

Bible Transitional Errors and the Missing Gospels

Some People argue that the Greek-to-English interpretations of The New Testament is questionable and that there is a great body of written material about Jesus that has been omitted from the Bible—information that could provide more information about who Jesus was and the historical climate in which He lived.

Dr. D. James Kennedy recently spoke about the claim concerning the questionable Greek-to-English interpretations of The New Testament by saying that he would have agreed with that statement if there were no original Greek manuscripts to compare with the English translations. How could he make such a statement unless he was fluent in Greek and English, he asked himself? Dr. Kennedy is indeed fluent in both languages and refers to the Greek writings on a regular basis.

But what about the missing Gospels? Why aren't *The Gospel of Philip*, *The Gospel of Thomas*, *The Epistle of the Apostles*, *The Acts of Paul*, *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene*, *The Gospels of the Ebionites*, *The Letters of I & II Clement*, *The Didache*, *The Apocalypse of Peter* and the Catholic Apocrypha included in most of the Bibles?

Dan Brown, the writer of the *Da Vinci Code*, states in his book that **“More than eighty gospels were considered for The New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion.”** Dr. D. James Kennedy responds to the “more than eighty gospels claim” by saying there are only about two dozen actual different gospels in existence with Matthew, Mark, Luke and John being the only first century gospels [Matthew, Mark and Luke written in AD 70, and John written in AD 95]. Dr. Kennedy continues by saying that the other gospels were written some 150 or more years after Jesus' death and that their accounts are thought to contain more speculation than fact as to the actual history of the life and death of Jesus.

Dr. Paul Maier makes the following comments concerning Mr. Brown's words: **“Brown's statement implies that there was a general submission of Gospels to some sort of early church panel that reduced the field to the familiar four. This was not at all the case. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were foundation documents in what later came to be known as the New Testament. Eusebius, the first church historian, tells how they were the core of the canon from the start, and how their authority was determined on the basis of usage in such early Christian centers as Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome. He also clearly identifies some of the later spurious writings, including the Gnostic gospels that the church rejected as soon as they surfaced. Today, they are known as the New Testament apocrypha.”**

Why was the New Testament Apocrypha rejected? To start off, Webster defines the word “apocrypha” as “writings or statements of dubious authenticity.” Besides not being “eye witness” accounts, *The Gospel of Philip*, *The Gospel of Truth*, *The Gospel of the Egyptian's*, *The Gospel of Thomas* and *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* all fall under the title of Gnosticism which professes that Salvation does not require the forgiveness of sins, and that the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus was irrelevant, both of which strongly contradict what the New Testament clearly teaches.

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The Gospel of Philip is more of a collection of excerpts from a Christian Gnostic sacramental catechesis (teaching) rather than a gospel, *The Gospel of Truth* is more of a sermon than a gospel, *The Gospel of the Egyptian's* is more of a description of Gnostic salvation history than a gospel and *The Gospel of Thomas* recognizes two deities instead of one. Let's read one of the sayings from *The Gospel of Thomas*: **“Jesus [Yeshua] said, ‘Blessings on the lion if a human eats it, making the lion human. Foul is the human if a lion eats it, making the lion human.’”**

Besides being a Gnostic-influenced document, *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* is a fragmented document with many missing pages from which the last name “Magdalene” is never even mentioned.

Let's look at some Scripture verses that rebut the Gnostic teaching:

James 2:10 says, **“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.”**

1 John 3:4 says, **“Everyone who sins breaks the law.”**

Mark 2:10 says, **“...the Son of Man (Jesus) has the authority to forgive sins.”**

Acts 4:12 says, **“...Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven (Jesus Christ) given by men by which we must be saved.”**

Romans 3:23, 24 says, **“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”**

The knowledge of these five Scripture verses alone, should make one weary of a new gospel that teaches that salvation does not require the forgiveness of sins, and that the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus is irrelevant. That new gospel should surely not be a part of the Holy Bible.

But what about the other mentioned gospels?

The Epistle of the Apostles reports to be another story of the Apostles and the teaching of Christ. Although it has some real truths in it, it is felt that this Epistle has been “tampered with” by inserting Gnostic influences.

The Acts of Paul was written by a cleric with a vowed intent of doing honor to the Apostle Paul. Unfortunately, he was accused by his peers of falsifying the facts and dismissed from his office.

The Gospel of the Ebionites was written in an attempt to harmonize the Synoptic Gospels into a single story. Unfortunately, minor revisions were made to this writing rendering

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Jesus as a vegetarian and a Son of God by adoption. Note that in Luke 24: 42, 43, Jesus took a piece of broiled fish from one of His disciples and ate it in their presence.

The 1st Letter of Clement was occasioned by a dispute in Corinth, which had led to the removal from office of several elders and priests that were charged with moral offences. Although he quotes some of the letters of Paul and Hebrews and remembers some of the sayings of Jesus, he never refers to them as authoritative Scripture.

The 2nd Letter of Clement, better described as a homily or a sermon, was written in the second century of which recent scholars now discredit Clement's authorship.

The Didache was a handbook for the new Christian converts consisting of the teaching of Jesus that was modified and added to some time in the third century. This work was never officially rejected by the Church but was excluded from the canon for its lack of literary value.

The Apocalypse of Peter is best known for its lurid descriptions of the punishments of hell. In contrast to the Book of Revelation, this document focuses in on the afterlife—the punishments of the evil and the salvation of the righteous—rather than the final triumph of Jesus Christ.

What about the Catholic Apocrypha? Why are these writings excluded from the Protestant Bibles? The Catholic Apocrypha which includes the books of Baruch, Daniel in the Lions' Den, Judith, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, Prayer in the Fiery Furnace, Sirach, Susanna and the Elders, Tobit, and Wisdom are referred to as the Old Testament Apocrypha since for the most part they were written before the time of Christ. Because the New Testament Apocrypha deals with the life of Jesus, there is little or no link to the Old Testament Apocrypha.

Obviously, the Catholics and the Protestants disagree as to whether these ten additional writings are inspired Scripture. I'll let the words from the historical section of *The NIV Study Bible* speak for my belief. **“There is no clear evidence that Jesus or the apostles ever quoted any Apocryphal works as Scripture [with the possible exception of Jude 14]. The Jewish community that produced them, repudiated them, and the historical surveys in the apostolic sermons recorded in Acts completely ignore the period they cover. Even the sober, historical account of 1 Maccabees is tarnished by numerous errors and anachronisms [persons or events that are chronologically out of place]. There is nothing of theological value in the Apocryphal books that cannot be duplicated in canonical Scripture, and they contain much that runs counter to its teachings.”**

Based on my research of these other gospels, I believe, that Eusebius, the first church historian, had good reason to exclude them from the Holy Bible. They simply didn't belong there!