. I transitioned from pleading with God for help to thanking Him and wholeheartedly believing that I already possessed what I sought. *That* made all the difference.

Now that we understand '*who came into being before coming into being*', '*stones will serve you*' and *paradise* a bit better, we can look at the five trees. The five trees can then only be principles that Jesus taught us to help us create and sustain this paradise we can live in. Remember that paradise is not heaven, there will be winter, there will be cold days, but the trees will remain the same.

As I shared earlier, my business began to thrive when my mindset shifted—when I stopped pleading with God and instead embraced the belief that He desires for us to live joyful, abundant lives. Things were going remarkably well, but then Covid-19 struck. South Africa imposed a strict lockdown, and nearly all shops and restaurants were closed, which had a devastating impact on my business.

When I grasped the full extent of the lockdown's effects, I reflected on Saying 19 from the Gospel of Thomas. Jesus reminded us that His principles remain steadfast, whether it's summer or winter. I found myself facing what felt like a deep, freezing winter. Yet, I held on to the assurance that we would be okay, because the same principles Jesus taught me to break free from poverty continued to work flawlessly, even as the economy faltered.

The trees don't change summer or winter, so also the teachings or principles that Jesus taught us do not change and can help us during any phase of our lives.



What is significant about five is that it can be counted on one hand. I don't think it needs to be exactly five, but that it must be a handful, easy to remember. The tree is such a beautiful metaphor. It is a single distinct idea or principle, but as with a tree that has many branches, this principle will have many sayings or smaller principles connected to it. When you walk in a forest and you look up and see all the branches, it is sometimes difficult to tell which branch belongs to which tree. So also the sayings of Jesus will sometimes overlap and can belong to more than one tree (principle). A tree is also a living organism, continuously growing. So with the principles Jesus taught us. The more we learn and use it, the stronger these trees will become.

I will share with you what I believe the five trees are - for me. They will be different for you - what you find helpful and important from the teachings of Jesus. But in sharing my own, it might help you find your own five trees in paradise.

1. **Become a single one.**
2. **Move mountains.**
3. **Be a city on a hill.**
4. **Gather the royal resources.**
5. **Be last.**

Five easy principles, easy to remember, but life changing.

Become a single one

Unlike becoming a Christian that is something almost everybody does, becoming a single one is not easy and requires effort (Thomas 23). Becoming a single one is about making the two into one (Thomas 22). It is about making the upper like the lower, being one with your Father, just like an infant (Thomas 22, 4). An infant is undivided, and has a pure, simple, loving relationship with their mother. So too, our relationship with our Father must be free from religion (Thomas 4).

Becoming a single one is about being whole, complete and undivided. It is about embracing your wild side (Thomas 7) and becoming a fighter (Thomas 98). Your body and your spirit become one (Thomas 29, 112), building each other up.

Making the two into one is becoming an infant (Thomas 22). An infant has no shame, doesn't care what other people think, that will allow you to discover who Jesus really is, that will allow you to no longer be afraid (Thomas 37). We are afraid of losing, of failing, of not having enough, not being man enough - this all has to do with what others think of us. When we no longer care, when we take our clothes off and trample on them, we lose all fear.

Move mountains

Move mountains (Thomas 48, Mark 11:22-23), command stones (Thomas 19). Faith is about being before coming into existence. Over and over Jesus said, 'your faith has healed you'. Pray, believe, heal yourself and others.

Have a vision, a dream (Thomas 83, 84) and bring it into existence.

Be a city on a hill

Be a fortified city on a hill. It cannot fall, but it also cannot be hidden (Thomas 32). Know what you believe and be ready to defend what you believe. We should not be an army that tries to invade others. Like a city, we should just stand our ground and be a safe place for those seeking refuge - like those being attacked by 'Christians' for being different. Don't try to 'convert' everyone to believe what you believe, but shine your light (Thomas 33). Some things we can and should keep to ourselves as it might confuse or even harm those who are holding on to a fragile faith, but others things we should shout from the rooftops (Thomas 33).

Building on a hill cannot be easy but there is a reason for building a fortified city on a hill. You expect an attack. Do not try and be everyone's friend (Thomas 16), don't be afraid to go against what your family believes (Thomas 55).

Gather the royal resources

Be ready, live ready. Work hard to be prepared against this world (Thomas 21). Know the possible dangers you face and make sure you have what you will need (Thomas 103). Make sure you have something on hand, that does not just include physical resources, but knowledge

as well (Thomas 41). This knowledge should include life skills but also spiritual knowledge. If you have no real knowledge, you can easily be let astray, especially in today's world of fake news and social media.

Gathering the resources you need takes work. Work is important, but so is rest (Thomas 27, 60, Mark 6:31) we need to have a balance between work and rest (Thomas 50) - that is a sign of the living Father within us.

Being ready means you are ready to face the challenges this world will bring, but it also means you are to move on (Thomas 42).

Be last

Thomas 4 links being last to being a child. Both, being last and being an infant, is linked to becoming a single one (Thomas 4).

Being last also has to do with being a servant (Mark 9:35). We are called to serve. To love others. Not to just live for ourselves, but to help those in need (Matthew 25:35-40).

But being last is also about not trying to be important. Jesus tells the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16), where He also uses the words, the first will be last. The parable is about workers that worked harder and longer, expecting more, but Jesus says it is not about working hard. It is not about being important. It is about becoming unimportant, like a child, just knowing that you are loved.

A child is not trying to be important. A child is not concerned about what others think (Thomas 37), an infant only knows that it is loved, and doesn't want to work hard for the parent's love of attention. It is only when you understand this, when you no longer try to impress God or impress others, that you can become a single one (Thomas 4), that you can become whole.

When we free ourselves from trying to be important, trying to impress others, and simply being a child of the Living Father, we become whole, we become a single one (Thomas 4). We can then free ourselves from working ourselves to death (Thomas 86) and understand the importance of rest (Mark 6:30-32, Thomas 60). If you are too busy trying to be important, you will never enter the kingdom of the Father (Thomas 64).

Saying 20

The disciples said to Jesus, "Tell us what Heaven's kingdom is like."

He said to them, It's like a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds, but when it falls on prepared soil, it produces a large plant and becomes a shelter for birds of the sky.

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 20

The beginning of greatness is often quite small. The mustard seed is common, something found even in the poorest home. The mustard plant in the wild is considered a weed. It spreads quickly, can take over an area and is undesired - just like the movement that Jesus started that spreads like a fire (Thomas 10).

This saying follows the saying of the five trees and is confirming the idea that following the teachings of Jesus is simple and does not require a lot. Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, mainstream Christianity - they all require a lot of you. They all have a list of todo's and a list of what you shouldn't do. They all require religious practices. Even mainstream Christianity that will claim you are saved by grace will then turn around and expect you to attend church, small group meetings, prayer meetings, listen to the church leaders, and have a long list of things you shouldn't do.

The real teachings of Jesus are however gentle and humble, a light burden.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

- Matthew 11:28-30

The real teachings of Jesus give you rest. The rule is simple, love, the principles you need to follow can be counted on one hand (see saying 19).

Saying 21

Mary said to Jesus, "What are your disciples like?"

He said, They are like little children living in a field that is not theirs. When the owners of the field come, they will say, "Give us back our field." They take off their clothes in front of them in order to give it back to them, and they return their field to them.

For this reason I say, if the owners of a house know that a thief is coming, they will be on guard before the thief arrives and will not let the thief break into their house (their domain) and steal their possessions.

As for you, then, be on guard against the world. Prepare yourselves with great strength, so the robbers can't find a way to get to you, for the trouble you expect will come.

Let there be among you a person who understands.

When the crop ripened, he came quickly carrying a sickle and harvested it. Anyone here with two good ears had better listen!

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 21

In the Gospel of Matthew and Paul's letters (e.g., 1 Thessalonians 5:2), Jesus is described as "the thief in the night." This comparison, however, raises questions. Why would Jesus be likened to a thief? In Matthew 24:43, it says that if the homeowner knew when the thief was coming,

they would not let the thief break in. But why would anyone resist or fear Jesus' return? Why would they be apprehensive about seeing Him?

Moreover, this analogy suggests the need to be vigilant and prepared for the moment Jesus returns, but how does this align with the Christian doctrine that salvation is based on faith rather than works? The idea of readiness implies effort and action—concepts that seem at odds with the notion of being saved solely through faith.

In contrast, the Gospel of Thomas (Saying 21) offers a different interpretation. Here, the “thief in the night” symbolizes life's challenges and unexpected hardships.

We need to prepare ourselves with great strength. Some translations use the words ‘gird your loins with great strength’. That does not mean you should tie your belt like some scholars suggest - how do you tie a belt with great strength? - It basically means you need to put in effort to ‘man up’ so that you have the strength to be prepared.

Jesus is not talking about the coming of an anti-christ. He clearly says what we need to prepare for - this world. This world is not our friend. Our time, our opportunities, are all just on loan to us. Life will come and claim everything back - strip us naked. It will happen unexpectedly - like a thief in the night. We need to be prepared.

This warning is repeated just before Thomas ends indicating that Jesus thought that this was important.

Jesus said, "Congratulations to those who know where the rebels are going to attack. [They] can get going, collect their imperial resources, and be prepared before the rebels arrive."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 103

We need to be prepared, spiritually, mentally, physically - being as fit and healthy as we can be, but also having the resources and finances we will need when disaster strikes.

For more on this see [The apocalyptic view of Jesus](#).

Saying 22

Jesus saw some babies nursing. He said to his disciples, "These nursing babies are like those who enter the kingdom."

They said to him, "Then shall we enter the kingdom as babies?"

Jesus said to them, "When you make the two into one, and when you make the inner like the outer and the outer like the inner, and the upper like the lower, and when you make male and female into a single one, so that the male will not be male nor the female be

female, when you make eyes in place of an eye, a hand in place of a hand, a foot in place of a foot, an image in place of an image, then you will enter [the kingdom]."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 22

Jesus repeatedly called us to become like children (Matthew 18:3-4, Matthew 19:14, Mark 10:14-15, Luke 18:16-17, Thomas 4, Thomas 22, Thomas 37) and also repeatedly told us that we are children of God (Thomas 3, Thomas 15, Thomas 21, Thomas 50).

In Saying 22 of the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus presents an image both tender and subversive: the nursing child cradled at its mother's breast. At first glance, it is a simple picture of dependence. But beneath its simplicity lies a profound vision of spiritual intimacy — a union with the Divine so direct, so unguarded, that it bypasses the formalities of creed and ritual.

This is not the spirituality of hierarchy. It is the spirituality of embodiment, where trust flows like milk from source to soul. The child does not negotiate or perform; it receives. Entirely exposed, entirely at peace. So too must the seeker stand before God: vulnerable, receptive, unfiltered.

What's striking is how difficult it is to even represent this moment visually — not because it is inappropriate, but because it is too intimate, too sacred, too real. In modern systems obsessed with decorum, such raw tenderness becomes controversial. And in that very censorship, we glimpse the power of the saying itself. Jesus is not calling us to religion. He is calling us to reunion. To return to a place before shame, before separation, before doctrine — where we drink in the Divine as naturally and necessarily as breath.

To become like a nursing child is not regression, but rebirth. It is to step out of structure and into presence. Not to perform divinity, but to receive it. A breastfeeding infant is about being one with your Father and being undivided in yourself. This saying is about becoming one, becoming whole and undivided.

The two must become one - making the inner like the outer and the outer like the inner.

We live in a world where we are constantly pressured into showing everyone how perfect our life is (think social media). People are pretending, living lies - being split into two - who they really are and who they pretend to be. Inner like the outer and outer like the inner is about living a life where you stop pretending, being yourself. Don't lie, don't do what you hate (Thomas 6).

A baby drinking from his mother does not feel ashamed. He does not feel the need to dress appropriately. He does not do anything to try and impress others.

The two must become one - making the upper like the lower.

A nursing baby is deeply and intimately connected to the mother. In the same way we must be connected with God. It is about rejecting dogma and understanding that you are a child of the living Father. Religious practices and religious organizations are not needed and will only cause a divide between you and your Father.

The two must become one - when you make male and female into a single one, so that the male will not be male nor the female be female.

Two thousand years ago, women were still seen as subject to men. Jesus changed that and empowered women. Just think of the story of Marta and Martha (Luke 10:38–42) where Marta did what society expected of her (served the men) while Martha chose to listen to Jesus (back then women didn't join the conversations between men). It however has to do with a lot more than just equal rights for women.

Society wants to put us in a box. As a white male South African I am expected to drink beer and love rugby. I don't. As a young woman you can spend time on your career but very quickly society will expect you to marry and be a mother. A father is expected to spend all his time at work while the mother is expected to create a loving home.

No more male and female is about rejecting labels. Rejecting the box society and your family wants to put you in. Don't lie and don't do what you hate (Thomas 6) - be who God made you.

When you make eyes in place of an eye, a hand in place of a hand, a foot in place of a foot, an image in place of an image, then you will enter [the kingdom].

When you become one and undivided in yourself, you will become a new person. The old you will be replaced by the new (Thomas 56 - Thomas 80).

Saying 23

Jesus said, "I shall choose you, one from a thousand and two from ten thousand, and they will stand as a single one."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 23

The teachings of Jesus will never be mainstream. There will always be those who want to use religion for power and there will for some reason always be the masses that will be more than willing to follow them.

In the Gospel of Matthew the idea that it will only be a few that will truly follow Jesus is repeated by Jesus.

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

- Matthew 7:13-15

Most people think that the wide gate is people that don't believe in God. That is however not what Jesus was talking about. If we look at verse 15, Jesus was warning us against false

prophets. The wide gate is people who follow false prophets/pastors/religions. Christianity is not the narrow road. It is the most popular religion in the world. There are more Christians than atheists in the world.

To stand as a single one does not mean we will be alone. Jesus said we should love and protect our friends like the apple of our eye (Thomas 25).

To stand as a single one" holds a dual significance. True followers of Jesus will stand united as a community. Simultaneously, each follower will stand as an individual—undivided within themselves and in a personal relationship with their Father, without reliance on any organization or group of people.

Saying 24

*His disciples said, "Show us the place where you are, for we must seek it."
He said to them, "Anyone here with two ears had better listen! There is light within a person of light, and it shines on the whole world. If it does not shine, it is dark."*

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 24

For this saying I agree with the interpretation of Stevan Davies.

The disciples again take the wrong approach. Their question, which appears to be nonsense, presupposes the orthodox view of Christianity: that Jesus himself is the be-all and end-all of the Christian faith. Accordingly, finding the place where Jesus is, is what any Christian should do. Rather than find all the world, the orthodox view expressed here in the disciples question is that finding the one place Jesus is will suffice. Jesus' response encourages breadth of inquiry ... In order to see the world as the Kingdom of God, one must illuminate the world in a Kingdom-like manner. Therefore, self-transformation must come first ...

- The Gospel of Thomas, Annotated & Explained (Stevan Davies), p. 34.

Rather than merely holding on to the 'name of Jesus' or believing in Him, we need to follow His teachings. When we do so, we will transform into new, better individuals (Thomas 22). Our lives will not only be filled with light, but we will also illuminate the world around us. However, if we fail to follow His teachings, our inner selves will be consumed by darkness, and instead of spreading love and hope, we will spread despair.

Saying 25

Jesus said, "Love your friends like your own soul, protect them like the pupil of your eye."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 25

Jesus said, "Love your brother like your soul: protect him like the pupil of your eye."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 25 (Elaine Pagels, Marvin Meyer translation)

In churches, while smiles and hugs are abundant, gossip and judgment often lie beneath the surface. Jesus speaks of genuine friendship. We are not meant to be alone, but having three true friends is far more valuable than having thirty superficial ones.

I like Ron Miller's interpretation:

A Thomas Believer must be rooted in love and Jesus's image here provides us with a striking metaphor for that love. How quickly our hand moves to protect our face if something is coming toward our eyes. If we had the same instinct for our fellow human beings, we would be living in a paradisiacal world. That's precisely the world Jesus calls us to create and consequently, the kind of communities we are called to create as well. When we see people being denied justice because of their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or any other aspect of their humanness, we must react as promptly as if our own life were being attacked.

- Ron Miller, The Gospel of Thomas, a guidebook for spiritual practice (p.43-44)

Saying 26

Jesus said, "You see the sliver in your friend's eye, but you don't see the timber in your own eye. When you take the timber out of your own eye, then you will see well enough to remove the sliver from your friend's eye."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 26

Some might take this saying, and it's equivalent in Matthew 7:5, to mean that you can start judging others once you sort out your own life (once you remove the timber from your eye and can see better). However, if we read Matthew 7:1-5, we can see that Jesus clearly says we should not judge others and verse 5 is meant to point out the hypocrisy of those who like to judge.

When we closely examine this saying, the judgment it refers to is not about actions, but rather about a person's perspective—their view of something (sliver in the eye). It's not that we shouldn't judge a murderer for their actions, but we should refrain from judging others for having a different view of God or religion. When we remove the timber from our own eye, we are removing religion and dogma from our view of God. This enables us to help others do the same, allowing them to see God more clearly, even if their view differs from our own beliefs. We need to tread with caution when we want to 'help' others (Thomas 34).

Saying 27

"If you do not fast from the world, you will not find the kingdom. If you do not observe the sabbath as a sabbath you will not see the Father."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 27

We need to find the kingdom in this world - while we are still alive. The kingdom of God is inside of us and outside of us (Thomas 3) and it has already come (Thomas 51). If we don't fast from the world, we will not find the kingdom.

Observing the Sabbath is not about following rules (Mark 2:27). It is about the principle of taking time off. Work six days a week and rest one - again, not a rule but a principle. Jesus did not observe the Sabbath, He was busy working every day, but he did take time off daily.

Fasting from this world should be a daily practice.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

- Mark 1:35

But we should also take periods to rest properly.

The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.

- Mark 6:30-32

The instruction was to go to a quiet place and rest. Jesus did not instruct them to pray non-stop, study the scriptures or attend a church - He instructed them to rest.

The idea that we should rest also implies that we should work but there should be a balance. If you do not make time to rest you will not find the kingdom. In Thomas 60 Jesus says we must find a place of rest otherwise this world will tie us down and kill us.

To fast means to say no to something. People who only focus on work and business will not enter the places of the Father (Thomas 64). You have to make time where you say no to work and no to pleasing others.

Saying 28

Jesus said, "I took my stand in the midst of the world, and in flesh I appeared to them. I found them all drunk, and I did not find any of them thirsty. My soul ached for the children of humanity, because they are blind in their hearts and do not see, for they came into the world empty, and they also seek to depart from the world empty. But meanwhile they are drunk. When they shake off their wine, then they will change their ways."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 28

Saying 28 is significant because it points to the divinity of Jesus. It shows that Jesus pre-existed. I discussed this saying in more detail in the section '[The Divinity of Jesus](#)'.

This saying also shows that what Jesus came to do is not give us the free gift of salvation, but to show us the way (*because they are blind in their hearts and do not see*). We should '*shake off their wine, then they will change their ways*' - it is not about saying a simple sinners prayer, but about changing your ways. We should grow, learn and live a life so that we do not depart from this world empty.

Saying 29

Jesus said, "If the flesh came into being because of spirit, that is a marvel, but if spirit came into being because of the body, that is a marvel of marvels. Yet I marvel at how this great wealth has come to dwell in this poverty."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 29

The key in understanding this saying is how it ends. You as a being have great wealth (opportunity) but most of us dwell in poverty. We dwell in poverty because we do not know who we are (Thomas 3). We can be poor in spirit, character, relationships, health, and we can also be physically poor - lacking what we need.

'Coming into being' is a principle that is often taught by Jesus (Thomas 19, Mark 11:22-24). It is the principle that something is created by 'believing' it into existence.

Flesh into being because of the spirit - Jesus is using the word 'flesh' - meaning your physical body (Thomas 28). There are a lot of examples in the gospels where Jesus said 'your faith has healed you'. Through our spirit we can have healthier physical bodies. Bodies that become less sick, heal quicker, are stronger.

Spirit came into being because of the body - Jesus is now no longer using the word 'flesh', but 'body'. 'Body' means the physical body and mind.

When we follow Jesus and we make the two one - upper (spiritual) and lower (physical bodies) - we become a new person with a new body (hand in place of a hand, foot in place of a foot - Saying 22). We discover how this body interacts with the world around us (Thomas 80). In

eastern medicine, you build your spirit through your body. Qi (vitality, energy, breath) is cultivated through physical exercises like Tai-Chi. Qi in turn generates Shen (spirit). Jesus is not talking about Qi and Shen, but the eastern philosophers saw and understood something in the way God created us.

We can build up our spirit with a healthy body and mind. But we can also build up our spirit when we suffer physically. When we face physical struggles like illness or injury, when we suffer physically, it can make us stronger spiritually. In the Greco-Roman world the idea that one could achieve divinity through how you lived was well known. With other words your spirit could become divine through what you do in your body.

Use your spirit to bring your body into existence - a healthier, stronger body. Use your body and the physical challenges you face to build up your spirit. Make the two into one (Thomas 22) and get access to the great wealth you possess.

Also have a look at saying 112 and 56 that also have to do with the flesh.

Saying 30

Jesus said, "Where there are three deities, they are divine. Where there are two or one, I am with that one."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 30

There is a similar verse in the Gospel of Matthew. Before we look at this saying, let's first take a look at the version in Matthew.

Two or three in Matthew

Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

- Matthew 18:19-20

Have you ever wondered what this verse means?

If you really think about this verse, it basically means you have to pray with others because God only gives you what you ask for if two or three agree. Not only that, but your alone time with God means nothing because Jesus is not there.

This can obviously not be true. Jesus told us that we should pray alone in our most private room.

But when you pray, go into your most private room, close the door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees [what is done] in secret will reward you.

- Matthew 6:6

Why would Jesus instruct us to pray alone if there was no point - if God only answered us when we prayed together? We know how important personal, alone time with God was to Jesus - how often He made time to be alone with God. I used to tell myself when two or three people are gathered together in His name, God will be there in a special way. But let's get real, what does that even mean? Jesus clearly said that it is better to pray alone as God will reward you if you pray that way.

If you really think about it, this verse does not make sense. If you ask your pastor about Matthew 18:19-20, he will tell you that the verse is actually about church discipline. That would be correct as the author of Matthew was busy talking about church discipline (Matthew 18:15-17). If however you read the whole Matthew 18 you will notice that the verse then even makes less sense. On the one hand Jesus is saying that God will never stop looking for us (Matthew 18:10-14) but then it also says you only get three warnings and then you are banned for life (Matthew 18:15-17). It says we should forgive 77 times (Matthew 18:21-22), but then also that if someone wrongs you, you should take two witnesses and treat that person as bad as you would a tax collector (Matthew 18:15-17).

These contradictions within Matthew 18 is because what Jesus was teaching was simply a bit too much for the Jewish audience. The Jews like judgment and punishment - it is a core part of their religion.

The author read or heard from someone that Jesus talked about where there are two or three, there He will be. He then incorrectly linked what Jesus said to an Old Testament law that there should be two or three witnesses when judging someone (Deuteronomy 19:15). I have already discussed [other examples where the author of Matthew tries to link Jesus to the Old Testament and goes too far](#). This is just another example.

If Matthew's author misquoted Jesus, how can we find out what Jesus actually meant? None of the other gospels in the Bible uses the verse about 'two or three', but the Gospel of Thomas does.

Three or two in Thomas

We are born in the image of God, we are children of God. We are deities. Even in the gospel of John (that I rarely reference) does Jesus refer to human beings as deities or 'gods' (John 10:34). If you now read the saying again (replacing deities with 'of you'), then it means exactly what you think it means. The smaller the group, the better. Three is great, two is better, if you are alone - perfect.

This changes everything. The church wants us to believe that the church is the place we need to go. The place where we will find God. Jesus however says it is not. When you are alone, when you share your faith with genuine friends - that is where He will be.

You can now start to see why the early church did not include the Gospel of Thomas in the Bible and why they tried so hard to destroy it (just one of many reasons).

Unlike the version in the Gospel of Matthew that simply does not make sense, what Jesus said in the Gospel of Thomas does make sense and is inline with what Jesus taught and did.

Jesus preached to crowds and there were mass conversions. If that happens today the pastor will shout 'Holy Spirit Revival!' Jesus didn't, He thought it was mostly fake!

Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in His name [identifying themselves with Him] after seeing His signs (attesting miracles) which He was doing. But Jesus, for His part, did not entrust Himself to them, because He knew all people [and understood the superficiality and fickleness of human nature],

- John 2:23-24

Jesus knew people. He knew that only a few would really follow His teachings.

Jesus said, "I shall choose you, one from a thousand and two from ten thousand, and they will stand as a single one."

- Gospel of Thomas, Saying 23

To stand alone or be a solitary one is the only way you will find the kingdom (Thomas 49, 75). There are many more examples where it clearly shows that crowds were not important to Jesus.

- They wanted to make Jesus king but he withdrew to the mountainside by Himself (John 6:15). There are many more examples of Jesus avoiding crowds and making time to be alone with the Father.
- The 5000 that He miraculously gave fish and bread, stopped following Him soon afterwards because they didn't like what He was teaching - John 6.
- A group of people were looking for Jesus after He preached to them the previous day. His disciples wanted Jesus to go back to them. He didn't. He didn't appoint leaders or tell them to meet on a weekly basis. The crowd itself simply wasn't important to Jesus. - Mark 1:35-38
- Jesus was with 12 men for three years. Eating with them, traveling with them, teaching them. They must have been very close. These men were also able to heal the sick and banished demons. Yet, when Jesus was troubled, He didn't tell them all, he only took 3 disciples with Him and asked them to pray with Him (Mark 14:33-34). Sadly even those three let Him down.

Jesus did most miracles in private

- Mark 5 - Jesus only took 3 with him
- Mark 7:33 - and taking him aside from the crowd
- Mark 8:23 - took the blind man out of the village before healing him (and he struggled a bit).
- Mark 9:25 - quickly completed miracle before crowd arrived.

Saying 30 is the exact opposite of the version we found in the Gospel of Matthew and aligns with everything else Jesus said and did. It is about your personal relationship with your Father. Not about a group or organization.

Saying 31

Jesus said, "No prophet is welcome on his home turf; doctors don't cure those who know them."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 31

Familiarity often breeds resistance. When Jesus returned to His hometown, those who had watched Him grow up couldn't reconcile the man they thought they knew with the wisdom and authority He now embodied. As Mark 6:1–6 recounts, their lack of faith became a barrier—not just to their belief, but to His ability to perform miracles among them.

Jesus is doing more than recounting a personal disappointment—He's offering a timeless warning: those closest to us—family, friends, even longtime companions—may be the hardest to reach. Attempts to share truth can be met not with gratitude, but with offense.

So don't be discouraged when rejection comes from the ones you hoped would listen most. If it happened to Jesus, it will surely happen to us. Speak truth anyway.

Saying 32

Jesus said, "A city built on a high hill and fortified cannot fall, nor can it be hidden."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 32

The concept of a fortified city on a high hill might be hard for us to grasp today. In modern times, such a city would be more vulnerable due to the threat of aerial bombardment. However, two thousand years ago, a fortified city on a high hill was nearly impossible to conquer, even by a large army.

When you are a child of the Father, when you follow the teachings of Jesus, you need to be a fortified city on a hill. You need to be ready to defend what you believe because you will face judgement and attack, especially by mainstream Christians who will take offense about your view of God and Jesus. At the same time, we need to shine for God and spread the good news

(Thomas 33) - it cannot be hidden. Don't try to avoid conflict at all cost or try to always keep the peace. Jesus did not come to bring peace (Thomas 16).

But remember, we are called to be a city on a hill—a place of refuge, not conquest. A safe haven for those seeking shelter, not an army on the march. Stand boldly for what is right. Defend the vulnerable. Let your light shine where it's needed most. But don't impose your vision of God on others. Conviction should walk hand-in-hand with compassion. The light we carry speaks loudest when it illuminates, not when it blinds.

Saying 33

Jesus said, "What you will hear in your ear, in the other ear proclaim from your rooftops. After all, no one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, nor does one put it in a hidden place. Rather, one puts it on a lampstand so that all who come and go will see its light."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 33



There is a piece missing from the original manuscript or a phrase was intentionally left out by Jesus. What you hear in your ear ... [do something] ... in the *other* ear, proclaim from your rooftops. The other thing you should do is probably the opposite - with other words keep it to yourself. If it was purposely omitted, silence confirms that we should keep it silent.

Some of the things I have discovered took me years to process and finally accept. When spreading the good news, we should be careful not to cause more harm than good. Following the guidance of the Holy Spirit, sharing what the person is ready to receive. Spreading the good news from a place of love. Not going around telling people how wrong their faith is.

A lampstand that gives light, a city on a hill that cannot be hidden - it is all the same idea. Shine your light bright, don't be silent, be loud. Be a lampstand giving light. Be a city on a hill, protecting those who are being attacked (judged by others) without invading other cities. Shout the good news from *your* rooftop. Spread the good news without forcing in on anyone. Don't do what Christians did - colonising and forcing their beliefs on others, but don't keep the real message of Jesus to yourself either.

Saying 34

Jesus said, "If a blind person leads a blind person, both of them will fall into a hole."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 34

This saying is like a warning following sayings 32 and 33. You should shine for God, but be careful. If you are not ready you can be the blind person leading the blind. About three decades ago I was part of a missionary group preaching on the streets of Hilbrow. I was this passionate Christian that thought I had all the answers trying to 'convert' all the 'sinners' for Jesus. I now know how wrong I was.

Saying 35

Jesus said, "One can't enter a strong person's house and take it by force without tying his hands. Then one can loot his house."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 35

Don't let yourself be bound.

At first, it can seem harmless—compromising a little here, going along to keep the peace there. Before long, we're bending ourselves into the shape of others' expectations: organized religion, inherited traditions, or society's definitions of right and wrong. Slowly, subtly, we become restrained—not by chains, but by quiet surrender.

This is the danger Jesus warns of. A parallel in Saying 60 reinforces it: don't let yourself be "tied up." Because once your hands are bound—your will, your discernment—it becomes easy for your house to be looted. Your truth, your spiritual inheritance, your strength can be stripped away.

And if you stay bound long enough? You might fall into the one sin that cannot be forgiven (Saying 44)—not because God withholds forgiveness, but because you are set on a path that leads you away from God.

Saying 36

Jesus said, "Do not fret, from morning to evening and from evening to morning, [about your food--what you're going to eat, or about your clothing--] what you are going to wear. [You're much better than the lilies, which neither card nor spin. As for you, when you have no garment, what will you put on? Who might add to your stature? That very one will give you your garment.]"

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 36

There are pieces missing from the saying. The second part is difficult to understand without the full text. For this saying I prefer translations like Stephen J. Patterson, James M. Robinson and Stevan Davies that focus on the section we do have.

Jesus says: "Do not worry from morning to evening and from evening to morning about what you will wear."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 36 - Stephen J. Patterson and James M. Robinson

Jesus is saying we should not be overly concerned about the things of this world. We should work hard to make sure we have the resources we need (Thomas 21) but it should never be about keeping up with the Joneses. We should not be concerned about what others think of us. Having the best and nicest clothes is also seen as a weakness in saying 78.

Saying 37

*His disciples said, "When will you appear to us, and when will we see you?"
Jesus said, "When you strip without being ashamed, and you take your clothes and put them under your feet like little children and trample them, then [you] will see the son of the living one and you will not be afraid."*

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 37

In Saying 37 of the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus speaks of children stripping off their garments and trampling them — an image both defiant and liberating. At its surface, it may strike the reader as enigmatic, even unsettling. But through it pulses a radical invitation: to cast off the layers we wear to please, to protect, to pretend — and to stand naked and unafraid before the Divine.

This is not a call to shame or scandal. It is a call to courage. The “garments” are not clothing alone, but every borrowed identity, every ego-crafted mask, every inherited dogma that keeps us from the unguarded presence of God. These children are not rebellious for rebellion’s sake

— they are free. Free from performance, free from anxiety, free from the fear that says, “I must become something acceptable before I approach the sacred.” No — Jesus beckons us to come as we are, without disguise or defense.

To trample those garments is to reclaim what organized religion often forgets: that God does not want our costumes. God wants our essence.

This saying echoes the purity of Thomas 22, but with a sharper edge. It is not merely receptivity, but refusal — a refusal to be bound by what does not serve the soul's yearning to be known. It is a confrontation with everything that makes us hide, and a celebration of the childlike spirit that dares to be seen.

To embody Saying 37 is to enter into fearless authenticity. To be unclothed by expectation and uncloaked by shame. To stand — like a child — in the gentle gaze of the Divine, and know that nothing more is needed.

Saying 38

Jesus said, "Often you have desired to hear these sayings that I am speaking to you, and you have no one else from whom to hear them. There will be days when you will seek me and you will not find me."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 38

For this saying, I like Stevan Davies' interpretation.

Jesus' disciples have failed to understand him. Accordingly, although they could hear Jesus speaking while they were with him, they nevertheless will start to seek him in the proper manner only when it is too late. This is in accord with the Gospel of Thomas's view that the disciples were people who inspired the mistaken future-orientated and Jesus-focused Christianity that came to be the orthodox Church. Such people do not understand that they must look to the present and to themselves. Thus, while his disciples have wanted to hear from Jesus, and know that his words are unique to him, they lose the unique opportunity given them because they have failed to understand. When they come to realize their mistake it will be too late.

- The Gospel of Thomas Annotated & Explained, Stevan Davies, p.50.

Saying 39

Jesus said, "The Pharisees and the scholars have taken the keys of knowledge and have hidden them. They have not entered nor have they allowed those who want to enter to do so.

As for you, be as sly as snakes and as simple as doves."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 39

Jesus often confronted religious elites—Pharisees and scholars alike—calling them out as hypocrites who clung to authority while withholding true understanding. *Be cautious of spiritual leaders* (Thomas 3). Their learning may serve not to liberate, but to lock others out. And when you begin to question them, when you challenge the house of cards, expect resistance (Thomas 16). They may see you not as a seeker, but as a threat.

It's striking that Jesus commands us to be "as sly as snakes." In Genesis, the serpent is the deceiver. In contrast, the dove brings peace to Noah (Genesis 8:11), and descends upon Jesus at His baptism (Mark 1:10)—symbols of purity and divine favor. But Jesus urges us to **embody both**. Gentleness without cunning leaves you vulnerable. Cunning without gentleness becomes manipulation. You must bring the two into one: innocence and insight; compassion and clarity.

When you engage others about faith, don't bark like a frantic poodle. Be a serpent—silent, steady, discerning—**waiting for the moment that truly matters**. Let your words be few, your truth be deep, and your spirit be soaked in love. We are not called to overpower others, but to speak with such grace and presence that even resistance cannot ignore us.

Saying 40

Jesus said, "A grapevine has been planted apart from the Father. Since it is not strong, it will be pulled up by its roots and will perish."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 40

Jesus saw it coming—a second vine, not rooted in the Father, but in human systems. A counterfeit growth. Over time, His radical message of inner transformation was reshaped into a religion, complete with hierarchy, doctrine, and control. The focus shifted from divine intimacy to institutional authority. From communion with the Father to allegiance to the church.

That grapevine grew tall—but not strong. It drew its life from power, not presence. And now, centuries later, we are witnessing its slow uprooting.

Saying 41

Jesus said, "Whoever has something in hand will be given more, and whoever has nothing will be deprived of even the little they have."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 41

Ron Miller gives this interpretation:

A very adult message is embedded in this teaching. Growth doesn't just happen to us. Some sixty-year-olds have had sixty years of experience, others have had one year of experience sixty times. We have to take advantage of the opportunity that is there. If we lost it, we lose all the consequences it would have given birth to, but if we grasp it, we gain all the consequences following from it.

- Ron Miller, *The Gospel of Thomas - A Spiritual Guide* (p.5).

There is a similar version in the canonical gospels.

And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and it will be added to you. For to those who have, more will be given, and from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away."

- Mark 4:24-25 (NRSVUE)

Most of the people Jesus was talking to were illiterate and they could only listen to spiritual leaders and to the teachings of Jesus. Today we could probably translate it to 'pay attention to what you read and to who you listen (on youtube, church, etc)'. In the previous two sayings (39, 40) we have just been warned to be careful of the 'spiritual leaders' who should know better and a false church that will not last. Saying 41 is following on that saying that we should be careful who we listen to, what we watch, read and believe.

Believing in mindless conspiracy theories can lead you down a perilous path of intellectual stagnation. Over time, this unquestioning acceptance erodes critical thinking, leaving you more susceptible to misinformation and increasingly gullible. As these beliefs take root, the fear of admitting you were wrong—both to others and to yourself—can compel you to defend even the most baseless ideas with unwarranted fervor. This cycle not only isolates you from constructive dialogue but also locks you into a mindset where personal pride eclipses the pursuit of truth, stunting personal growth and understanding.

Instead of spending our time watching yet another uninspiring movie—one that neither captivates us nor adds value to our lives—we could choose to read a book on a subject that genuinely interests us. This would not only engage our minds but also encourage curiosity, leading us to ask new questions and seek further understanding. By doing so, we learn, grow, and enrich ourselves, rather than passively sitting in front of the TV like mindless spectators.

The principle that those with very little will lose what they have, while those with more will gain even more, applies universally. In Saying 21, we are advised to be prepared and ensure we have the necessary resources (Thomas 103). This preparation extends beyond spiritual readiness to include mental and physical preparedness. One might think that a major storm like Katrina or the apocalyptic fires in Los Angeles (January 2025) would be a great equalizer, with everyone suffering equally, regardless of wealth. However, this is not the case. Those with financial means had the option to evacuate, stay in hotels, and rebuild easily. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many businesses shut down while others thrived even more.

Work hard to make sure you have something on hand.

Saying 42

Jesus said, "Be passersby."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 42

We are all travelers on a journey, merely passing through. Regardless of our beliefs—whether Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, or Atheist—we are all in the same boat. Every single one of us will face the inevitability of death. So is Jesus just stating the obvious?

No, Jesus did not say 'you are passersby', he said, '**be** passersby'.

Being a passerby is having a specific state of mind. You should not be overly concerned with this world (Thomas 36). Like someone visiting a foreign country on vacation, you should appreciate every moment (Thomas 91) instead of just living on autopilot (work, eat, sleep, repeat). A passerby knows he will be moving on and is therefore ready to move on. He does not dread the day he needs to move on with his journey - it is not about dying but about moving on (Thomas 1). A passerby travels lightly and does not leave a mess behind. We should work hard to make sure we and our loved ones have what they need (Thomas 21), but it should not be all about gathering riches in this world (Thomas 64). We should be ready to move on at any time (Thomas 63). Living everyday to the fullest and appreciating every day with our loved ones.

Saying 43

His disciples told him, "Who are you to say these things to us?"

"You don't understand who I am from what I say to you.

Rather, you have become like the Judeans, for they love the tree but hate its fruit, or they love the fruit but hate the tree."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 43

Over and over in the Gospel of Thomas we see that the disciples don't get Jesus and ask the wrong questions. In the Gospel of Mark, the disciples also never really understood who he was.

People like the idea of Jesus, but they don't want to follow his teachings. The church liked and used the idea of Jesus to start their religion - but they only used his name, rather following Paul and ignoring things that Jesus said.

Saying 44

Jesus said, "Whoever blasphemes against the Father will be forgiven, and whoever blasphemes against the son will be forgiven, but whoever blasphemes against the holy spirit will not be forgiven, either on earth or in heaven."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 44

We find a similar verse in Mark 3.

28 "Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter, 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin"— 30 for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

- Mark 3:28-30

In Mark verse 30 is added - *for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit"*. This is not something that Jesus said, but an observation that the eyewitnesses, or the author of Mark, or a later scribe made. I do not believe the act of saying Jesus had an unclean spirit was the sin against the Holy Spirit.

It starts in Mark 3:20 where first his family thought he was crazy and wanted to stop him (21), then the scribes accused him of doing it with the help of demons (22). Jesus then explains that one should not be divided (24) and that you first need to tie up the strong man before ransacking a house (27). Directly after that, he talks about sinning against the Holy Spirit that cannot be forgiven as it is an eternal sin.

The sin that cannot be forgiven, is when the Holy Spirit guides you in a certain way, but then, because you listen to family or leaders (scribes), you allow yourself to be tied up (Thomas 35) and you are split into two (Thomas 11). This is the eternal sin because it sends you on a path where you will never discover the real Jesus and when you realize your mistake, it might be too late (Thomas 38).

Saying 45

Jesus said, "Grapes are not harvested from thorn trees, nor are figs gathered from thistles, for they yield no fruit.

Good persons produce good from what they've stored up; bad persons produce evil from the wickedness they've stored up in their hearts, and say evil things. For from the overflow of the heart they produce evil."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 45

Another teaching of Jesus that is rejected by Christianity. People will follow a christian leader because of what he confesses to be, a born again christian, while ignoring the things he does. They will write off the bad he did and is doing as *he is simply a sinful human being, like all of us*. That is not what Jesus taught.

We get a similar version in the Gospel of Matthew, but then Matthew adds the following:

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23 Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; go away from me, you who behave lawlessly.'

- Matthew 7:21-23

Saying 46

Jesus said, "From Adam to John the Baptist, among those born of women, no one is so much greater than John the Baptist that his eyes should not be averted.

But I have said that whoever among you becomes a child will recognize the kingdom and will become greater than John."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 46

Jesus said: From Adam to John the Baptist, no one born of a woman is above John the Baptist, so that he should not lower his eyes. But I have said: Whoever among you becomes like an infant will know the Kingdom and be greater than John.

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 46 (Stevan Davies translation)

No one, not Moses, Elijah, Isiah, David or anyone else is much greater than John the baptist and they all should lower their eyes. But if *you* become like an infant, *you* will be greater than all of them! Stop and think on that for a moment!

Now, when you become an infant, you become last (many of the first will become last and will become a single one). Being last means you do not see yourself as important. It is not about how important you are. It is about knowing who you are, a child of the living Father (Thomas 3) and ruling over all (Thomas 2). Not by being the boss of anyone, but being subject to none but God the Father.

Saying 47

Jesus said, "A person cannot mount two horses or bend two bows.

And a slave cannot serve two masters, otherwise that slave will honour the one and offend the other.

"Nobody drinks aged wine and immediately wants to drink young wine. Young wine is not poured into old wineskins, or they might break, and aged wine is not poured into a new wineskin, or it might spoil.

An old patch is not sewn onto a new garment, since it would create a tear."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 47

Jesus did not teach a different form of Judaism. He did not teach a flow-out of Judaism. What Jesus taught was radically different. The real teachings of the historical Jesus are equally foreign to Christians today. Will Christians today really accept the historical Jesus? - I think most will not. Too much is at stake for those who wield religion to gain political control over other people or even over whole countries.

Jesus repeats the principle of not being divided over and over. A way to divide yourself is trying to serve two masters. By choosing one, you have to say no to the other. You cannot mix the old with the new. Mainstream Christianity is that - a mixture of what they like from the Old Testament with the new. A mixture of organized religion mixed with having a personal relationship with God.

Jesus is clearly talking about the Old Testament Jewish laws and saying that you have to choose. If you want to follow his teachings but then go back to the old, you will eat what is dead and be split into two (Thomas 11).

Saying 48

Jesus said, "If two make peace with each other in a single house, they will say to the mountain, 'Move from here!' and it will move."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 48

Becoming one and being undivided are found throughout Thomas (for example Thomas 22) while being divided is seen as something bad even in the gospel of Mark (Mark 3:24, Thomas 11). In Mark we also see that if you want to move a mountain, your **words** and your **thoughts/feelings** (heart) **should become one** (aligned).

*22 Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. 23 Truly I tell you, **if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and if you do not doubt in your heart but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you.***

- Mark 11:22-23

Saying 48 is a bit different as it seems to be referring to two people staying in a house (spouses?) and they only need to make peace and don't need to become one. The word peace comes from a word that means 'to make one', but I think Jesus is pointing out that the unity required by a couple to move mountains does not need to be perfect. As long as they make peace and agree that the mountain needs to be moved.

Moving a mountain is obviously a metaphor. Nowadays, driving through a mountain pass can be an enjoyable experience, offering breathtaking scenery as you cruise in a comfortable, air-conditioned vehicle while listening to your favorite travel playlist. However, in the first century, encountering a mountain on your route was far from delightful. People of that era grasped the

metaphor's significance more keenly, as a mountain symbolized a daunting obstacle that needed to be overcome.

To overcome the mountains you will face, you will need to be focused with the faith described by Jesus in Mark 11. There are mountains that need to be tackled as a team with your life partner, for example finances, purchasing a house, etc. It is vital that you and your partner work as a team in order to achieve your goals. You cannot stay with someone with whom you cannot make peace.

As seen in Mark's version, it also means that you should be whole and undivided. That you can only move your mountain when you are focused and your words, thoughts and feelings are aligned - are one.

Saying 49

Jesus said, "Congratulations to those who are alone and chosen, for you will find the kingdom. For you have come from it, and you will return there again."

- Gospel of Tomas, saying 49

Being alone doesn't mean one should be lonely. We are instructed to love and protect our friends (Thomas 25). The true teachings of Jesus will never become mainstream. The concept of Jesus is well-known and loved, but who he really was and what he really taught is not (Thomas 43). Those who stand alone are the ones who face resistance for their beliefs (Thomas 16). Standing alone also signifies that finding the kingdom is about a personal relationship with God, rather than joining a church or group (Thomas 16, 23, 75).

In Thomas, being a human means you are created in God's image. You have the light of God within you (Thomas 50) and it is up to you if you will bring forth this light (Thomas 24). We come from great wealth (Thomas 85). We come from God and will return there again.

This message is drastically different from the Gospel of John that says we are from below and Jesus is from above (John 8:23). In John Jesus is God's *only* begotten Son. Thomas however says we need to know ourselves, we need to understand that we are children of the living Father (Thomas 3).

Returning to the kingdom from which we come can also have to do with the fact that when we were a child seven days old (Thomas 4), we were untouched by religion, we were whole. But then, as we grew we became split into two because of religion and pressures from society (Thomas 11). We can however return to that state of being whole and become a child (Thomas 4, 22). We will then be able to enter the kingdom from which we originally came.

Saying 50

Jesus said,

"If they say to you, 'Where have you come from?' say to them, 'We have come from the light, from the place where the light came into being by itself, established [itself], and appeared in their image.'

If they say to you, 'Is it you?' say, 'We are its children, and we are the chosen of the living Father.'

If they ask you, 'What is the evidence of your Father in you?' say to them, 'It is motion and rest.'"

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 50

As children of the living Father, we must be so different, so alien, that people would want to ask the question, *where have you come from?* We can then answer that we come from the light - the creation power of God. The light came into being by itself - scientists can explain how things evolved through the theory of evolution, but they cannot explain how the first spark of life came into existence. The light appeared in the images of the Creator (or creators, in Genesis 1:26 God says 'Let *US* make ..'). In sayings 83 and 84 we see that light creates our images (visions, dreams).

Many believe that we are God. Jesus says that is not true. We are only the children of the living Father.

What evidence do we have of the Father? The *only* evidence we can have is when people look at our lives and see something different. What is it that they will see that is different? It is motion and it is rest.

It might sound strange at first, until you think about it in context with what Jesus taught. A lot of the sayings are about making the two one (Thomas 22, 106). Here we have two opposites, motion and rest that must exist within us in perfect harmony, combined into a united, single, whole. Think of the yin and yang symbol. In eastern philosophy like Daoism the two opposites must exist in perfect harmony. The one cannot exist without the other.



Jesus did not teach Daoism or eastern philosophy. Daoism and others however did discover some truth about God because they lived in and studied the same world, the same creation created by one Creator. The yin and yang symbolizes two opposites, being harmonious into a single one. Heat and cold, light and darkness, male and female. The one cannot exist without the other and each one contains a bit of the other. For example, day contains shadows and night contains stars.

In more or less the same way, Jesus said that we should make the two into one, upper and lower, outside and inside, male and female (Thomas 22). So why did Jesus choose motion and rest as the two opposites as evidence of the Father within us? Because almost all the teachings of Jesus can be grouped into these two opposites.

We need to discover the interpretation of the sayings of Jesus (Thomas 1), look for the truth (Thomas 2) and also discover who we are (Thomas 3). It is not just believing in Jesus or accepting Jesus as your saviour as orthodox Christianity teaches. It requires work from our side, it requires effort, it requires searching, learning, growing. It requires movement. Jesus told us to make sure we have something on hand (Thomas 41) and to work hard to be prepared for this world, to have the resources we will need (Thomas 21). As we work hard to be prepared there will be progress, there will be movement.

Work (movement) cannot however exist on its own. If you are only focused on work you will not enter the places of the Father (Thomas 64). The principle of rest was very important to Jesus (Thomas 27, 60). Jesus told his disciples to go away to a quiet place to rest after they have been busy (Mark 6:31). Jesus told us we will find rest in him and his workload is light (Matthew 11:28-30). You need to be well balanced, there should be movement and rest.

When you have this balance in your life, you will at each stage of your life be ready to move on. You will be a passerby (Thomas 42). You will know that you have done all you can to be ready mentally and spiritually as well as preparing for those you leave behind (Thomas 21). You will therefore be a passerby that is ready to enter the eternal rest (Thomas 51) at every stage of your life. Rest is also about being content, being free from always wanting more (Thomas 86).

As mentioned when discussing yin and yang, the two opposites must become a single oneness, but each half also contains a bit of the other. So also with the 'rest of the dead' that will take place (Thomas 51).

An object is said to be at rest if it does not change its position with respect to its surroundings with time.

- Scientific definition of rest

When you observe a tree with birds flying around it, the birds are in motion while the tree is at rest, but only relative to its surroundings. The tree is actually in constant motion. It grows slowly, moves as the Earth rotates, travels around the sun, and our solar system moves within the

galaxy. If you consider it, the state of rest for the tree is far from being completely still and devoid of movement.

In the same way I believe we are now in motion and when the time comes for each one of us to pass on we will enter our rest. The rest we enter will however not be devoid of movement.

The evidence of the Father within us is movement and it is rest. We live a life where we incorporate and apply all the teachings of Jesus so that we experience progress, growth, life - movement. At the same time our life is filled with rest where we experience time with our Father, in nature, with family and friends. A life defined by movement but also looking forward to passing over to eternal rest. A life where we discovered the interpretations of the teachings of Jesus and will therefore not taste death (Thomas 1) but enter the eternal rest (Thomas 51).

Saying 51

His disciples said to him, "When will the rest for the dead take place, and when will the new world come?"

He said to them, "What you are looking forward to has come, but you don't know it."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 51

This saying clearly goes against the idea of orthodox Christianity that the Kingdom of God is something that we need to wait for, a golden city that will arrive in the future (according to Revelation). The kingdom of the Father is inside of us and outside of us (Thomas 3), it is spread over the world and people don't see it (Thomas 113).

Jesus was not the Messiah the Jews expected or wanted. In the same way, the kingdom of God is not what mainstream Christianity expects or wants. Instead of putting the work in to become a better person, to find the truth, and to be a light in the world that makes this world a better place, Christians would rather pay a magic prayer and wait for a make-belief city of gold.

For more on this see [The Apocalyptic view of Jesus](#).

Saying 52

His disciples said to him, "Twenty-four prophets have spoken in Israel, and they all spoke of you."

He said to them, "You have disregarded the living one who is in your presence, and have spoken of the dead."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 52

The disciples of Jesus again get it wrong, as a lot of Christians do today. They want to prove that Jesus really was the Messiah of the Hebrew Bible. They try to do that by finding prophecies in the Hebrew Bible about Jesus. This idea of finding prophecies about Jesus started shortly after his crucifixion and became gradually more important. We can see that when we compare the gospel of Mark to Matthew and Luke. Especially in the Gospel of Matthew, we can see where the author has gone too far by linking Jesus to prophecies, and sometimes not even prophecies but events in the Hebrew Bible.

You only need to read some of the well known prophecies about Jesus like the virgin birth, Jesus being called out of Egypt or the well known Isaiah 53 in context in the Old Testament to realize it is not a prophecy about Jesus.

The first followers of Jesus were Jews, and most of them were unwilling to completely leave their Jewish religion behind even when Jesus clearly said that they should choose between the old and the new (Thomas 47, 8). It is these early Jewish followers that tried to link Jesus to the Hebrew Bible and at the time the Greek speaking believers started writing the canonical gospels, these ideas were already well known and passed on.

Whether or not the prophets of the Old Testament really prophesied about Jesus seems unimportant and irrelevant to Jesus according to this saying. What is important is that we focus on what Jesus taught.

Saying 53

His disciples said to him, "is circumcision useful or not?"

He said to them, "If it were useful, their father would produce children already circumcised from their mother. Rather, the true circumcision in spirit has become profitable in every respect."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 53

I agree with the interpretation of Stevan Davies on saying 53.

One sees in Paul's letters that circumcision was symbolic of the agreement to keep Torah as a whole. It was (and is) to Judaism what baptism is to Christianity: a ritual that initiated babies and adults into the religion and symbolized the adoption of the religion. A question concerning circumcision features a single part that signifies the whole. So the greater question would be: "Is keeping the Torah, the law of Judea, required or not?"

- The Gospel of Thomas Annotated and Explained, Stevan Davies, p.70

It is not about following religious rules, regulations or rituals. It is not about religion but about your personal relationship with God and how that changes who you are.

Saying 54

Jesus said, "Congratulations to the poor, for to you belongs Heaven's kingdom."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 54

Another translation reads: *Blessed are the poor.*

The Gospel of Matthew adds '...poor in spirit' (Matthew 5:3), but Thomas and Luke (Luke 6:20) do not. To understand what Jesus was saying, we need to understand that 'poor' and 'the rich' in the time of Jesus does not mean the same thing as it does today.

In [agrarian society](#) wealth was based on the ownership of land. Most land was controlled by a small number of wealthy, elite families. The landowners rented the land for tenant farmers, who - together with their families - actually worked the land. There were rich Romans who acquired extensive domains in the provinces, which they normally held as absentee landlords. About 90% of people got their living from agriculture and any large-scale commercial or manufacturing activity was rare. Inequality was typical for all the societies in the Ancient world. There was no middle class. Unlike the cities of today where there are large companies and factories, the ancient city was largely parasitic on its surrounding villages.

Nobody likes paying taxes, but today we understand that at least some of that money will be used to provide social services, public hospitals, police, etc. In the time of Jesus the rich took taxes but provided almost nothing in return. The Roman armies were used to expand the roman empire and enforce the collection of taxes, they were not there to serve and protect the people.

It is understandable that people in the time of Jesus saw the tax collectors as evil and did not want anything to do with them (Mark 2:15-17, Matthew 9:10-11). The rich dominated the poor and made their lives miserable (James 2:6). They had a 'soft life' and knew very little about the real world or how to survive if it wasn't for their rich inheritance (Thomas 78).

The rich have power, and the more power they have the more they want (Thomas 81). They become so focused on their business and money that they can no longer enter the kingdom of God (Thomas 64, Mark 10:17-23), the money starts to control them.

No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

- Matthew 6:24

The poor on the other hand were not a small group of unsuccessful people who lived in poverty. It was 90% of the population who knew how to live off the land, who had the drive to work hard to survive (Thomas 69). They did not live by taking from others and giving nothing in return.

Today we think of the poor as people who live in poverty. Jesus did not think you are blessed when you live in poverty, if you live in poverty you do not know who you are (Thomas 3).

Having wealth is also not seen by Jesus as a bad thing. We are encouraged to make sure we have what we need (Thomas 41, 21, 103) and that we can even help others who are in need (Thomas 95).

Jesus said, "Let one who has become wealthy reign, and let one who has power renounce ."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 81

The power that we should renounce is the power that came with money in the ancient world, the power to control and abuse the poor. We however do not need to renounce wealth.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

- Matthew 5:3

I do not believe 'poor in spirit' means humble as poor in spirit means you are lacking in spirit. I think what it means is we should be **poor** in spirit - meaning you can have wealth but still live, think, and have a poor attitude - not poor as we understand it today, but poor as Jesus meant it:

- Not someone living in poverty or lacking anything and someone that can optionally have wealth.
- Someone who knows how to live off the land, with the drive to work hard and survive.
- Someone that doesn't look down on others or abuse others who have less.
- Someone who is not controlled by money and not dependent on it.
- Someone whose life does not revolve around making money.

Saying 55

Jesus said, "Whoever does not hate father and mother cannot be my disciple, and whoever does not hate brothers and sisters, and carry the cross as I do, will not be worthy of me."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 55

Ron Miller had the following to say about this saying.

Since this text can also be found in the canonical gospels, we find countless commentaries reminding us of the outlandish hyperbole so common in the Middle Eastern discourse. Jesus is talking about priorities, not about literally hating others, especially the very parents we are enjoined to honor by one of the Ten Commandments. And yet, I think we must be cautious in declawing this teaching.

Families are sometimes hazardous to our health. They can function like the “old wineskins” in the last saying [Saying 47]. They often represent change-resistant habits. “This is how we’ve always done it”. As parents, we have strong ego hooked into our children. Something in us wants them to replicate us. We might want them to carry on with our business or adhere to our religion or continue to live in our town or vote in our party. And this is dangerous. This is ego.

I once heard David Steindl-Rast speak at Loyola University. A woman in the audience expressed concern that her children were not going to church with her anymore. He made an interesting distinction. He said that wanting our children to have a spiritual path is laudable. But wanting them to have our spiritual path is ego.

- Ron Miller, The Gospel of Thomas, a Spiritual Guidebook (p.14)

Although it might in part be a bit of a hyperbole, it doesn’t change the fact that Jesus is saying we might sometimes need to go against what our parents taught and what they expect from us. This is so important, that Jesus repeats this saying with a slight variation.

"Whoever does not hate [father] and mother as I do cannot be my [disciple], and whoever does [not] love [father and] mother as I do cannot be my [disciple]. For my mother [...], but my true [mother] gave me life."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 101

Now this sounds more like Jesus - *if you do not love father and mother as I do, you cannot be my disciple.*

He talks about the first mother you must hate and says, *for my mother ...* and then unfortunately there is a piece missing. The second mother that you must love is the one who gave Jesus (and us) life - he is talking about the person who delivered you into this world.

Now we know that Jesus said that the most people we will fight with because of our faith, are our family members.

Jesus said, "Perhaps people think that I have come to cast peace upon the world. They do not know that I have come to cast conflicts upon the earth: fire, sword, war. For there will be five in a house: there'll be three against two and two against three, father against son and son against father, and they will stand alone.

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 16

.. but even if we do fight with our family members, that doesn’t mean we should hate them.

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you

- Matthew 5:44

So we know we must love our family members, our mother that gave us life, then what is the version of our mother and father that we must hate?

The answer comes in the last part of the saying we are looking into.

*Jesus said, "Whoever does not hate father and mother cannot be my disciple, and whoever does not hate brothers and sisters, **and carry the cross as I do, will not be worthy of me.**"*

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 55

Today the 'cross' is something good because Christianity has romanticized the idea. The cross is a symbol of victory over death and the forgiveness of sins. Carrying your cross to most Christians means to them they must be willing to lay down their life for Christ. Although the idea is good, we must be willing to lay down our lives, I do not believe that is what Jesus meant. I do not think that is what his followers understood.

When Jesus spoke these words, the crucifixion of Jesus had not taken place yet. The cross was not a symbol of victory over death or laying down your life for God. The cross was a terrible way to die and it was reserved for the worst criminals - the filth of society.

Jesus also didn't say we must die on the cross like he will, but that we must carry the cross like he does.

The image that his followers would have had when he said this, is someone walking with a cross, on his way to be crucified. It would have been someone that was judged, condemned and ridiculed by the people. It would have been a terrible image of being alone, judged and humiliated. The 'carry our cross' means that we must be willing, like Jesus, to be judged and condemned even by those we love the most - father and mother.

In Mark we read a story of where Jesus' family judged him (Mark 3:21). Some translations say his family, others use the words 'his own people' or 'those who he belonged to'. This is important. In the following verse (Mark 3:22) we read that the spiritual leaders of that time judged him and said he was possessed.

In response to his own family and spiritual leaders judging him, he said the following:

- A kingdom divided cannot stand (Mark 3:24) and a house divided against itself cannot stand (Mark 3:25). This again is important, Jesus starts with our wider circle (spiritual leaders) and ends with our house (family). We know how much Jesus talked about the importance of not being divided in ourselves. You cannot allow your family or people you look up to (spiritual leaders) to split you in two.
- He talks about a strong man that must be tied up before a house can be plundered (Mark 3:27). You cannot allow your family or anyone else to tie you down, restrict you from living the way Jesus wants you to.
- He talks about sin against the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:29) - where we tell ourselves lies just to comply with those we love, but deep down we know it is not the right path.

- He ends with his true family, those that do the will of the Father (Mark 3:34).

We can see how strongly Jesus reacted when those he belonged to (family), those he was supposed to respect and admire, judged him.

A muslim or buddhist on the other side of the world doesn't care what you believe. It is your own family members and those they see as spiritual leaders that will put pressure on you to believe what they do. And we have a very strong and deep disposition to fall for the pressure they will put us under.

We have a need to belong and a fear of rejection, and with good reason.

As clever as human beings are, we rely on social groups for survival. We evolved to live in cooperative societies, and for most of human history we depended on those groups for our lives. Like hunger or thirst, our need for acceptance emerged as a mechanism for survival. "A solitary human being could not have survived during the six million years of human evolution while we were living out there on the African savannah," Leary says.

With today's modern conveniences, a person can physically survive a solitary existence. But that existence is probably not a happy one. Thanks to millions of years of natural selection, being rejected is still painful. That's not just a metaphor. Naomi Eisenberger, PhD, at the University of California, Los Angeles, Kipling Williams, PhD, at Purdue University, and colleagues found that social rejection activates many of the same brain regions involved in physical pain (Science, 2003).

- [American Physiological Association](#)

Being part of a social group is a good thing. Studies have shown that people who are part of social groups live longer and are happier.

Jesus told us to love and protect our friends.

Jesus said, "Love your friends like your own soul, protect them like the pupil of your eye."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 25

It is good to be part of the group, but we must not be controlled by the group. We must be willing to go against our need for acceptance and inclusion.

The only way to truly do that is to 'hate mother and father', not your actual mother or father, but your need to belong, to be accepted. Your need for approval. Hate the idea of a mother and father that you need validation from. Reject that old part of you that still needs approval from your parents, family members and pastors. But love your mother, father, and brother and those who judge you.

We need to go against our instinct to seek approval - and that is why Jesus uses such strong words.

Saying 56

In my interpretation of Saying 56, I will also incorporate the interpretations of Sayings 80 and 110, as they are interconnected. Stevan Davies highlights that the Gospel of Thomas possesses a subtle structure (The Gospel of Thomas, Annotated and Explained, p. 136). I believe that these three sayings are deliberately not part of one saying and spread out to indicate that each saying requires spiritual growth before continuing to the next. Each level must be reached before continuing to the next.

Jesus said, "Whoever has come to know the world has discovered a carcass, and whoever has discovered a carcass, of that person the world is not worthy."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 56

A carcass represents something that is lifeless and decayed. However, not everything in the world shares this state of death and decay. The Kingdom of God resides within us and also manifests around us (Thomas 3). The Kingdom is spread throughout the earth (Thomas 113). Jesus teaches that if we split a piece of wood or lift a stone, we will find him there (Thomas 77). Clearly, considering the entirety of Jesus' teachings, it is evident that He did not imply that everything in this world, or all material things, are inherently bad.

What then is the 'carcass' that Jesus is referring to? It is not creation, it is not nature, it is the socialized world. On the next layer the carcass is also the 'old us' that was living in a miserable state, being dependent on this socialized world, trying to be part of something that is dead.

As children, we possess innocence and a beautiful perspective of the world. We are still free from religion (Thomas 4), free from what divides us. Free from race, sexual orientation, or social status. But as we grow older, the world and religion starts to divide us, to split us into two (Thomas 11). We become broken people, hurting in ourselves and hurting others. We witness the depths of human malice and hypocrisy, particularly evident through the lens of social media. We realize that the religion instilled in us from childhood leads to division, conflicts, and is built on falsehoods. We come to understand that the world can be unfair, harsh and unforgiving.

As a child of God, you need to get to know the world. You need to see through its illusions. If you cannot see the 'world' for what it is. It is only when you have discovered the carcass in this world, that you will be willing to do what is required of you. To seek the truth no matter how disturbing it might be (Thomas 2). You are then ready for the next level.

Jesus said, "Whoever has come to know the world has discovered the body, and whoever has discovered the body, of that one the world is not worthy."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 80

Unlike a carcass, the body is not something that is bad. In Thomas 29 we have seen that the body is not just our physical body, but our body and mind. We have seen that it is something good that can build up our spirit. When we make the two into one, we get a new body - *eyes in place of an eye, a hand in place of a hand, a foot in place of a foot* (Thomas 22).

During the first stage, when we got to know the world, all we could see was the carcass - death, decay and rot. But now, we discovered the new body that is no longer divided in itself. We now no longer taste death (Thomas 1).

We are not simply a new person, being spiritually born again as Christianity teaches. For Jesus, it is a holistic approach. Our spirit and body (the upper and the lower - Thomas 22) must become one before we get *eyes in place of an eye, a hand in place of a hand, a foot in place of a foot* (Thomas 22). It is not (just) about getting to know the Bible, it is about getting to know this world. It is about seeking the truth (Thomas 2) and uncovering the lies.

When we are whole again, undivided in ourselves and no longer someone that will try to please society, leaders or family. Then we are ready to move to the next level.

Jesus said, "Let one who has found the world, and has become wealthy, renounce the world."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 110

We got to know this world and we understand that it is a carcass. We then progressed and became a new person (Thomas 22, 80) that no longer only saw the carcass - we no longer tasted death (Thomas 1). This new person that consists of a body and spirit contains great wealth and potential (Thomas 29). We are no longer a slave of the world, religion, society or even family. We can control our environment so that *these stones will serve* (Thomas 19) us.

We can *use* the world to gain wealth (Thomas 81, 110), but we should renounce it - not become part of it again. Because if we eat what is dead (the carcass), we will be split into two (Thomas 11).

As we can see, unlike the idea of Christianity where being reborn is purely spiritual, the real Jesus had a much more practical approach. Jesus spent a lot of time healing the sick, because our physical bodies are important. It is part of who we are. So is our environment and the world we live in. Reading the Bible is important, but so is getting to know this world.

Saying 57

Jesus said, The Father's kingdom is like a person who has [good] seed. His enemy came during the night and sowed weeds among the good seed. The person did not let the workers pull up the weeds, but said to them, "No, otherwise you might go to pull up

the weeds and pull up the wheat along with them." For on the day of the harvest the weeds will be conspicuous, and will be pulled up and burned.

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 57

I have a lot to say about organized religion and Christianity in this book. As Jesus said, I think it harms your spirit (Thomas 14), but that doesn't mean that there will not be true children of God in every Christian denomination. We should leave the judging for God.

Saying 58

Jesus said, "Congratulations to the person who has toiled and has found life."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 58

The overall message of Thomas is that you should find the interpretation of the sayings of Jesus (Thomas 1), that you should seek the truth (Thomas 2), find out who you really are and find the kingdom of the Father that is inside of you and outside of you (Thomas 3). You have to bring forth what is within you (Thomas 70) to find salvation. According to orthodox Christianity, all we need to do is pray a magical prayer and believe that Jesus died for your sins. The message in Thomas is we should labor to find life. We must be adults. We must take responsibility for our spiritual growth.

We are called to make the two one, that also includes the upper and the lower. I believe the labour we are called to do is not just spiritual, but also physical. We should work with great strength to be prepared against this world (Thomas 21) and to have something on hand (Thomas 41).

God is not just interested in our spirit, but in us as a whole. We should work hard holistically - to find the life God wants us to live.

Saying 59

Jesus said, "Look to the living one as long as you live, otherwise you might die and then try to see the living one, and you will be unable to see."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 59

The "living one" is not necessarily Jesus. The "living one" could be God as God is referred to as the "Living Father" (Thomas 3). "You might die" can mean when we actually die, but also when we reach a point in our lives where we taste death (Thomas 1), where we refused to look for Jesus for too long (Thomas 38), where we have committed the sin that cannot be forgiven (Thomas 44).

Saying 60

He saw a Samaritan carrying a lamb and going to Judea. He said to his disciples, "that person ... around the lamb." They said to him, "So that he may kill it and eat it." He said to them, "He will not eat it while it is alive, but only after he has killed it and it has become a carcass."

They said, "Otherwise he can't do it."

He said to them, "So also with you, seek for yourselves a place for rest, or you might become a carcass and be eaten."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 60



There is a piece missing in the manuscript. We only have "that person [missing section] around the lamb". It could be "tied rope" or "had his arms around" or something similar.

We are warned again not to allow ourselves to be tied up (Thomas 35) or to be controlled by others. We are again shown the importance of finding a place of rest (Thomas 27). We are here to serve one another but not be controlled by anyone (Mark 10:42-44). We should work hard but also make time to rest. That is the evidence of the Father within us - motion and rest (Thomas 50). We need this balanced life to truly live and not taste death (Thomas 1).

Saying 61

Jesus said, "Two will recline on a couch; one will die, one will live."

Salome said, "Who are you mister? You have climbed onto my couch and eaten from my table as if you are from someone."

Jesus said to her, "I am the one who comes from what is whole. I was granted from the things of my Father."

"I am your disciple."

"For this reason I say, if one is whole, one will be filled with light, but if one is divided, one will be filled with darkness."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 61

Two people will be in exactly the same circumstances. Born in the same place, maybe even the same family. Initially, they will have the same opportunities and resources. But then one person will live (thrive, experiencing life, growth, health, and joy) while the other one will die (experiencing physical death or suffering from decay, illness, and despair). The one who lives is the one who followed the teachings of Jesus (Thomas 1), who was prepared (Thomas 21). Jesus is saying, don't blame your circumstances, you create your world.

The metaphor of two men sitting on a couch parallels the example of the two individuals in the field from Matthew and Luke. Contrary to popular belief, particularly among those who subscribe to pre-tribulation rapture, you do not want to be the one who is taken away.

36 For as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, 39 and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so, too, will be the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Then two will be in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. 41 Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken, and one will be left. 42 Keep awake, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

- Matthew 24:36-42

The ones that were taken away in the time of Noah, were then ones that were not prepared and they were taken away to death. This is even made more clear in Luke.

35 There will be two women grinding meal together; one will be taken and the other left." 37 Then they asked him, "Where, Lord?" He said to them, "Where the corpse is, there the eagles will gather."

- Luke 17:35-37

It is unbelievable how people believing in pretribulation rapture took this verse out of context. The idea of one being taken away is someone being swept away that was not prepared, that did not take proper precautions - as Noah did. It is not just about being physically prepared (Thomas 21) but about being spiritually and mentally strong and prepared for anything.

Jesus goes further and says he comes from what is whole and that some things of the Father were given to him. This shows a more humble Jesus, similar to what we find in Mark, but in contrast to the Jesus we find in John.

If you are whole, you will be filled with light. If not, there will be darkness. Are you a shining light in this dark world? Yes, people don't know what you are going through - but we are all sitting on the same couch. Be the one that lives.

Saying 62

*Jesus said, "I disclose my mysteries to those [who are worthy] of [my] mysteries.
Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing."*

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 62

Jesus begins by affirming that his deepest teachings—his mysteries—are not for everyone. This echoes Matthew 13:11 and Mark 4:11, where he says the “mysteries of the kingdom” are given to some but hidden from others. In Thomas, however, this isn't about exclusion—it's about readiness. Only those who have shed the need for external validation (Thomas 55) can truly receive the inner teachings.

The mysteries aren't handed to you by a church or a pastor—they're revealed inwardly to those who are spiritually prepared.

Saying 63

Jesus said, There was a rich person who had a great deal of money. He said, "I shall invest my money so that I may sow, reap, plant, and fill my storehouses with produce, that I may lack nothing." These were the things he was thinking in his heart, but that very night he died. Anyone here with two ears had better listen!

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 63

Jesus said we should work hard and be prepared (Thomas 21), that we should make sure we have something on hand (Thomas 41), but we need to make sure to live every day to the fullest and that we are ready to move on by being passers by (Thomas 42). Like a child (Thomas 4), we should cherish the present moment. Life isn't solely about hard work and making money (Thomas 64) or planning for the future. Every moment is precious and a gift from God (Thomas 91).

Saying 64

Jesus said, A person was receiving guests. When he had prepared the dinner, he sent his slave to invite the guests. The slave went to the first and said to that one, "My master invites you." That one said, "Some merchants owe me money; they are coming to me tonight. I have to go and give them instructions. Please excuse me from dinner." The slave went to another and said to that one, "My master has invited you." That one said to the slave, "I have bought a house, and I have been called away for a day. I shall have no time." The slave went to another and said to that one, "My master invites you." That one said to the slave, "My friend is to be married, and I am to arrange the banquet. I shall not be able to come. Please excuse me from dinner." The slave went to another and said to that one, "My master invites you." That one said to the slave, "I have bought an estate, and I am going to collect the rent. I shall not be able to come. Please excuse me." The slave returned and said to his master, "Those whom you invited to dinner have asked to be excused." The master said to his slave, "Go out on the streets and bring back whomever you find to have dinner."

Buyers and merchants [will] not enter the places of my Father.

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 64

This saying follows saying 63 and obviously goes together. Again, Jesus is not telling us that we should only focus on the spiritual and not be concerned about making a living, he repeatedly told us of the importance of working hard, being prepared and making sure we have what we need (Thomas 21,41,103). He however also told us of the importance of rest (Thomas 27, 50, Mark 6:31) - not just taking a nap, but taking time to be in nature, read a book, study the scriptures or spending time with family and friends (Thomas 25).

This world will attempt to take everything from us (Thomas 21), often by keeping us perpetually busy. We must pause, take a break, and ensure we are still okay, that our spirituality remains intact (Thomas 97).

We must learn to say 'No'. After a long day of hard work, it's important to acknowledge when we've done enough, regardless of the urgency of the project or the magnitude of the problem. When asked to help arrange a wedding (or anything else), we should be clear about our limits: "I can help with this, but I don't have time for that." Our responsibility is not to make others happy, but to ensure our own happiness.

This is the evidence of the Father within us, that we can live a well balanced life, achieving growth (motion) while also experiencing the Father's rest (Thomas 50).

Saying 65

He said, A [...] person owned a vineyard and rented it to some farmers, so they could work it and he could collect its crop from them. He sent his slave so the farmers would give him the vineyard's crop. They grabbed him, beat him, and almost killed him, and the slave returned and told his master. His master said, "Perhaps he didn't know them." He sent another slave, and the farmers beat that one as well. Then the master sent his son and said, "Perhaps they'll show my son some respect." Because the farmers knew that he was the heir to the vineyard, they grabbed him and killed him. Anyone here with two ears had better listen!

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 65

This saying is similar to Mark 12:1-12, Luke 20:9-19, Matthew 21:33-46. The canonical gospels give a bit more context and add that the Pharisees were not happy to hear this.

When they realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowd. So they left him and went away.

- Mark 12:12

The Pharisees realized that Jesus was saying that they would eventually kill him because of his message. People fail to grasp the significance of this parable. Jesus never explains that he needed to die for our sins. Think about that for a second, according to Christianity, the most important, most significant thing that Jesus did, yet Jesus never talks about it. Not once. In this parable Jesus is telling us why he believed he needed to die. He had to come to bring a message because people didn't listen to those who came before him (the prophets). He is going to be killed because they didn't like the message. A message that God gave to them before, but they didn't listen.

Isaiah gave the same message as Jesus did.

*What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?
says the Lord;*

*I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams
and the fat of fed beasts;*

*I do not delight in the blood of bulls
or of lambs or of goats.*

*12 When you come to appear before me,
who asked this from your hand?*

Trample my courts no more!

*13 Bringing offerings is futile;
incense is an abomination to me.*

*New moon and Sabbath and calling of convocation—
I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity.*

*14 Your new moons and your appointed festivals
my soul hates;
they have become a burden to me;*

I am weary of bearing them.
15 *When you stretch out your hands,*
I will hide my eyes from you;
even though you make many prayers,
I will not listen;
your hands are full of blood.
16 *Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;*
remove your evil deeds
from before my eyes;
cease to do evil;
17 *learn to do good;*
seek justice;
rescue the oppressed;
defend the orphan;
plead for the widow.
- Isaiah 1:11-17

This message of Isaiah is inline with the message of Jesus. We need to put in the work, we need to repent (stop sinning - yes, it is possible not to have an affair, not to steal) and help others. But it takes effort and people don't like to hear that message. They will rather just go and slash one of their sheep's throats instead. That is much easier. That is why people like sacrifices, it is easy.

This saying (65) and the parable of the wicked tenants in the canonical gospels has a very clear message. Jesus will be killed by wicked people because he came to tell us that the Owner of the vineyard expects something from us. People will not like that message, and they will kill him.

Jesus came anyway, knowing that he would be killed, but he didn't want to be killed. It wasn't necessary. The Father didn't want to sacrifice Jesus for our sins, God thinks sacrifices are useless. People however love the idea of sacrifice because it means something else pays for us. That is why the idea that Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice started shortly after Jesus was killed. It is however clear that Jesus never thought that he had to die for our sins - more on this in the [Atonement section](#).

Saying 66

Jesus said, "Show me the stone that the builders rejected: that is the keystone."
- Gospel of Thomas, saying 66

This saying is familiar, as it appears in the canonical gospels. We all know that Jesus was the rejected stone. Not only was he rejected in the past, but he still is today. While the name of Jesus is well known and Christians claim to follow him, the true essence of who he was and

what he taught is still being rejected. Instead, Christianity has chosen to build on another foundation—Paul.

Although this saying is about Jesus, there's more to it than meets the eye. It appears to be a quote from the Old Testament scripture—Psalm 118:22. Since Jesus rarely quoted scripture, it's essential to pay close attention when he does, and examine the significance of what he chose to reference. Let's have a look at Psalm 118:22 in context.

Psalm 118

*1 O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures forever!*

*2 Let Israel say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”*

*3 Let the house of Aaron say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”*

*4 Let those who fear the Lord say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”*

*5 Out of my distress I called on the Lord;
the Lord answered me and set me in a broad place.*

*6 With the Lord on my side I do not fear.
What can mortals do to me?*

*7 The Lord is on my side to help me;
I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.*

*8 It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to put confidence in mortals.*

*9 It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to put confidence in princes.*

*10 All nations surrounded me;
in the name of the Lord I cut them off!*

*11 They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side;
in the name of the Lord I cut them off!*

*12 They surrounded me like bees;
they blazed like a fire of thorns;
in the name of the Lord I cut them off!*

*13 I was pushed hard, so that I was falling,
but the Lord helped me.*

*14 The Lord is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.*

15 There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous:

*"The right hand of the Lord does valiantly;
16 the right hand of the Lord is exalted;
the right hand of the Lord does valiantly."*

*17 I shall not die, but I shall live
and recount the deeds of the Lord.*

*18 The Lord has punished me severely,
but he did not give me over to death.*

*19 Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the Lord.*

*20 This is the gate of the Lord;
the righteous shall enter through it.*

*21 I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.*

***22 The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.***

*23 This is the Lord's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.*

*24 This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

*25 Save us, we beseech you, O Lord!
O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!*

*26 Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
We bless you from the house of the Lord.*

*27 The Lord is God,
and he has given us light.*

*Bind the festal procession with branches,
up to the horns of the altar.*

*28 You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;
you are my God; I will extol you.*

*29 O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever.*

- Psalm 118

This beautiful psalm is about Israel and possibly David, being prosecuted and standing alone against the nations that surround them. The stone the builders rejected in the context of this Psalm will be the nation Israel and possibly David.

We can see a clear pattern of God choosing the underdog. Israel was this nation of slaves that were chosen by God. David's father didn't think much of him. Jesus was a nobody coming from Nazareth that was an insignificant settlement in Galilee.

When Jesus is quoting Psalm 118, I don't think he is just referring to himself. I believe he is pointing out that our Father champions the underdog. Jesus was definitely the stone that was rejected, but so will be his followers.

As described in Psalm 118, we too will find ourselves surrounded by those who hate and oppose us (Thomas 68). There may come a time when we must sever ties with those who stand against (Thomas 16, 55) us as Israel had 'cut off' those around them (Psalm 118:11). In Psalm 118, we see a nation that stands alone; similarly, we are called to stand firm in solitude (Thomas 16, 49, 75). This nation faced hardships to reach the other side and find life, just as we are called to endure (Thomas 58).

Saying 66 speaks about Jesus, but it also highlights our Father who champions the underdog. If you find yourself as the underdog, take heart—big things are on the horizon.

Saying 67

Jesus said, "Those who know all, but are lacking in themselves, are utterly lacking."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 67

No one is perfect except the Father (Mark 10:18). We are all lacking in one way or another. This saying is talking about knowing and we can therefore understand that the lacking in oneself is lacking knowledge about oneself. The translation of Stevan Davies makes this clear.

Jesus said: One who knows everything else but who does not know himself knows nothing.

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 67 (Stevan Davies translation)

We cannot find the kingdom of God within us if we do not know ourselves. If we do not know ourselves we live in poverty, but if you do know yourself you will understand that you are a child of the living Father (Thomas 3).

Saying 68

Jesus said, "Congratulations to you when you are hated and persecuted; and no place will be found, wherever you have been persecuted."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 68

Jesus said: Blessed are you when they hate and persecute you. No place will be found where they persecuted you.

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 68 (Stevan Davies translation)

Jesus says: "Blessed are you when you are hated and persecuted; but they will not find a position in that place to which they shall pursue you!"

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 68 (Doresse translation)

When you adhere to the authentic teachings of Jesus, you may face judgment and ridicule because organized religion, which Jesus opposed, remains popular. You might encounter some form of persecution, be it emotional, social or simply pressure from family (Thomas 69). If you do face persecution, it signifies that you have stood up for what is right (Thomas 16). Good for you! Saying 68 emphasizes that being persecuted for your beliefs is commendable, and those who attack you will ultimately find no ground to stand on (*they will not find a position in that place to which they shall pursue you*). Their arguments will be exposed as baseless and you will be vindicated.

Saying 69a

Jesus said, "Congratulations to those who have been persecuted in their hearts: they are the ones who have truly come to know the Father."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 69a

Keep in mind that the sayings in the Gospel of Thomas were not originally numbered. I agree with Stevan Davies that Saying 69 is actually two separate sayings.

69a continues where 68 left off. It again talks about blessed are those that have been persecuted, but then adds "*in their hearts*".

Stevan Davies, in his work "Gospel of Thomas Annotated and Explained" (p. 88), and Bart Ehrman, in "Armageddon," point out that the extent of Christian persecution has often been exaggerated throughout history. Today, many Christians claim they are persecuted, despite the fact that most Western countries uphold freedom of religion protected by law. However, emotional and social persecution, not by governments or kings, but by family and other Christians, is prevalent. Following the teachings of Jesus often makes one an outsider, as noted in Thomas 16, leading to isolation. When you experience rejection, bullying, and ostracization, it draws you closer to the Father—the one who always understands and never forsakes you.

Saying 69b

"Congratulations to those who go hungry, so the stomach of the one in want may be filled."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 69b

The canonical gospels present this teaching in different ways. In Matthew's account, it is a hunger for righteousness (Matthew 5:6). In Luke's version, those who are hungry will be satisfied, with no specific reason given for their hunger (Luke 6:21). However, Saying 69b adds a unique twist: individuals go hungry because they give their own food to those even poorer than themselves. In my opinion, the version in the Gospel of Thomas is superior. It's clear why Matthew and Luke opted for a softer interpretation.

We are blessed if we help others, especially if it takes something from us. It might be money and resources that we actually need for ourselves, or it can be our precious time. We are called to help others, not only when it is convenient and costs nothing.

Saying 70

Jesus said, "If you bring forth what is within you, what you have will save you. If you do not have that within you, what you do not have within you [will] kill you."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 70

This saying is similar to saying 24 where Jesus says *'There is light within a person of light, and it shines on the whole world. If it does not shine, it is dark.'* In Thomas 24 the disciples got it wrong, they were looking for Jesus when Jesus told them to look inside of them. Again now, Jesus is saying that we are not saved by something or someone outside of us. We are saved by something within us. The strength of this saying is that it does not tell us what to believe (to be saved) but challenges us to discover what lies hidden within ourselves.

I like how Ron Miller in his book , "The Gospel of Thomas, a guidebook for spiritual practice" (p.5) says: *"We must be adults. We must take responsibility for our spiritual growth. Our salvation is not going to happen without us. For far too long, Christians have been obsessed with this notion that "all is grace" and "all is faith" and there is no room for works. That is one of the most damaging pieces of nonsense ever foisted out on spiritual seekers. ... There is far too much laziness passing itself off as trust in God."*

There is great wealth inside of you (Tomas 29, 85) - you just have to bring it forth.

Saying 71

Jesus said, "I will destroy [this] house, and no one will be able to build it [...]."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 71

It will be difficult to find an interpretation for this saying without a bit more context. In the canonical gospels we get similar (but different) versions.

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

- John 2:19

In John it is not a house but a temple, and the temple is obviously referring to the body of Jesus as it will be raised again in three days. This is in direct contrast to the version in Thomas. However we do know that the Gospel of John was written many decades after the crucifixion of Jesus and that the christology of Jesus evolved and changed a lot from Mark (our earliest canonical gospel) to John. There are also some biblical scholars like Elaine Pagels who believe that the Gospel of John was written as a response to the Gospel of Thomas.

As the Gospel of Mark is our earliest and most reliable canonical gospel, I will focus on Mark's version of this saying.

As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."

- Mark 13:1-2

The version in Mark is a bit closer to Thomas' version. In Mark it is not a house, but the temple. The other significant difference is that Jesus is the one who destroys it in the Gospel of Thomas. However, later in Mark Jesus is being accused of saying exactly that - that he will be the one that destroys the temple.

Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying, "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'"

- Mark 14:57-58

These are not the words of Jesus but someone giving false testimony about Jesus according to the author of Mark. The story that Jesus said he will destroy the temple must however have been going around as the 'false witness' must have gotten the idea from somewhere.

We found the same accusation in Acts.

They set up false witnesses who said, "This man never stops saying things against this holy place and the law, for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses handed on to us."

- Acts 6:13-14

In the accusation in Acts, it is added that not only will Jesus destroy 'this place' but that he will also change the customs of Moses (that he did).

When Stephen responded to the accusations, he never said that Jesus didn't say he will destroy the temple. He responded by saying it is not about the temple.

*48 Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with human hands; as the prophet says,
49 'Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool.
What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord,
or what is the place of my rest?
50 Did not my hand make all these things?'
51 "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do.
- Acts 7:48-51*

We now have a bit more context and can see that the house in Saying 71 might be a reference to the temple or some other organized gathering of Jewish leaders.

If we look at the historical Jesus, who he really was, we can see that he was against organized religion. We find several clues and indications in the canonical gospels (See [Jesus as a Jew and the Jewish law](#)) of that. In the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus is clearly and openly against organized religion (Thomas 4, 6, 11, 14).

I believe when Jesus said the temple will be destroyed, he was talking about the end of organized religion and not necessarily the actual destruction of the temple - although he might have foreseen it, I think it was less important.

Now, organized religion is all but destroyed - but for those that follow the real Jesus, it has been destroyed. For me, Jesus pulled down every brick and freed me from the lie that is organized religion.

Saying 72

*A [person said] to him, "Tell my brothers to divide my father's possessions with me."
He said to the person, "Mister, who made me a divider?"
He turned to his disciples and said to them, "I'm not a divider, am I?"
- Gospel of Thomas, saying 72*

Christians today are so quick to use Jesus (not really his teachings, but more *their* idea of Jesus and the Bible) as their little stick in their little squabbles. From politics to issues that should have nothing to do with religion and Christianity (like the anti-vax campaign for example). I just love how Jesus responded to this man.

Saying 73

Jesus said, "The crop is huge but the workers are few, so beg the harvest boss to dispatch workers to the fields."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 73

We found a similar version in the canonical gospels (Matthew 9:35-38). There is work that needs to be done but the workers are few. There are many Christians, but few true followers of Jesus that are willing to do the work. There is an urgency in this saying. We should have the same sense of urgency when we look at the 'crop' (people in need).

Saying 74

He said, "Lord, there are many around the drinking trough, but there is nothing in the well."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 74



People have a thirst for God, but they end up looking for God in the wrong places. They end up at churches that are only there to take their money and tell them lies. The turn to religion that has been created by men to control others.

Saying 75

Jesus said, "There are many standing at the door, but those who are alone will enter the bridal suite."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 75

The bridal suite is symbolic of where two becomes one (Mark 10:6-8). We are called to become like children and make the two into one (Thomas 22). Becoming one with our Father, one with ourselves, undivided, whole, complete. When we achieve this state, we can enter the kingdom of our Father.

Many will try to achieve this state of oneness (*many standing at the door*), but it is only those who are alone that will enter. Before you can make the two into one, you must become a single one. This concept does not imply isolation, as Jesus underscored the importance of friends (Thomas 25) and family (not necessarily blood relatives - Mark 3:34-35). To stand alone is a common theme in Thomas (Thomas 49). We have been born with a natural desire to fit in, to be accepted by others (see interpretation of Thomas 55). If you truly want to follow Jesus, you have to overcome that desire.

It is not just getting rid of your desire to fit into a church or religious organization, you need to let go of your desire to be accepted and approved by your family and friends (Thomas 55) and be willing to be the outcast, rejected and condemned by others. You must get to a point where you no longer fear conflict and you no longer try to keep everyone happy (Thomas 16). You must get to a point where you no longer depend on someone else to make you happy or whole (Thomas 87).



Before you can even try to make the two into one, to become a single one on a higher level, you first need to stand alone. Once you are willing to lose it all, you will gain so much more (Mark 10:29-30).

Saying 76

Jesus said, The Father's kingdom is like a merchant who had a supply of merchandise and found a pearl. That merchant was prudent; he sold the merchandise and bought the single pearl for himself.

So also with you, seek his treasure that is unfailing, that is enduring, where no moth comes to eat and no worm destroys."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 76

We need to look for what is important and hold on to that. This saying is similar to Saying 8 about the large fish. The fact that Jesus repeats this idea shows how important it is to choose wisely. You cannot truly follow Jesus if you choose to hold on to the orthodox Christianity.

Letting go of what we know and what is familiar is never easy. The thought of upsetting or even losing friends and family makes it even more challenging. However, it is crucial to decide what is truly important. For me, following the real Jesus is of utmost importance.

Saying 77

Jesus said, "I am the light that is over all things. I am all: from me all came forth, and to me all attained.

Split a piece of wood; I am there.

Lift up the stone, and you will find me there."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 77

Thomas, like John, identifies Jesus with the light that existed before the dawn of creation and was the power used in the creation by God (Genesis 1). Thomas and John however have different ideas on how to find this light. For John it is to believe in Jesus, for Thomas it is to follow the teachings of Jesus (Thomas 1) and bring forth the light that is within you (Thomas 24, 50).

In Saying 77 Jesus is saying that this light still shines through everything that was created around us. We can learn from the creation around us, seeing how our Father created everything and understanding that we are created in His Image.

Jesus said, "Images are visible to people, but the light within them is hidden in the image of the Father's light. He will be disclosed, but his image is hidden by his light."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 83

We need to find the light that is within us, we can find it by looking at the Father's light, His creation. When we do that, we can do what we are born to do - to create - our Father is the Creator and we are born in His image.

We need to take responsibility for our lives - our worlds. When Jesus said *"I am the light that is over all things. I am all: from me all came forth, and to me all attained. Split a piece of wood; I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there."*, he was talking about his world, his life. He created his world and he took responsibility for every piece of it. Pick up a stone, that was me, split a piece of wood, I made that.

Jesus teaches us that we create our worlds (Thomas 19, Mark 11:22-24). In this saying, Jesus is talking about *his* world. Jesus brought *his* world into existence; it all began with his light. Light is linked to a creation power (Thomas 50). All came into being because of Jesus - came into being before coming into being (Thomas 19). He is in everything and everywhere. Pick up a stone, and you will find him there, for he created it. Split a piece of wood, and you will discover his handiwork within.

We have the light inside of us as well (Thomas 24, 50). We are called to be like Jesus (Thomas 13, 108). We also should bring our worlds into existence (Thomas 19, Mark 11:22-24).

This interpretation, that Jesus was talking about his world and explaining to us that we should do the same for our worlds, is confirmed by saying 12.

Jesus said to them, "No matter where you are, you are to go to James the Just, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 12b

If Jesus created *the* world and *all attains to him*, all comes back to him, all is for him, then how is it possible that the world was created for James the Just? The only explanation that makes sense, is that Jesus was talking about his world. James, as someone that was taught by Jesus, then did what Jesus taught him and let his world come into being (Thomas 19 , Mark 11:22-24).

Saying 78

Jesus said, "Why have you come out to the countryside? To see a reed shaken by the wind? And to see a person dressed in soft clothes, [like your] rulers and your powerful ones? They are dressed in soft clothes, and they cannot understand truth."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 78

Stevan Davies in gives this interpretation:

The audience has gone into the desert to see Jesus, and they are not entirely satisfied with what they found. Presumably they found Jesus dressed in rags. He responds angrily that if they have come to the desert to see someone dressed elegantly, they have come to the wrong place, just as if they had come to see reeds shaken by the wind. Reeds, of course, are not desert plants but littoral plants growing on the banks of lakes and streams. Jesus contrasts himself - in the desert, socially outcast - with elegant dressed kings and courtiers, who live in the well watered regions where reeds can be found. The truth is evidently to be discovered outside the margins of established society.

- The Gospel of Thomas, Annotated and Explained (p.100)'

It's curious how people idolize celebrities and leaders who seem to have it all, even though most of these figures wouldn't give them a second thought. In the Netflix documentary 'The Secrets of Hillsong,' the people who worked for the pastors of that well-known and affluent Christian church reveal how poorly they were treated by the church leaders.

Jesus said that the kingdom of Heaven belongs to the poor, but as explained in my interpretation of that saying, the concept of "poor" in Jesus's time did not carry the same meaning as it does today (Thomas 54). The poor knew how to live off the land and how to survive. They took care of each other and offered mutual support (Thomas 69b). They were strong and resilient, not a "reed that can be shaken by the wind." On the other hand, the rich

and powerful led lives of luxury, with everything done for them; they knew nothing of what it meant to truly live. As Stevan Davies explains, this saying is not just about the rich and the poor; it emphasizes not looking to those who are socially accepted as leaders, but instead finding truth in the desert—going beyond the boundaries of established society.

Saying 79

A woman in the crowd said to him, "Lucky are the womb that bore you and the breasts that fed you."

He said to [her], "Lucky are those who have heard the word of the Father and have truly kept it. For there will be days when you will say, 'Lucky are the womb that has not conceived and the breasts that have not given milk.'"

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 79

The apocalyptic view of Jesus was simple, we can expect difficult times. If you follow the teachings of Jesus (the word of the Father), you will be better prepared for those difficult times - spiritually, mentally and physically by having prepared the resources needed (Thomas 21).

Even today, there are apocalyptic events playing out all over the world. There are definitely people in Gaza today that will say it is better not to have children during a time when they are forced to abandon their homes and walk for days without food or shelter.

Saying 80

Jesus said, "Whoever has come to know the world has discovered the body, and whoever has discovered the body, of that one the world is not worthy."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 80

The interpretation of this saying is given together with the interpretation of saying 56.

Saying 81

Jesus said, "Let one who has become wealthy reign, and let one who has power renounce ."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 81

Becoming wealthy is not about amassing unnecessary riches. It is about attaining freedom from the financial control of others. It is about having sufficient resources to live a fulfilling life, free from debt and external financial constraints, rather than simply accumulating wealth. We are

encouraged to ensure we have what we need (Thomas 21, 41, 103). As explained in Saying 54, the rich in the first century were vastly different from the wealthy today. They wielded complete power over the poor, who were at the mercy of rich landowners.

Let us strive to be among those who have gained wealth and reign—free from the control of others. Yet, let us never forget that we are called to serve and 'be last' (Thomas 4), and let us never use our wealth to exert power over those who are less fortunate than ourselves (Thomas 95).

For more on this, see the interpretation of saying 56.

Saying 82

Jesus said, "Whoever is near me is near the fire, and whoever is far from me is far from the kingdom."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 82

How hot are things around you? How many people are not happy with what you believe or what you stand for? That is a clear indication of how far you are from the kingdom. If everyone likes you, or no one has a problem with you, you need to *wake the hell up* (pun intended).

Saying 83

Jesus said, "Images are visible to people, but the light within them is hidden in the image of the Father's light. He will be disclosed, but his image is hidden by his light."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 83

Images are linked to how things should be created and light is linked to the creation power of the Father - see Thomas 50. Images are our dreams, how we see ourselves, now and in the future (Thomas 84). Jesus showed us how to use the creational power of the light to create our worlds (Thomas 77).

How we bring our dreams into reality is to find and use the light inside of them, but the light inside of them is hidden. To find the light within them, we cannot look at the Creator (the Father) as he is not yet disclosed, but we can see the Image of His light - what He created. Want to make your vision board a reality - take a hike in nature. Spending time in God's Creation, will help you reshape your ideas of what needs be (change your vision board a bit) - it should not be just about getting the car or house you want. It is about creating an echo system where everything has its place and where there is balance. Looking at 'image of the Father's light', becoming whole, balanced, will allow you to find the light within your images.

We can see how Jesus harnessed the power of the light.

Jesus said, "I am the light that is over all things. I am all: from me all came forth, and to me all attained.

Split a piece of wood; I am there.

Lift up the stone, and you will find me there."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 77

Jesus not only told us what he achieved, but how we should do the same. We should bring our worlds into existence (Thomas 19, Mark 11:22-24). We should bring our body and spirit into existence (Thomas 29). By faith we should bring forth healing - read the gospel of Mark and count how many times Jesus said, *your faith* has healed you. By being prepared, we should prevent this world from taking from us (Thomas 21).

But make sure your dreams (images) are not based on selfish desires to impress others. If that is the case, you first have to become whole and get new dreams (an image instead of an image - Thomas 22). If you don't bring your images in line with God's will, or you don't bring them into existence ... to be continued in the next saying.

Saying 84

Jesus said, "When you see your likeness, you are happy. But when you see your images that came into being before you and that neither die nor become visible, how much you will have to bear!"

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 84

When you see your likeness, the image of you want to be that has been brought into existence, then you are happy. But when you see your images that came into being before you (Thomas 83), your dreams of what you want to become or achieve, that hasn't been brought into existence yet, and they do not come into existence - you fail to materialize them, and you fail to change those dreams (images) into different images (Thomas 22) - how much will you have to bear!

If your dreams (images) are selfish or rooted in trying to impress others, you need to change so that your images will change (Thomas 22), with other words your old dreams (images) need to die. When they are in line with God's will for you, then you must find the light within them to bring them into existence (Thomas 83). Look at Jesus, what he taught. How he created his world (Thomas 77).

Saying 85

Jesus said, "Adam came from great power and great wealth, but he was not worthy of you. For had he been worthy, [he would] not [have tasted] death."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 85

Adam came from great power. A world where he simply walked with God, where he had the perfect relationship with his Father.

God said that they could eat from every tree in the garden except one.

And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

- Genesis 2:16-17

The word for good is: *tôb* (tobe)

good (as an adjective) in the widest sense; used likewise as a noun, both in the masculine and the feminine, the singular and the plural (good, a good or good thing, a good man or woman; the good, goods or good things, good men or women), also as an adverb (well): - beautiful, best, better, bountiful, cheerful, at ease, X fair (word), (be in) favour, fine, glad, good (deed, -lier, liest, -ly, -ness, -s), graciously, joyful, kindly, kindness, liketh (best), loving, merry, X most, pleasant, + pleaseth, pleasure, precious, prosperity, ready, sweet, wealth, welfare, (be) well ([-favoured]).

The word for evil is: *rah*, *raw-aw'*

*bad or (as noun) evil (naturally or morally). This includes the second (feminine) form; as adjective or noun: - adversity, affliction, bad, calamity, + displease (-ure), distress, evil ([-favouredness], man, thing), + exceedingly, X great, grief (-vous), harm, heavy, hurt (-ful), ill (favoured), + mark, mischief, (-vous), misery, naught (-ty), noisome, + not please, sad (-ly), sore, sorrow, trouble, vex, wicked (-ly, -ness, one), worse (-st) wretchedness, wrong. [Including feminine *ra'ah*; as adjective or noun.]*

Good can also mean best, favor, kindness and *bad* can also mean calamity, affliction, displease.

God wants us to know right from wrong, that is not what the tree of knowledge represents. The tree of knowledge represents religion. A detailed list of what is considered wrong and the punishment that will accompany that. It is a detailed list of what is right and the blessings you will receive when you do that. That *is* the Old Testament. That *is* dogma. That *is* religion.

Adam came from great power. There is power in simply walking with God. No priests, no rituals, no pastors, no creeds. Just you and God. There is power in not following man made rules. There is power and freedom in being able to be "naked" and unafraid (Thomas 37) without man made rules.

We are at our best if we are not contaminated by religion (Thomas 4). Religion is bad for you (Thomas 6, 11, 14). You need to move past your religion and get to a point where you are just a child of the living Father. There is great power in that and you will not taste death.

Saying 86

Jesus said, "[Foxes have] their dens and birds have their nests, but human beings have no place to lay down and rest."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 86

Don't skip this saying because you think you know it - a twist is coming.

Some translations use 'son of man' instead of human beings. 'Son of man' can sometimes refer to 'Jesus', or sometimes to a human being (Stevan Davies - Gospel of Thomas Annotated and Explained, p.108). Matthew and Luke put it in a bit more context. In Matthew, this is Jesus' response after a teacher of the law asked to follow him (Matthew 8:19-22). In Luke, it is simply a man that asks if he could follow Jesus (Luke 9:57-58).

The most common interpretation is that Jesus meant that if you want to follow him, you should be willing to leave everything behind and be a bit of a homeless person like he was. I have a problem with this interpretation, and not because I don't like what it means. I think people are barking up the wrong tree with this saying (or similar verses in the canonical gospels).

It was very important to Jesus that his followers make time to rest (Mark 6:30-32, Thomas 60). In fact, rest is one of the two aspects that Jesus says is evidence of the Father within you (Thomas 50). Does it make any sense that Jesus would tell someone that they will find no rest if they follow him when that is the exact opposite of what he teaches his followers?

Though Jesus may not have been wealthy, he always had everything he needed. He could choose a simple lifestyle as he does not need the glamor and prestige that others do. Jesus found places to rest and lay his head as he stayed with others. Just as he calmed the storm and provided food when there was none, he always found shelter—because he willed it into reality through his faith. He was never 'homeless' and never begged. Even when he told the rich man to give up his riches (which held power over him), Jesus said that if he followed him, the man would have received much more, including *fields* (real estate, a place to call home) in return (Mark 10:30).

The interpretation that Jesus said we must be willing to 'find no rest' and be 'homeless' cannot be what Jesus meant. Let's look at this saying again.

Jesus said, "[Foxes have] their dens and birds have their nests, but human beings have no place to lay down and rest."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 86

If the 'son of men' or 'human beings' was referring to Jesus and those who followed him, wouldn't he have said something like "People have homes and places to stay, but those who follow me will have nothing"? The human beings in this saying are most human beings as they are contrasted against the animals (foxes and birds).

Most human beings do have a place to lay down and rest, but it is very seldom enough for them. If you do a quick google search, you will find that Americans move on average 11.7 times in their lifetime. It is never enough. Even the rich that can afford a mansion, will end up buying another, and another.

Some animals will migrate, but it will always be the same route. Some animals like lions, tigers and others will leave the 'family home' to find their own 'place', but once they find a good area with enough food, they will be content. That is what Jesus meant with 'foxes have their dens' and 'birds have their nests'. Animals will be content and happy with what they have. Humans on the other hand, will never be satisfied, they will never have enough. They will never find rest.

That is why Jesus called us to be like children - a child can be happy without comparing his house to a mansion in a different area. That is another reason 'rest' is evidence of the Father within us (Thomas 50) as we are free from keeping up with the Joneses.

When the man asked to follow Jesus, Jesus looked at the man and saw someone that would never be content with a simple lifestyle. He did not need to be homeless, but if he followed Jesus he had to learn to find 'rest', and some people will never find 'rest' as they will always submit to their human nature to want better, more. We must be like a bird that looks for a good place for our nest, build our perfect nest, but then find rest. We must learn to be content.

This saying is similar to Thomas 64, people who are too busy will not enter the places of the Father.

Saying 87

Jesus said, "How miserable is the body that depends on a body, and how miserable is the soul that depends on these two."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 87

If you are reliant on someone else for your happiness, you will end up feeling miserable (*a body that depends on a body*). A child of God is happy to stand alone (Thomas 75). A child of God is someone that knows himself (Thomas 3) and is happy and content (Thomas 37). This inner happiness allows you to offer unconditional love to your partner. Unconditional love means not

expecting anything in return. You'll avoid arguments that stem from feeling unloved or unsupported.

Even if you are currently single and unhappy about it (*a soul that depends on [the union] of these two*), relying on a future relationship for your happiness will only lead to disappointment. You may be even more miserable when you eventually enter a relationship, as it will be centered around your unmet needs. Learn to be happy and whole on your own. When you do enter a relationship, you will be happier and a better partner, free from neediness and demands.

Saying 88

Jesus said, "The messengers and the prophets will come to you and give you what belongs to you. You, in turn, give them what you have, and say to yourselves, 'When will they come and take what belongs to them?'"

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 88

Prophets, pastors, and preachers may attempt to sell you something that is inherently yours. They might claim you need to perform certain actions to become a child of God, but you are already His child. They may try to convince you that continuous attendance at their services is necessary for a relationship with your Father. However, just as you didn't require an organization or another person to have a relationship with your earthly parents, you don't need anyone else to connect with your Heavenly Father.

People will hand over their money to these spiritual leaders, but when those people take an honest look at those leaders, they will realize these leaders themselves are missing something - a real relationship with their Heavenly Father.

Saying 89

Jesus said, "Why do you wash the outside of the cup? Don't you understand that the one who made the inside is also the one who made the outside?"

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 89

The obvious interpretation of this saying is that we should not only be concerned with the part of us that others see. With other words, it is not about putting up a show. There is however more to this saying. Jesus didn't just say 'the One who sees the outside of the cup, also sees the inside', instead he said: 'Don't you understand that the one who *made* the inside is also the one that made the outside'.

There are parts of our human nature that we are ashamed of, that we want to hide from others. As we are ashamed of it, we don't talk about it and try not to think about it - but it is there. Jesus is saying, don't you understand that God also made that part of you. You need to make sure that

that part of you is also clean. Cleaning something means giving it attention. That means don't ignore it, accept it as part of you. This of course has to do with your sexuality but also other parts of your life that don't really come up in 'Christian' conversations - see keeping your lion happy (Thomas 7).

Saying 90

Jesus said, "Come to me, for my yoke is comfortable and my lordship is gentle, and you will find rest for yourselves."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 90

Jesus did not instruct us to adhere to the rules of the Old Testament (see [Jesus as a Jew and the Jewish Law](#)). He does not expect us to follow religious rituals or human leaders. His primary command is simply to love.

Saying 91

They said to him, "Tell us who you are so that we may believe in you."

He said to them, "You examine the face of heaven and earth, but you have not come to know the one who is in your presence, and you do not know how to examine the present moment."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 91

Steven Davies gives this interpretation:

This is one of the sayings that most clearly express the unique perspectives of the Gospel of Thomas. The questioners represent those who would focus their attention on the person of Jesus himself, evidently assuming that what came to be known as "faith in Christ" is the proper essence of Christianity. In other words, they are seeking not to find the mystery of the Kingdom but the identity of Jesus himself.

- Stevan Davies - The Gospel of Thomas, Annotated and Explained (p.112).

I don't think this perspective is unique to Thomas and it is in line with what we find with the historical Jesus.

'The one who is in your presence' can be referring to Jesus, or to God. If you think it is referring to Jesus, then it should be on who he really was (the historical Jesus) and what he taught.

Finding God is not about (just) having 'faith in Jesus', it is not about gnosticism with its complex ideas of cosmology and spirituality, and it is not about studying scriptures or prophecies

(Thomas 52). It is about being free from religion and being present like a child (Thomas 4). It is mindfulness on nuclear power.

Saying 91 brings us again to the necessity of attention and awareness. Everything is there in the here and now but we ourselves are absent. St. Augustine made this same point in his 'Confessions', saying to God (in free English translation) "You, God, were inside of me, but I was outside of myself". In other words, our normal condition is so distracted that we can't recognize what is right in front of us, what is happening in the present movement. We are absent to our own interior life, and, therefore, it is as if that life does not exist.

- Ron Miller - The Gospel of Thomas, a guidebook for spiritual practice (p.85).

Saying 92

*Jesus said, "Seek and you will find.
In the past, however, I did not tell you the things about which you asked me then. Now I am willing to tell them, but you are not seeking them."*

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 92

In the initial stages of our faith journey, we are eager to learn and grow spiritually, seeking a deeper connection with God. However, we may be somewhat naive and not yet prepared to fully uncover the truth. As we progress in our spiritual growth, God begins to reveal deeper truths to us. Some of these truths go against what is popular or mainstream, so many choose to ignore what God is showing them. Very few will continue to discover the truth when it can sometimes be disturbing (Thomas 2). It is only those who persist that will truly find God.

Saying 93

"Don't give what is holy to dogs, for they might throw them upon the manure pile. Don't throw pearls [to] pigs, or they might ... it [...]."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 93

Some people simply don't want the truth. Jesus did not remain silent when confronting the judgmental Pharisees and teachers of the law. He steadfastly defended his beliefs and those of his followers, such as when he stood up for his disciples who did not adhere to man-made traditions. However, Jesus never attempted to 'convert' anyone who wasn't already seeking the truth. He also did not feel the need to defend himself against those who accused him - for example when he was accused of being a drunkard (Luke 7:34).

Some people don't want help. You will waste your precious time trying to show them the truth.

Saying 94

Jesus [said], "One who seeks will find, and for [one who knocks] it will be opened."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 94

Finding an open door is not about praying and then sitting back and waiting for God to open a door for us. It is about seeking - we are required to do some work (Thomas 58). Seek the truth, seek the life you want.

Saying 95

[Jesus said], "If you have money, don't lend it at interest. Rather, give [it] to someone from whom you won't get it back."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 95

When you have money you can help others. People however get addicted to the power that money gives them (Thomas 81) and they just want more - making use of every opportunity to increase their wealth instead of helping others.

Saying 96

Jesus [said], The Father's kingdom is like [a] woman. She took a little leaven, [hid] it in dough, and made it into large loaves of bread. Anyone here with two ears had better listen!

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 96

Following the teachings of Jesus requires little effort but returns great results (Thomas 20, Matthew 11:28-30). The kingdom of God is not some future place we need to wait for, it is also not just some spiritual place detached from our physical existence. The kingdom of God is here and now (Thomas 113), inside of us and outside of us (Thomas 3).

When you have something you need to do - produce something to eat (bread), you need to work and use what you have (the dough), but then you add your faith to the formula (the leaven/yeast) and that makes the end result so much bigger than what it would have been if it was only your effort (the dough). If you don't understand this concept, stop living your soft life, manufacture some hardship by baking your own bread. Now that you have used yeast and added it to the dough, now that you have seen it rise, you will understand the metaphor.

Jesus did not only tell us about this important principle, but showed us how it works. When he had a challenge, he had to feed a crowd. He used what they had (a couple of loaves of bread and fish), he added faith, and produced a lot (Mark 6:30-44).

We must do the same with every challenge we face. We can't just pray (beg). Jesus got frustrated and angry with people who had no faith and put in no effort to solve their problems - see my [Faith, Healing and Miracles](#) section. We have to use what we have, do our part and work, but then we add our faith to make the end result grow and multiply.

When you need money, work, use what you have (your skills, business) but then add faith to the recipe and see your result multiply.

When you are sick or someone you love is sick, use what you have (healthy food, exercise, lots of water, medicine if needed), but then also add your yeast (faith) to help the dough (healthy living, medicine) rise and multiply.

Saying 97

Jesus said, The [Father's] kingdom is like a woman who was carrying a [jar] full of meal. While she was walking along [a] distant road, the handle of the jar broke and the meal spilled behind her [along] the road. She didn't know it; she hadn't noticed a problem. When she reached her house, she put the jar down and discovered that it was empty.
- Gospel of Thomas, saying 97

A woman, working hard, carrying a jar of meal all the way home, only to discover that it is empty. At first glance it looks like the woman did nothing wrong and this was just a tragic event. But Jesus is trying to teach us something here, so we need to look closer.

Jesus is saying the 'kingdom will be like' but then describes a tragic event. The kingdom of God is here and now (Thomas 113), inside of us and outside of us (Thomas 3). This present reality can be as beautiful and wonderful as God's creation, and we are responsible for shaping our lives (Thomas 77). However, the world can also be harsh and unforgiving. We must be prepared, or we risk losing everything, even the clothes on our backs (Thomas 21). For some, the kingdom of God will resemble this woman's experience: she began well, but her story ends in tragedy. The question is, why? What did she do wrong?

The woman started out perfectly, she had a full jar of meal. Although she persevered to the end, she did it on autopilot. She never stopped to rest, if she did, she would have noticed the problem. Jesus teaches us of the importance of rest (Thomas 7, 50, 60, Mark 1:35, Mark 6:30-32). It is not just about making time to rest, but taking stock. Making sure you are still on the right path.

This saying is similar to Thomas 92 where there are people who started out good (they were seeking the truth), but once the truth started to become uncomfortable they stopped searching for the truth.

Avoid living life on autopilot and simply going through the motions. Be present, be mindful (Thomas 91). Pause, take a break, reflect, and ensure that you are still on the right path.

Saying 98

Jesus said, The Father's kingdom is like a person who wanted to kill someone powerful. While still at home he drew his sword and thrust it into the wall to find out whether his hand would go in. Then he killed the powerful one.

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 98



This saying will sound strange to mainstream Christians. Why would Jesus want to associate himself or his followers with an assassin? This saying however is not strange or foreign to the historical Jesus. A lot of what Jesus taught us had to do with being prepared (Thomas 21, 103). The historical Jesus did teach that we should love our enemies but also that he didn't come to bring peace but war (Thomas 16) and that we should purchase a sword (Luke 22:35-38). Jesus was not in favor of peace at any cost.

This world is not our friend and will try and take everything from us (Thomas 21). We need to be prepared, spiritually, mentally and physically. We need to have a fighting spirit. We should embrace and nurture the fighter within us (Thomas 7).

Saying 99

*The disciples said to him, "Your brothers and your mother are standing outside."
He said to them, "Those here who do what my Father wants are my brothers and my mother. They are the ones who will enter my Father's kingdom."*

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 99

We find similar versions of this saying in the canonical gospels (Mark 3:31-35). Jesus is emphasizing the importance of family, but he is redefining the concept of family beyond blood relations. *'Those here'* refers to those who are present in our lives and connected to us through their actions and choices. *'Who do what my Father wants'* are not members of a church as we understand 'church' today. As we have seen, the historical Jesus did not teach about the 'church' in the modern sense. Instead, Jesus taught that the Father's will involves helping others, loving, and forgiving—essentially being a good human being. These are the people you want as family in your life.

Your family, your 'tribe' can include actual family members, but not all your family members need to be 'family'.

Saying 100

*They showed Jesus a gold coin and said to him, "The Roman emperor's people demand taxes from us."
He said to them, "Give the emperor what belongs to the emperor, give God what belongs to God, and give me what is mine."*

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 100

This saying is well known as we find a similar version in the Bible (Mark 12:17). I always thought the version in the Bible was a bit 'empty'. Is all that Jesus said we should pay tax and also give to God? Is that why the people were amazed when they heard Jesus saying this (Mark 12:17b)?

The version in the Gospel of Thomas adds *'and give me what is mine'*. I think this gives it a completely different meaning. I don't think Jesus meant: give to the emperor, God and Jesus. In Thomas, Jesus is always deflecting the attention from him and pointing it back to us. We need to find the light in ourselves (Thomas 24, 70), we need to become like Jesus (Thomas 108), we need to know who we are (Thomas 3).

I believe what Jesus meant was this: Give to the emperor what belongs to the emperor (pay your tax), give to God what belongs to God (do not lead a selfish life, do the will of the Father), but also take what is yours (*give me what is mine*).

We find a similar idea in Thomas 21 where Jesus warns us that the world will try and take everything from us, but we need to be prepared and stop that from happening. In Thomas 88, it is the spiritual leaders that will want to take what is yours.



Jesus is saying, you need to pay your tax and probably also do *some* other things that are 'expected of you' - but don't allow *them* (the government, your employer, the church, your family) to take what belongs to God (your time and resources) or what is yours.

Saying 101

"Whoever does not hate [father] and mother as I do cannot be my [disciple], and whoever does [not] love [father and] mother as I do cannot be my [disciple]. For my mother [...], but my true [mother] gave me life."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 101

I have given an interpretation for this saying together with saying 55.

Saying 102

Jesus said, "Damn the Pharisees! They are like a dog sleeping in the cattle manger: the dog neither eats nor [lets] the cattle eat."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 102

This saying is just a slightly different version of saying 39. The fact that this message is repeated in Thomas shows how important this was to Jesus. Jesus did not like the Pharisees. In Matthew 23. Jesus calls them hypocrites, blind guides, fools, snakes and vipers. But why did he have such a problem with the Pharisees and teachers of the law?

We know that Jesus was opposed to organized religion, as clearly seen in the Gospel of Thomas and, to a lesser extent, in the canonical gospels. Jesus emphasized that practicing religion through rituals and rules can harm one's spirit (Thomas 14) and create internal division (Thomas 11). However, I believe this is not the main reason Jesus clashed with the Pharisees.

In Mark 12:28-34, we see Jesus acknowledging a teacher of the law who was close to the kingdom of God. This teacher understood that laws about love were more important than other laws, indicating he was on the right path to getting closer to God. While the Pharisees' beliefs were problematic, what truly angered Jesus was their hypocrisy and their tendency to impose their way of life on others.

This is echoed in Thomas 39, where Jesus criticizes those who neither live authentically nor allow others to do so ("... nor lets the cattle eat"). Jesus was not merely upset with people adhering to traditions and Old Testament laws, but with those who dictated how others should live.

Today, we may not have Pharisees dictating our actions, but we do encounter judgmental Christians who impose their beliefs on others.

Saying 103

Jesus said, "Congratulations to those who know where the rebels are going to attack. [They] can get going, collect their imperial resources, and be prepared before the rebels arrive."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 103

Interpretation for this saying given together with saying 21.

Saying 104

They said to Jesus, "Come, let us pray today, and let us fast."

Jesus said, "What sin have I committed, or how have I been undone? Rather, when the groom leaves the bridal suite, then let people fast and pray."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 104

In Thomas 14 we are told if we fast, we will bring sin upon ourselves but no reason is given. In saying 104, we can see why. In the canonical gospels, when Jesus is asked why his disciples are not fasting, he says you shouldn't mix the old with the new (Mark 2:18-22). The old represents Old Testament rules and rituals like fasting while the new is the teachings of Jesus. Fasting was a common practice in the Old Testament, reflecting the perceived divide between people and God.

In those times, individuals made sacrifices, visited the temple, sought the priest's intercession, and fasted—all in an effort to draw nearer to God, gain His approval, or receive His guidance. However, Jesus taught us that God is our Father. Just as my daughter doesn't need to stop eating for a week to get my attention or an answer from me, you don't need to partake in such practices to connect with God. He is your Father. Engaging in these religious rituals may, in fact, distance you from the direct relationship God desires with you.

In Thomas 11 we are told that if you eat what is dead (partake in Old Testament rituals, rules and regulations), you will be split into two. Jesus says the only time you need to fast, is when the groom leaves the bridal suite. As we have seen in Thomas 75, the bridal suite is a metaphor for the two becoming one. When you are no longer one, when you are divided (because you partook in what was dead - Thomas 11), then you will need to fast. But that is not something that should happen. What Jesus is saying is we should never go back to the old way of doing things.

But didn't Jesus fast in the canonical gospels? There is strong evidence that he never fasted. Matthew and Luke both say that Jesus fasted, that he was hungry and that the devil tempted him with food.

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted[a] by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

- Matthew 4:1-3

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tested by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

- Luke 4:1-4

However, we know that Matthew and Luke used Mark as a source. In Mark Jesus did not fast, he was not hungry, and there was no 'conversation' with the devil.

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tested by Satan, and he was with the wild beasts, and the angels waited on him.

- Mark 1:12-13

You might argue that Mark simply didn't mention Jesus fasting, but remember, Matthew and Luke used Mark as a source. So, where did they get the idea that Jesus was fasting? I have a good idea, which I will get to shortly, but let's first examine Mark's account more closely. According to Mark, the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness for forty days, where he was tested by Satan. Jesus often retreated to the wilderness or a solitary place to be alone with his Father (Mark 1:35; Mark 6:30-32). Mark doesn't provide details on what being 'tested by Satan' entailed, but there was no conversation and no mention of Jesus being hungry. In fact, we read that the 'angels waited on him'. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, 'to wait on someone' means '*to serve food and drink, especially to customers in a restaurant*'.

So where would the idea that Jesus fasted come from? As we have seen multiple times in Thomas, Jesus was against organized religion, but people like religion. Fasting is one of those religious practices that you can do to put up a show (as we will see in a moment). People want to fast. We have evidence that fasting was added to something that Jesus said. In Mark 9:29 Jesus says that some unclean spirits can only be driven out by prayer. Later manuscripts added 'and fasting' but it wasn't part of the original manuscripts. That means a scribe, centuries after the words of Jesus was recorded, thought it would be a good idea to add 'and fasting'. Why would a scribe add those words? Again - that is what people want - visible, external religious worship. But that is not what Jesus said.

It is possible that in the same way, fasting was added to Matthew's and Luke's versions as well. As Bart Ehrman in 'Misquoting Jesus' explains, we have no complete manuscripts from the first three centuries and that is when most of the changes and additions would have taken place. Whether it was a scribe or Matthew and Luke who added the idea that Jesus fasted doesn't really matter. The idea that Jesus also fasted in the wilderness could have started and circulated orally after Mark's gospel if it was added by Matthew and Luke. The fact is we have evidence (Mark 9) that this is something that happened - fasting being added to the story when it wasn't originally part of the story.

If we only look at the above, I think it is possible and even plausible that Jesus never fasted. However, if we look at other things Jesus said about fasting, I think it becomes highly unlikely that Jesus did fast during the only time he is said to have fasted in Matthew and Luke. In the canonical gospels, Jesus also says that fasting is something that shouldn't be done anymore.

18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting, and people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" 19 Jesus said to them, "The wedding attendants cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day. 21 "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. 22 Similarly, no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins, but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."

- Mark 2:18-22

Matthew (Matthew 9:14-17) and Luke (Luke 5:33-39) has almost identical versions, except in Mark's versions they will only fast on that day (one day), in Matthew and Luke (that used Mark as their source), the one day has been increased to 'days' (people really want to fast!). I think we would all agree that the authors of the canonical gospels thought that the bridegroom that will soon be taken away (Mark 2:20) is Jesus. They however didn't think that 'day' or 'days' of fasting meant that it should continue until Jesus comes again. If they did, then the following verses (21-22) simply doesn't make sense. Fasting is something that was part of the old way of doing things. Jesus says what he came to teach us is new, and should not be mixed with the old (Old Testament religious rules and regulations).

There is something however that doesn't make sense in the canonical gospels about fasting. What exactly is Jesus saying here? His disciples were in a 'honeymoon phase' because the bridegroom (Jesus) was with them, but once he is taken away he will leave them in a state of despair so they should fast? Jesus didn't want to leave them in a state of despair that is why he told them to go back to their homes in Galilee where he will meet them after his crucifixion (remember, the whole waiting for Jesus in Jerusalem never happened - see [The Pentecost](#)). Is Jesus really going through all this effort to say that the only time his followers will need to fast is when they mourn his death and before they realized he has indeed risen again? It can't be for longer than that as Jesus wouldn't have added the whole section about not mixing the old and the new. Something just doesn't make sense.

As I have mentioned at the beginning of my interpretation of this saying, this saying is important for various reasons. It is not just about fasting, but all types of religious rituals, regulation and rules. Another reason why I think this saying is important is that it is one of the sayings that is clear evidence for me that the Gospel of Thomas predates all the canonical gospels including the Gospel of Mark.

The canonical gospels were written some decades after the crucifixion of Jesus and by then the death and resurrection of Jesus became the most significant thing about Jesus up to the point where that was almost all that Paul focused on while ignoring most of what Jesus actually taught. I think they might have looked at what Jesus said from this point of view, thinking that

the bridegroom was Jesus. In the Gospel of Thomas, the groom is not Jesus, but ourselves leaving the perfect oneness and becoming split in two.

I think what Jesus actually said in Mark 2:18-22 is closer to this:

Mark 2:18-22	Closer to what Jesus actually said?
<p><i>18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting, and people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?"</i></p> <p>19 Jesus said to them, "The wedding attendants cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.</p> <p><i>21 "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. 22 Similarly, no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins, but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."</i></p>	<p><i>18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting, and people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?"</i></p> <p><i>"What sin have [they] committed, or how have [they] been undone? Rather, when the groom leaves the bridal suite, then let people fast and pray."</i> [verses 19-20 replaced with a version of saying 104]</p> <p><i>21 "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. 22 Similarly, no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins, but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."</i></p>

Remember we don't have the exact words of Jesus in any of the gospels as I have discussed and demonstrated in detail in this book. We also often see that the disciples often didn't get Jesus (especially in Thomas) and that they frequently wanted to focus on the person of Jesus instead of looking within themselves. It is possible that the author of Mark misunderstood the groom to be Jesus and changed the actual wording of Jesus a bit. Matthew and Luke then made the same mistake as they copied it from Mark.

If you are still not convinced that Jesus is against fasting, we can look at the only other time that Jesus talked about fasting.

"And whenever you fast, do not look somber, like the hypocrites, for they mark their faces to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their

reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

- Mark 6:16-18

If these were the exact words of Jesus, then he would have contradicted himself, earlier when he explained why his followers were not fasting, he said we shouldn't mix the old with the new. We know that we don't have the exact words of Jesus. Jesus again has a problem with fasting as it is an outward religious practice where people are seeking attention and approval not really from God, but from others. If you take Mark 6:16-18 and all you do is change the first couple of words slightly from "*And whenever you fast, do not look somber, like the hypocrites, for they ...*" to "*You fast, you look somber, like hypocrites, you ...*" then everything fits, everything makes perfectly sense.

Jesus is against fasting or any type of religious ritual or practice. God is your Father. Believe it, accept it, live like He is.

Saying 105

Jesus said, "Whoever knows the father and the mother will be called the child of a whore."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 105

We first need to understand what it meant to be a child of a whore in biblical times. Contraception in biblical times was not as effective as today, so children of prostitutes would have been fairly common. Family in those times were very important and we can see how children of prostitutes were viewed.

*Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty warrior. His father was Gilead; **his mother was a prostitute**. Gilead's wife also bore him sons, and when they were grown up, they drove Jephthah away. "**You are not going to get any inheritance in our family,**" they said, "because you are the son of another woman." So Jephthah fled from his brothers and settled in the land of Tob, where a gang of scoundrels gathered around him and followed him.*

- Judges 11:1-3

Gileadite was a mighty warrior and turned into a hero, but he would have been the exception. We can see that he was rejected by the rest of the family and did not get an inheritance.

To 'know father and mother' is to know and accept what you have been taught by your parents regarding religion and your place in society. We need to overcome our natural desire to seek approval and acceptance of our parents, family members, peers (Thomas 55). If you only 'know

your parents' (simply accept and stick to what your parents, church and spiritual leaders taught you), you will be like the child of a prostitute that misses out on his true inheritance.

Instead of 'knowing our parents', we must know ourselves.

Jesus said, "If your leaders say to you, 'Look, the (Father's) kingdom is in the sky,' then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. Rather, the kingdom is within you and it is outside you.

When you know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will understand that you are children of the living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you live in poverty, and you are the poverty."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 3

When you know yourself, you will understand that you are a child of the living Father. You will not live in poverty as you will get your true inheritance as a child of God.

Don't just accept what spiritual leaders tell you (Thomas 3), or stick to what your parents taught you about God and religion, know who you really are.

Saying 106

Jesus said, "When you make the two into one, you will become children of Adam, and when you say, 'Mountain, move from here!' it will move."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 106

Jesus said, "When you make the two into one, you will become children of humanity, and when you say "Mountain move from here", it will move.

- Goslepel of Thomas, saying 106 (Elaine Pagels & Marvin Meyer translation)

We are born in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). We originally had great power and wealth before the fall (Thomas 85) - before religion was introduced. We become separated from God through organised religion and we become split into two (Thomas 11). When we become whole again, when we realize that we are children of living Father (Thomas 3), then we will be able to move mountains.

Stevan Davies gave this interpretation:

One might paraphrase saying 106 this: "When you make the two into one, you will be called fully human." Thomas's frequently reiterated theme of unification, of oneness, of merging the two into one seems to have as its postulated goal the attainment of a fully human condition by people who have not yet gained that status.

- Stevan Davies, The Gospel of Thomas, Annotated and Explained (p.128).

This saying is also similar to Mark 11:22-24.

Have faith in God," Jesus answered. "Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

- Mark 11:22-24

In Mark, Jesus is also talking about making the two one.

1. What you ask in prayer - your words and thoughts
2. Believe that in your heart - your feelings.

Saying to the mountain to move is not enough. When you say it, you must believe it. What we believe has a lot to do with what we feel. You cannot pray for success, say you believe it, but then have fear in your heart because deep down you think you are going to fail.

But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

- James 1:6-8

When it comes to achieving success, health, or any other goal, it is essential to visualize it, believe you already possess it, feel it, live it, and embody it. Your mind and actions must be in complete alignment, with no division. It is not only your words and feelings that must be unified, but your entire being. The principle of integrating the two into one is holistic, affecting every aspect of our existence. Furthermore, it is about making the upper like the lower (Thomas 22), being one with God.

This is not a trick to achieve your goal, it is becoming the human being God intended you to be, someone in His likeness, that is whole and one with Him, someone that moves mountains.

Saying 107

Jesus said, The kingdom is like a shepherd who had a hundred sheep. One of them, the largest, went astray. He left the ninety- nine and looked for the one until he found it. After he had toiled, he said to the sheep, 'I love you more than the ninety- nine.'

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 107

This is another saying that is evidence for me that the Gospel of Thomas was written before the canonical gospels. Matthew and Luke have a similar version to saying 107, except their versions simply don't make any sense.

Matthew 18:6 starts talking about 'little ones' that stumble and go astray. Jesus then tells the story of the lost sheep from verse 10 to 14. In that parable, the lost sheep is clearly one of the 'little ones' that went astray and the shepherd is either Jesus or God. Jesus then says this in verse 13: *And if he [the shepherd] finds it [the lost sheep], truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray.*

In Luke's account (Luke 15:1-7), the lost sheep is a sinner. In verse 7 Jesus says: *I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.*

Okay, so what exactly is Jesus trying to teach us here? It is better to go astray, party and sin as much as you can, because then God will love you more? Don't try and say that is not what he is saying - read both accounts, that is exactly what Jesus is saying. If you stayed true to God all your life and there is someone that didn't, that went astray and sinned, then God will love him more than you. You might say we are all sinners so God loves all of us, maybe, but according to the parable 99 of the sinners didn't go off the rails, one did, one completely abandoned God, and that is the one God loved more than the 99 that stayed true to Him. Stop lying to yourself, this doesn't make any sense.

As frequently observed in the Gospel of Thomas, even Jesus' disciples often didn't fully understand his teachings. Many of Jesus' sayings, including this parable, were transmitted orally. People misunderstood the true meaning behind Jesus' words and often placed them in the wrong context. Later, Matthew and Luke encountered this oral tradition with its wrong context and wrote it down.

The version in Thomas (Saying 107) makes perfectly sense. The Shepard is not God and the lost sheep is not a person. Stevan Davies explains it like this:

In this version of the famous "lost sheep" parable, the sheep is the largest and most favored. This is also the pattern of the parable of the pearl (Saying 76), in which a merchant gives everything up to get the one great pearl. It is also the pattern found in the parable of the fish (Saying 8), in which a fisherman keeps the one fine fish and discards a pile of trivial fish.

- Stevan Davies, The Gospel of Thomas, Annotated and Explained (p.128).

As with the fish and the pearl, you have to understand what is important and let go of what is not. You can't hold on to all the dogma you have been taught. You need to throw it away to find and keep what is truly important.

I will explain this saying from my own personal experience. I was a fundamentalist Christian, believing the Bible was the Word of God and I tried to work my way up in church. I then discovered a different view of Jesus that went against 99% of what I was taught. After I have *toiled* for a couple of years, studying, looking for the truth, I found the 1% that is so much better than the 99%.

Jesus said, "Congratulations to the person who has toiled and has found life."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 58

Jesus said, "Those who seek should not stop seeking until they find. When they find, they will be disturbed. When they are disturbed, they will marvel, and will reign over all."

- Gospel of Thomas, Saying 2

The parable of the lost sheep is not about a sinner. It is about *you* going after what is important, seeking the truth, and choosing wisely.

Saying 108

Jesus said, "Whoever drinks from my mouth will become like me; I myself shall become that person, and the hidden things will be revealed to him."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 108

When we seek the truth (Thomas 2), strive to understand the historical Jesus, and interpret his sayings (Thomas 1), we are drawing directly from his essence and will become like him. The Apostle Thomas achieved this profound level of understanding, as the hidden sayings revealed to him alone in Thomas 13 illustrate. Likewise, we too can aspire to become the twin of Jesus - see the [Introduction of Thomas](#).

Jesus becoming us ('I myself shall become that person') illustrates the profound interconnectedness of everything and everyone. In Thomas 77, we see that Jesus is present everywhere and in everything, but on a smaller scale we should also take control of our world and take responsibility for what is in it.

This goes so drastically against the idea of Christianity that we are pitiful sinners.

Saying 109

Jesus said, The (Father's) kingdom is like a person who had a treasure hidden in his field but did not know it. And [when] he died he left it to his [son]. The son [did] not know about it either. He took over the field and sold it. The buyer went ploughing, [discovered] the treasure, and began to lend money at interest to whomever he wished.

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 109

The original message of Jesus was delivered to the Jews, but they did not recognize the treasure that was revealed to them. This treasure, the teachings of Jesus, was passed on to the early Church. However, as with the parable of the fish and the lost sheep, they didn't know what was important and held on to things that were not. They didn't dig beneath the surface to find the treasure. It was ultimately the outsiders, neither those of the Jewish religion nor those belonging to the Church, who discovered the true teachings of Jesus and the real treasure they hold.

Saying 110

Jesus said, "Let one who has found the world, and has become wealthy, renounce the world."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 110

Interpretation given together with saying 56.

Saying 111

Jesus said, "The heavens and the earth will roll up in your presence, and whoever is living from the living one will not see death."

Does not Jesus say, "Those who have found themselves, of them the world is not worthy"?

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 111

What does it mean when the heavens and the earth will roll up in your presence? Initially, I imagined something akin to heaven and earth bowing down or clearing a path in reverence. But then I read another symbolic description of heaven and earth rolling up with a bit more descriptive detail.

The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

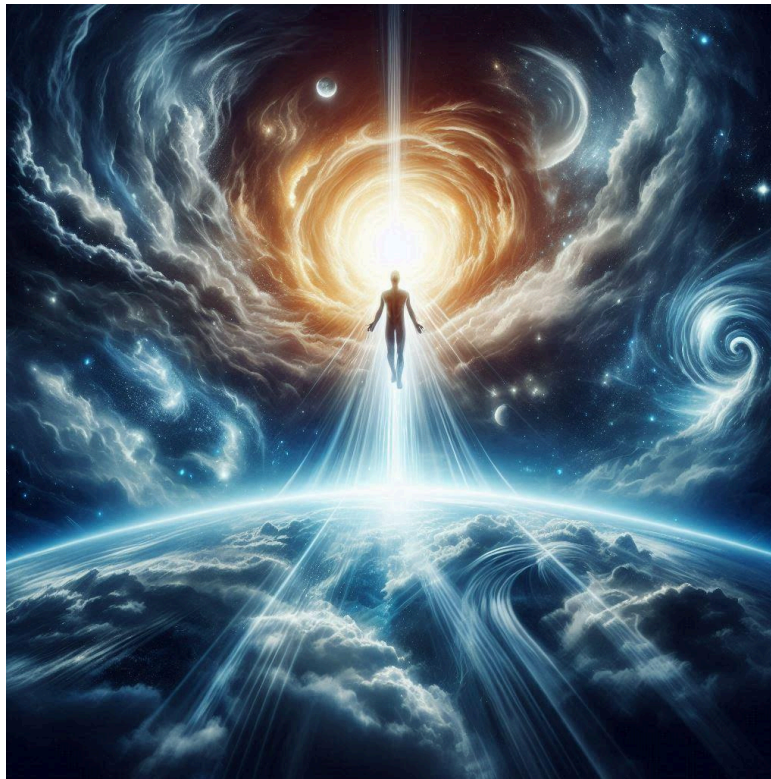
Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?"

- Revelation 6:14-17

Revelation 6 described seven seals that are opened. Each seal that is opened is progressively more impressive and terrifying. It is only on the 6th seal that the heavens are rolled up like a scroll and the earth is moved from its place.

You might be wondering why I'm quoting from Revelation after previously stating that I don't believe it was inspired by God (see [Revelation](#)). I still hold that view, but Revelation's use of similar imagery, coupled with additional detail, provides a valuable perspective. I think we can leverage this to gain a better understanding of what a first-century audience might have envisioned when they heard the phrase 'heaven and earth rolling up.'

It is not a mere bowing down in respect or a courteous gesture to clear a path; rather, it is a fearful retreat in the presence of unimaginable power and authority. But this overwhelming reaction is not because of Jesus' presence. Instead, Jesus tells His followers, "The heavens and the earth will roll up *in your* presence." Can you fathom that? Heaven and earth rolling up in *your* presence! Dare we even imagine it?



You might be thinking this is getting a bit much. Relax, take a deep breath and go and make yourself a nice cup of coffee. Then ask yourself, what is Jesus trying to tell us here?

When it comes to Jesus, indeed, the actual heavens and earth will roll up in His presence. However, when Jesus speaks these words to us, He is referring to our individual worlds. We see a similar concept in Thomas 77, where Jesus states that He is everywhere, in everything, and also calls us to become like Him. There is *the* world, and then there is *your* world. It's not about

the entire planet trembling in fear because of you, but about you taking control of *your* world. It's about your personal heavens and earth rolling up in awe when you walk into an interview, enter the boardroom, visit the doctor to get your test results, or even take your last breath.

When you are living from the Living One, you will not see death. This does not mean we will never experience fear—after all, Jesus Himself felt fear before His crucifixion. But He did not shrink back in fear, and neither will you. As previously mentioned, death can mean physical death, but also a life that is void of life. A life filled with despair, fear, decay, chaos and rot. When you are living from the living One (God the Father), then you will not see a life like this. You will see a life full of hope, love, progress, healing, .. full of life. When that life comes to an end, it is not the end. Jesus never told us much about heaven, but he did say it is not the end (Mark 12:18-27). We know that it is not 'death' but a doorway to a place where we will be with our Father and where we will find rest (Thomas 51).

Saying 112

Jesus said, "Damn the flesh that depends on the soul. Damn the soul that depends on the flesh."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 112

Stevan Davies makes this point regarding saying 112.

The present saying may make the point that ideally the two would be mutually independent and it is unfortunate that they aren't.

- Stevan Davies, Gospel of Thomas Annotated and Explained (p.134).

Stevan Davies has a valid point: physical illness (flesh) impacts thoughts and emotions (soul), and emotional distress (mind/soul) affects the body (flesh). However, I believe Davies misses the broader message. The goal is not for the body and soul to function independently. Instead, Jesus repeatedly emphasizes the importance of unifying the two. When the flesh relies on the soul or the soul on the flesh, they are not truly one. The aim is to achieve harmony between body and soul.

The term "depend" means to be controlled or determined by something or someone. When you depend on someone, they can influence your outcome. At the time of writing this, Donald Trump unexpectedly sided with Russia against Ukraine. This decision outraged leaders in Europe, Canada, Australia, and the UK. However, their dependence on the United States for security left them with limited options. Being dependent on someone or something is not a good idea.

When the flesh depends on the soul, it signifies an individual who prioritizes their soul or spirit while giving minimal attention to their body (flesh). An example of this can be found in Gnosticism, which focuses solely on the spiritual and views physicality as inherently bad.

Similarly, many Christians may concentrate on their spiritual growth while neglecting their physical well-being.

Conversely, when the soul depends on the flesh, it describes someone who may spend hours at the gym, becoming obsessed with physical fitness and health while dedicating little time to their spiritual growth. Their happiness is tied to their physical appearance and how they look and feel physically.

Instead of *the flesh that depends on the soul .. and the soul that depends on the flesh*, the two should become one.

... Jesus said to them, "When you make the two into one, and when you make the inner like the outer and the outer like the inner, and the upper like the lower, ...

- Gospel of Thomas, section of saying 22

Inner can refer to the soul while outer is the body. The upper is spirit or the spiritual. You should make it all into one. The one should not be dependent on the other, the two should be united working together. Instead of the body dragging behind or the soul dragging behind (being dependent on the other), the body and soul can build each other up.

Jesus said, "If the flesh came into being because of spirit, that is a marvel, but if spirit came into being because of the body, that is a marvel of marvels.

Yet I marvel at how this great wealth has come to dwell in this poverty."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 29

We cannot separate our body from our soul in this life, nor should we attempt to. We must embrace the unity of the two, rather than concentrating solely on one aspect. As mentioned earlier, Christianity often focuses predominantly on the spiritual. This is particularly evident when we compare Jesus' portrayal in the earliest canonical gospel (Mark) to the later Gospel of Luke. Luke, using Mark as a source, altered the account to remove any traces of Jesus' agony. The following are extracts from an article Bart Ehrman wrote about this:

Luke has changed Mark (his written source for the account) in significant ways. Many of these changes achieve one overarching purpose: Luke has eliminated every reference and hint to Jesus' agony. No longer does the narrator say that Jesus was deeply distressed; no longer does Jesus say that he is grievous unto death; no longer does he fall on his face to pray in agony (he instead takes his knees); he prays only once, instead of three times, that God will remove his fate from him; and he prefaces this prayer, unlike Mark, by saying "if it be your will."

In Mark's Gospel Jesus is silent the entire way to the place of crucifixion; it is almost as if he is in shock at what is happening to him. He doesn't say anything when being nailed to the cross. He doesn't say anything while hanging on the cross. Everyone there mocks him: the people passing by, the Jewish authorities, and the two criminals being

crucified with him. At the end he cries out his only words in the entire proceeding: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Luke has changed the entire scene. In Luke's version, Jesus is not silent en route to the cross, as if in shock and despair. Instead, he sees some women weeping by the side of the road, as he is on the way to crucifixion, and he tells them not to weep for him but for themselves, for what will later befall them. He is more concerned about them than about himself. When being nailed to the cross he is not silent; instead he prays, Father forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing.

- Jesus's Lack of Agony - The Bart Ehrman Blog

Remember that the passage that narrates the "bloody sweat" in Luke 22:43-44, wasn't originally part of Luke but was added later by a scribe.

Why would Luke want to remove the agony of Jesus? As mentioned earlier, Gnosticism and Christianity that followed Jesus, want to only focus on the spiritual and pretend the physical doesn't exist or even see the physical as bad or evil. But that is not what Jesus taught us. When Jesus experienced fear, he didn't ignore it.

They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."

Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

- Mark 14:32-36

Fear, stress and anxiety comes with very real physical symptoms. When Jesus experienced overwhelming fear, he didn't just do a quick prayer and then pretended like it wasn't there, he took time out to deal with it. He told three of his closest friends and spent time praying alone. Take note, he didn't tell everyone, he took three of his closest friends aside and only told them. He went further, spent some time alone and prayed.

When you have a problem with fear, anxiety or stress, don't think that you are weak. Don't do what most fundamentalist Christians do - try to pretend it is not there because then 'you don't trust God' or you are 'not a good Christian'. Jesus wasn't weak. By acknowledging his fear and dealing with it, Jesus could do what was needed.

Many Christians struggle with admitting their anxiety or fear because of the belief that we should always trust God. This can lead to the misconception that physical symptoms are unimportant

and that our focus should solely be on the soul. However, when we ignore the body, it creates a dependence on the soul, diminishing the body's significance.

This separation weakens the soul, as it is not meant to function independently of the body. For example, imagine experiencing a panic attack with severe physical symptoms. You pray to God, asking for help, but the symptoms persist. In that moment, you may feel defeated, having admitted to yourself that you can't handle the situation because you had to ask God for help. As your fear increases and you perceive that God is not providing immediate relief, your symptoms worsen as now your last hope (God) is also not helping, leading to an even more intense panic attack.

By acknowledging the interconnectedness of body and soul, we can better understand how to address and manage our anxieties and fears, trusting that both aspects are important in our spiritual journey.

Jesus spent a lot of time talking about the importance of rest (Thomas 27, 50, Mark 6:31). Why? Because our bodies are important. Our health is important. It is part of who we are. Jesus didn't only focus on the spiritual, neither should we.

I understand that my interpretation of this saying is a bit lengthy (and it was even longer initially), but I believe it is a crucial concept. It is one of the fundamental principles of becoming a single one, though not the only one and not necessarily the most important. To illustrate this further, let's consider another example. I have explained how Jesus did not view the body and soul as mutually exclusive. Now, I want to examine how Paul perceived them as separate, which led to his inner turmoil and struggle up to the point where he saw himself as a wretched person.

21 So I find it to be a law that, when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, 23 but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched person that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I am enslaved to the law of God, but with my flesh I am enslaved to the law of sin.

- Romans 7:21-25

Paul struggled with something in his flesh that caused him to feel like a wretched person. Some believe it was related to homosexuality as he wasn't interested in getting married (1 Corinthians 7:8-9) and he had a "thorn in his flesh" and prayed three times for God to remove it, but God did not (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). He clearly had desires of the flesh that he saw as bad (Romans 7:18-19).

Whatever it was, there were desires that he was struggling with. He describes it as his inner being being at war with his outer being. That caused him to be divided in himself and that made

him feel like a 'wretched person'. He said that despite that, he is saved by Jesus. But is that how Jesus wants us to live, like wretched human beings that at least will go to heaven one day?

Jesus told us that we should make the inner like the outer (Thomas 22). Paul was wrong. Jesus does not want us to be divided in ourselves. Jesus said we should embrace our carnal desires (Thomas 7). We should be in control, but we shouldn't be at war with our desires, we should make it part of who we are. Jesus also said we shouldn't try to be something that we are not and we shouldn't follow man made religious rules (Thomas 6).

Paul's flesh depended on his soul, to somehow let his desires just go away. Because of that, his flesh was 'damned', but so was his soul.

Jesus said, "Damn the flesh that depends on the soul. Damn the soul that depends on the flesh."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 112

Instead, what he should have done is embrace his fleshly desires as part of who he is. He should have ensured that his spirit is in control, following the rule of love. He should have ignored the silly man made religious rules that want to see everything as sin (Thomas 6). He should have made the two into one (Thomas 7, Thomas 22), becoming one, becoming whole, becoming happy instead of a wretched man.

Saying 113

His disciples said to him, "When will the kingdom come?"

"It will not come by watching for it. It will not be said, 'Look, here!' or 'Look, there!' Rather, the Father's kingdom is spread out upon the earth, and people don't see it."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 113

Stevan Davies gives this interpretation:

Saying 113 is probably the last in the sequence of sayings that made up the original Gospel of Thomas, for saying 114 seems to have been added later. Saying 113 is an important summation of the worldview reflected in many of Thomas's sayings, which is that the Kingdom is here now, and people must learn to discern it, rather than waiting for some cosmic miracle to bring the Kingdom down to earth.

Thomas's Gospel does not have very much structure to it, but it has a little. The prologue and first saying introduce the work. Jesus' first saying, number 2 in the list, raises the often repeated theme "seek and you will find" and defines the sort of seeking required as an internal quest with emotionally powerful results. Saying 3 follows with a 'topic paragraph' outlining the main points: "The Kingdom is within you and outside of you. Know yourselves!" along with a critique of the position that the Kingdom is out there

somewhere waiting to arrive in the future. Saying 113 brings the circle back to its beginning and reiterates the strong statement of saying 3: The Kingdom of the Father is already here.

As saying 3 criticizes leaders who put the Kingdom out there in the sky or beyond the sea, so saying 113 by its misguided opening question implicitly criticizes the branch of Christianity (later to become the Church) that expects the Kingdom to arrive in the future.

Thomas's sayings are often polemical in a similar question-and-answer pattern, most frequently labeling the questioners as "his disciples." There are two principal varieties of misguided questions:

Questions regarding the end:

- *18 - Tell us about the end. What will it be?*
- *51 - When will the dead rest? When will the new world arrive?*
- *113 - When is the Kingdom coming?*

Questions regarding the nature of Jesus:

- *24 - Show us the place you are for it is essential for us to seek it.*
- *37 - When will you appear to us? When will we see you?*
- *43 - Who are you to say these things to us?*
- *52 - Twenty-four prophets spoke to Israel and they all spoke of you.*
- *91 - Tell us who you are so that we can believe in you.*

Thomas's Gospel, through these questions and Jesus' answers, criticizes two of the "rocks" on which the later Christian churches based their faith: the idea that the Kingdom will come in the future and the idea that Jesus himself is the central aspect of the religion that he founded. Thomas's Gospel teaches that while Jesus is a teacher of great importance, his teachings are the important factor, not his person.

- Stevan Davies, *The Gospel of Thomas Annotated and Explained* (p.137-138).

As explained in my section, [The Divinity of Jesus](#), I believe Jesus was much more than just an important teacher. But apart from that, I agree with (and like) the interpretation Davies gives.

Saying 114

Simon Peter said to them, "Make Mary leave us, for females don't deserve life." Jesus said, "Look, I will guide her to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of Heaven."

- Gospel of Thomas, saying 114

Most scholars believe this saying was not part of the original Gospel of Thomas and was added later. To be fair in my quest to look for the historical Jesus and ignore things that were added later, I should also ignore this saying in the same way I ignore the last part of the Gospel of Mark that was also added later. However, if this was indeed one of the sayings of Jesus, it would not be a problem as it is in line with everything we know about the historical Jesus.

Jesus (if we assume it was a saying of Jesus) is not saying that women should become men, but that women and men should be the same spiritually (Thomas 22). We are equal. Jesus told women not to play the role society expects of them, the submissive housewife (Luke 10:38-42).

This idea that is taught by Paul that women should be subject to men and that men are the head of them does not come from Jesus. Jesus started a movement that gave women power to speak and lead, the early church did not like it and quickly addressed the problem. Jesus was the reason there was a problem for the early church in the first place.

The teaching by Paul that women should be subject to men and that men are their head does not originate from Jesus. Jesus initiated a movement that empowered women to speak and lead. This movement was met with resistance by the early church, which quickly sought to address what it perceived as a problem.

Not The End

As I've mentioned, my goal is not to cover everything Jesus taught but to challenge some of the misconceptions about Jesus and the Bible. This book is intended to serve as a starting point for exploring the Gospel of Thomas. In my studies, I've read several books on Thomas, and in each, I've found a few interpretations that resonate with me while disagreeing with most of the others. I'm sure you, too, may not agree with all of my interpretations—and that's a good thing. That's exactly how it should be.

I would love to hear your own interpretations and insights. I might even make some changes to this book after hearing your interpretations. We have one Teacher and that is Jesus. The rest of us are all just brothers and sisters that can also learn from each other. However, never let anyone dictate what you should believe; your journey is uniquely yours.

While this marks the end of this version of my book, it is only the beginning of my spiritual journey of discovery. I hope to continue learning, growing in knowledge, and—most importantly—deepening my relationship with my Father.

I encourage you to seek the truth, to endeavor to discover the real Jesus, to truly understand His teachings, and to grow into a better person along the way. To come to understand that you are a child of the Living Father and to truly understand what that means (for you). To become whole and happy. Someone that makes this world a better place, someone that loves others and

stands up for the truth. Someone that has discovered the Kingdom of the Father, here and now, inside of you and around you. Live a life filled with happiness, but also look forward to the day you will be with your Father and reunited with loved ones who have gone before you. After all, we are all just passers-by on this journey.