



A STRANGE ENDING TO THE GOSPEL OF MARK

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OVERVIEW

After reviewing this week’s Easter Scripture, a few things crept up. First, an article from the Biblical Archeological Society, led to a Rabbit Hole to help understand those scriptures. As you will see, that Rabbit Hole led to some information that can be considered controversial, but can also be looked at as simply information to digest and discern.

In some ways, it is quite fascinating, but it should not be taken as “Gospel.” ;-)



FROM THE BIBLICAL ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Most general Bible readers have the impression that Matthew, the opening book of the New Testament, must be our first and earliest Gospel, with Mark, Luke and John following. The assumption is that this order of the Gospels is a chronological one, when in fact it is a theological sequence. Scholars and historians are almost universally agreed that Mark is our earliest Gospel—by several decades, and this insight turns out to have profound implications for our understanding of the “Jesus-story” and how it was passed down to us in our New Testament Gospel traditions.

The Gospel of Mark, for the final editors of the New Testament, may have been looked at as deficient. First, it is significantly shorter than the other Gospels—with only 16 chapters compared to Matthew (28), Luke (24) and John (21). But also, how Mark begins his Gospel and how he ends it.

He has no account of the virgin birth of Jesus (like Matthew 1:18-25 or Luke 1:26-38), or for that matter, any birth of Jesus at all. In fact, Joseph, husband of Mary, is never named in Mark’s Gospel at all; and Jesus is called a “son of Mary”. But maybe even more significant is Mark’s strange ending. He has no appearances of Jesus following the visit of the women on Easter morning to the empty tomb.

Like the other three Gospels, Mark recounts the visit of Mary Magdalene and her companions to the tomb of Jesus early Sunday morning. Upon arriving they find the blocking stone at the entrance of the tomb removed and a young man (not an angel) tells them:

“Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.” And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing (Mark 16:6-8)

And there the Gospel simply ends!

Mark gives no accounts of anyone seeing Jesus, like in Matthew, Luke, and John later report. In fact, according to Mark, any future epiphanies or “sightings” of Jesus will be in the north, in Galilee, not in Jerusalem.

This original ending of Mark was viewed by later Christians as deficient and various endings were added by editors and copyists in some manuscripts to try to remedy things. The longest ending, which became Mark 16:9-19, became so treasured that it was included in the King James Version of the Bible, favored for the past 500 years by Protestants, as well as translations of the Latin Vulgate, used by Catholics.

This meant that for countless millions of Christians it became sacred scripture. If you check the Bible you use, chances are you will find this ending, considered by scholars to not be original:

Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. She went and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept. But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it. After these things he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. And they went back and told



the rest, but they did not believe them. Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover. So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.

Even though this ending is proven to be false, people loved it, and to this day many Christians consider this original.

However, the scholarly evidence appears to be clear. This ending is not found in our earliest and most reliable Greek copies of Mark. In *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Bruce Metzger writes: "Clement of Alexandria and Origen [early third century] show no knowledge of the existence of these verses; furthermore, Eusebius and Jerome attest that the passage was absent from almost all Greek copies of Mark known to them."

The language and style of the Greek does not appear to be "Mark-ian", and it seems evident that the new ending took parts of Matthew, Luke and John and simply create a "proper" ending.

Even though this longer ending became the preferred one, there are two other endings, one short and the second an expansion, that also shows up in various manuscripts:

1. *But they reported briefly to Peter and those with him all that they had been told. And after these things Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.*
2. *This age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who does not allow the truth and power of God to prevail over the unclean things of the spirits [or, does not allow what lies under the unclean spirits to understand the truth and power of God]. Therefore, reveal your righteousness now' – thus they spoke to Christ. And Christ replied to them, 'The term of years of Satan's power has been fulfilled, but other terrible things draw near. And for those who have sinned I was handed over to death, that they may return to the truth and sin no more, in order that they may inherit the spiritual and incorruptible glory of righteousness that is in heaven.*

That said, what about the original ending of Mark? Its implications could be considered astounding for Christian origins.

1. Since Mark is our earliest Gospel, written according to most scholars around the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE, or perhaps in the decade before, we have strong textual evidence that the first generation of Jesus followers were perfectly fine with a Gospel account that recounted no appearances of Jesus. We have to assume that the author of Mark's Gospel did not consider his account deficient in the least and he was passing on, what he considered to be the authentic Gospel.



2. But who is our first gospel witness? What we learn is rather amazing. In Mark, on the last night of Jesus' life, he told his intimate followers following their meal, "But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee" (Mark 14:28). What we believe is that Mark thinks that Jesus has been "lifted up" or "raised up" to the right hand of God and that the disciples would "see" him in Galilee. His tradition is that the disciples experienced their epiphanies of Jesus once they returned to Galilee after the eight-day Passover festival and had returned to their fishing in despair. This is precisely what we find in the Gospel of Peter (see below), where Peter says:

Now it was the final day of the Unleavened Bread; and many went out returning to their home since the feast was over. But we twelve disciples of the Lord were weeping and sorrowful; and each one, sorrowful because of what had come to pass, departed to his home. But I, Simon Peter, and my brother Andrew, having taken our nets, went off to the sea. And there was with us Levi of Alphaeus whom the Lord ...

You can read more about this fascinating "lost" Gospel of Peter, but this ending, where the text happens to break off, may be revealing. What we see here is precisely parallel to Mark. The disciples returned to their homes in Galilee in despair, resuming their occupations, and only then did they experience "sightings" of Jesus. Strangely, this tradition shows up in an appended ending to the Gospel of John (Chapter 21), where a group of disciples go back to their fishing, and Matthew knows the tradition of a strange encounter on a designated mountain in Galilee, where some of the 11 apostles even doubt what they are seeing (Matthew 28:16-17).

The faith that Mark reflects, namely that Jesus has been "raised up" or lifted up to heaven, is precisely parallel to that of Paul, who is the earliest witness to this understanding of Jesus' resurrection. Paul notably parallels his own visionary experience to that of Peter, James, and the rest of the apostles. What this appears to mean is that when Paul wrote, in the 50s CE, this was the resurrection faith of the early followers of Jesus. Since Matthew, Luke, and John come so much later, and reflect the period after 70 CE when all of the first witnesses were gone (including Peter, Paul, and James the brother of Jesus), they are 2nd generation traditions.

Mark begins his account with the line "The Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God" (Mark 1:1). For him, this is not a deficient version that needs to be supplemented or "fixed" with later alternative versions about Jesus' resurrection in Jerusalem.

Finally, what was recently discovered in the Talpiot tomb under the condominium building, not 200 feet from the "Jesus family" tomb (see below), offers a powerful testimony to this same kind of early Christian faith in Jesus' resurrection. On one of the ossuaries, or bone boxes in this tomb, is a four-line Greek inscription which has been translated as:

I Wondrous Yehovah lift up—lift up!

And this is next to a second ossuary representing the "sign of Jonah" with a large fish expelling the head of a human stick figure, recalling the story of Jonah. In that text Jonah sees himself as having passed into the gates of Sheol or death, from which he utters a prayer of salvation from the belly of the fish:

"O Yehovah my God, you lifted up my life from the Pit!" (Jonah 2:6).



It is a rare thing when our textual evidence seems to either reflect or correspond to the material evidence and what may be derived in the case of the two Talpiot tombs, and the early resurrection faith reflected in Paul and Mark. That this latest archaeological find corresponds so closely to Mark and Paul, our first witnesses to the earliest Christian understanding of Jesus' resurrection, for many is most striking.

Analysis of the "Strange Ending" of Mark:

The article provides a detailed analysis of the Gospel of Mark, focusing particularly on its unique aspects, its textual history, and its implications for understanding early Christian beliefs about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Here's an assessment of its accuracy:

1. **Chronological Order of the Gospels:** The article accurately notes that Mark is widely believed by scholars to be the earliest Gospel, with Matthew, Luke, and John following. This reflects a theological rather than chronological order, as these Gospels were arranged to present a cohesive narrative of Jesus' life, teachings, death, and resurrection.
2. **Content of Mark's Gospel:** The article correctly highlights some of the distinctive features of Mark's Gospel, such as its brevity compared to the other Gospels and its lack of a detailed birth narrative for Jesus. It also emphasizes Mark's abrupt ending after the discovery of the empty tomb, without any post-resurrection appearances of Jesus in Jerusalem.
3. **Additions to Mark's Ending:** The article accurately describes the textual history of Mark's ending, noting that various endings were added by later editors and copyists to supplement what was perceived as a deficient conclusion. It correctly identifies the longer ending of Mark (Mark 16:9-20) as a later addition that does not appear in the earliest and most reliable manuscripts.
4. **Theological Significance:** The article effectively discusses the theological implications of Mark's original ending and its portrayal of Jesus' resurrection appearances in Galilee rather than Jerusalem. It highlights the early Christian belief in Jesus' exaltation to the right hand of God and the significance of visionary experiences as reflections of this belief.
5. **Archaeological Evidence:** The article briefly mentions recent archaeological discoveries, such as the Talpiot tombs, which some scholars interpret as potentially corroborating early Christian beliefs about Jesus' resurrection. This evidence is presented in conjunction with textual evidence from Mark and Paul to suggest continuity in early Christian understandings of Jesus' resurrection.

There are several critical challenges and points of contention regarding the claims made in the article and its implications, especially concerning recent findings such as those related to the Talpiot tomb:

1. **Validity of Interpretations:** One critical challenge is the validity of the interpretations presented in the article, especially regarding the Gospel of Mark's supposed deficiency and the implications drawn from it. While the Gospel of Mark does have an abrupt ending after the discovery of the empty tomb, scholars debate whether this was intentional, a stylistic choice, or if the original ending may have been lost.
2. **Textual Criticism:** The article presents the longer ending of Mark (Mark 16:9-20) as inaccurate and suggests that the original ending of Mark lacked post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. However, the textual history of Mark is complex, and while some



manuscripts do lack the longer ending, others include it. Scholars debate the authenticity and originality of the longer ending, with some arguing that it may have been a later addition but still reflects early Christian beliefs.

3. **Archaeological Evidence:** The article mentions recent archaeological findings, such as those related to the Talpiot tomb, as supporting evidence for the early Christian understanding of Jesus' resurrection. However, the connection between these archaeological discoveries and the theological interpretations drawn in the article is highly speculative and controversial. Many scholars dispute the claims made in the "Lost Tomb of Jesus" documentary and question its methodology and conclusions.
4. **Historical Context:** The article makes sweeping assertions about the beliefs of early Christians based on the Gospel of Mark's supposed deficiency and the alleged absence of post-resurrection appearances. However, early Christian beliefs and practices were diverse and evolved over time. Drawing definitive conclusions about early Christian beliefs from the Gospel of Mark alone is problematic and overlooks the complexity of early Christian history.
5. **Scholarly Consensus:** The article presents a particular interpretation of the Gospel of Mark and its implications for understanding early Christian beliefs, but it does not reflect the consensus among scholars in the field. Many scholars have different perspectives on the Gospel of Mark, its original ending, and the development of early Christian theology.

In summary, while the article presents an intriguing perspective on the Gospel of Mark and its potential theological implications, its claims are highly controversial and subject to debate among scholars. The validity of its interpretations and the connections drawn to recent archaeological findings are uncertain and disputed within the academic community.

But, the article provides a well-reasoned analysis of Mark's Gospel and its significance for understanding early Christian beliefs about the resurrection. It accurately presents scholarly views on the Gospel's composition, textual history, and theological themes, while also engaging with archaeological evidence to support its arguments.

THE TALPIOT & JESUS FAMILY TOMB(S)

The terms "Talpiot tomb" and "Jesus Family tomb" are often used interchangeably, but they refer to the same archaeological site ... the tomb discovered in the Talpiot neighborhood of Jerusalem in 1980. This tomb gained widespread attention due to claims made in a documentary film titled "The Lost Tomb of Jesus," which suggested that it might have been the burial site of Jesus of Nazareth and his family.

When the article mentions the "Talpiot tomb" and the "Jesus family" tomb separately but in close proximity to each other, it might be a misunderstanding or a reference to different aspects of the same archaeological discovery. In reality, the Talpiot tomb is the same as the tomb often referred to as the "Jesus Family tomb."

Here are some key points about the Talpiot Tomb:

1. **Discovery:** The Talpiot Tomb was discovered in 1980 during construction work in the Talpiot neighborhood of Jerusalem. The tomb contained a number of ossuaries (stone boxes used for secondary burial of bones) with inscriptions in Greek and Aramaic.
2. **Ossuaries with Inscriptions:** Among the ossuaries found in the Talpiot Tomb were several with inscriptions that drew particular interest. One ossuary had the inscription



“Jesus son of Joseph,” another was inscribed with “Mariamene” or “Mariamne,” which some speculated could refer to Mary Magdalene, and others had names associated with figures from the New Testament, such as Matthew and Joseph.

3. **Statistical Analysis:** Proponents of the theory argued that the combination of names found in the tomb, particularly the presence of the name “Jesus son of Joseph” alongside other names associated with Jesus’ family and disciples, was statistically significant and suggested a familial connection.
4. **Documentary and Research:** In 2007, a documentary titled “The Lost Tomb of Jesus” reignited interest in the Talpiot Tomb theory. The documentary, directed by Simcha Jacobovici and produced by James Cameron, presented the hypothesis that the tomb might have contained the remains of Jesus of Nazareth, his wife Mary Magdalene, and other family members. However, this theory has been widely criticized by scholars and experts for its speculative nature and lack of solid evidence.
5. **DNA Testing:** The documentary claimed that DNA testing conducted on ossuary inscriptions and bone fragments found in the tomb provided evidence of familial relationships among the individuals buried there. However, the validity and reliability of these DNA tests have been questioned by many scholars and experts.
6. **Controversy:** The discovery of the Talpiot Tomb sparked controversy and debate among scholars, archaeologists, and theologians. Some proponents argued that the tomb might have been the burial site of Jesus and his family, while others dismissed these claims, citing lack of conclusive evidence and the commonality of names in the region during that time period.
7. **Interpretation of Evidence:** Critics of the theory argue that the names found in the Talpiot Tomb were common in the region during the time period, and that the theory relies on speculative interpretations of the evidence. They contend that there is insufficient evidence to conclusively link the tomb to Jesus and his family.
8. **Scholarly Debate:** The question of whether the Talpiot Tomb is the burial place of Jesus and his family remains a subject of scholarly debate. While some researchers argue that the names found in the tomb are too common to be conclusively linked to the biblical figures, others suggest that the combination of names and inscriptions is statistically significant and worthy of further investigation.

Overall, the Talpiot Tomb is a site of historical and archaeological interest, but its connection to the biblical figures remains uncertain and subject to interpretation.

THE LOST GOSPEL OF PETER

The “Gospel of Peter” is an ancient text that is considered one of the non-canonical or apocryphal gospels. It is not included in the New Testament canon recognized by most Christian denominations today. Here are some key points about the Gospel of Peter:

- **Date and Origin:** The Gospel of Peter is believed to have been written in the mid to late second century AD, likely around 150-200 AD. It is believed to have originated in Syria, possibly in the region of Antioch.
- **Content:** The Gospel of Peter contains an account of the Passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, similar to the canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. However, it also includes unique elements and details not found in the other Gospels,



such as the description of the cross speaking and walking out of the tomb after Jesus' resurrection.

- **Manuscript Discoveries:** Fragments of the Gospel of Peter were discovered in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The most significant discovery was made in 1886 when a fragment of the text was found in the tomb of a monk in Akhmim, Egypt. Additional fragments were later discovered in 1892 and 1904 at the same site.
- **Theological Perspective:** The Gospel of Peter reflects the theological perspectives and beliefs of certain early Christian communities. It contains elements of Docetism, a belief that Jesus only appeared to be human and did not possess a physical body. This is evident in the Gospel's description of Jesus' suffering and death, which portrays him as impassive and unaffected by pain.
- **Canonical Status:** The Gospel of Peter was not included in the New Testament canon established by early Christian councils. It was considered by some early church fathers, such as Serapion of Antioch, to be heretical due to its Docetic tendencies. Despite its exclusion from the canon, the Gospel of Peter provides valuable insights into early Christian beliefs and the diversity of early Christian literature.
- **Authorship:** The authorship of the Gospel of Peter is uncertain, as the text itself does not explicitly identify the author. Additionally, no ancient sources attribute the Gospel to a specific individual. However, early Christian tradition attributed the Gospel to Peter, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus. This attribution to Peter is based on the title of the Gospel and the tradition that it was written by or based on the teachings of Peter. However, modern scholars generally do not accept this traditional attribution. Instead, they view the Gospel of Peter as a pseudonymous work, meaning it was written under a false name to lend authority to its teachings. Given the lack of direct evidence and the pseudonymous nature of the text, scholars today do not have a definitive answer regarding the true author of the Gospel of Peter. It is regarded as an anonymous work that reflects the theological perspectives and beliefs of certain early Christian communities in the second century AD.

Overall, the Gospel of Peter is a significant ancient text that sheds light on the early Christian movement and its theological diversity. While not considered canonical by most Christians, it remains an important piece of early Christian literature for scholars studying the development of Christian beliefs and texts.



WHO WAS MARK?

"Mark" is traditionally identified as John Mark, who is mentioned in the New Testament. He is believed to be the author of the Gospel of Mark. John Mark is mentioned in several passages in the New Testament:

1. **Acts 12:12:** After Peter's miraculous escape from prison, he goes to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered and were praying.
2. **Acts 12:25:** Barnabas and Saul (Paul) take John Mark with them as they return to Jerusalem from Antioch.
3. **Acts 13:5:** Barnabas and Saul (Paul) take John Mark with them as they set out on their first missionary journey from Antioch.
4. **Acts 15:37-39:** During the second missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas have a disagreement over whether to take John Mark with them. Paul does not want to take him because he had left them during the first journey. Barnabas takes John Mark with him to Cyprus, while Paul chooses Silas as his companion.

John Mark is also mentioned in the letters of Paul. In Colossians 4:10, Paul refers to him as a cousin of Barnabas. In Philemon 24, he is mentioned among Paul's fellow workers.

Traditionally, John Mark has been regarded as the author of the Gospel of Mark, though the Gospel itself does not explicitly identify the author. This attribution is based on early Christian tradition and the testimony of early church fathers such as Papias and Eusebius. However, some modern scholars debate the authorship of the Gospel, considering factors such as its anonymity and its composition date.

WHO WAS MARY THE MOTHER OF JAMES?

When the Gospel of Mark mentions "Mary the mother of James," it refers to a specific Mary and James within the context of the passage. In Mark 15:40, we encounter this Mary at the crucifixion scene:

"But there were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome."

In this context, "Mary the mother of James" is believed to refer to Mary the wife of Clopas. This identification is based on comparing Mark's account with similar passages in other Gospels. In John 19:25, for example, we read:

"But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene."

Here, the Mary who is described as the wife of Clopas is often identified as the same Mary mentioned in Mark 15:40 as the mother of James and Joses. This Mary is sometimes referred to as "Mary the wife of Clopas" or "Mary the wife of Alphaeus," with Alphaeus possibly being another name for Clopas.

As for James, he is commonly understood to be James the Less or James the son of Alphaeus. This identification is based on the parallel passages in Matthew 27:56 and Mark 15:40, where Mary the mother of James and Joses is mentioned alongside another Mary, identified as the



mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee. This James, known as James the Less, is often considered one of the twelve apostles and a relative of Jesus.

So, in summary, “Mary the mother of James” in the Gospel of Mark likely refers to Mary the wife of Clopas or Alphaeus, and “James” refers to James the Less, one of the apostles.

MARY THE MOTHER OF JESUS

Mary the mother of Jesus was also present at the crucifixion, as mentioned in various Gospel accounts including the Gospel of John:

“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.” (John 19:25)

This passage confirms the presence of Mary, the mother of Jesus, at the crucifixion alongside other women, including Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene. Therefore, in Mark 15:40, where it mentions “Mary the mother of James,” it’s likely that Mary the mother of Jesus is also included among the women who were present at the scene of the crucifixion.

While Mary, the mother of Jesus, is mentioned at the crucifixion scene in various Gospel accounts, she is not explicitly mentioned as being present at the tomb during the burial or resurrection narratives. The focus of the Gospel accounts tends to be on other women, such as Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, who are mentioned as being present at the tomb.

In Mark 15:47 and Mark 16:1, it's specifically mentioned that Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James observed where Jesus was laid after the crucifixion and returned to the tomb early on the first day of the week. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is not mentioned in these passages.

So, while Mary the mother of Jesus was present at the crucifixion, she is not mentioned as being directly involved in the events surrounding the tomb after Jesus’ burial.

MARY, MARY, MARY

The number of Marys present at both the crucifixion and the resurrection varies slightly across the Gospel accounts, but generally, there are three prominent Marys mentioned:

1. **Mary, the mother of Jesus:** She is present at the crucifixion, as mentioned in John 19:25, alongside other women. While she is not explicitly mentioned at the tomb during the resurrection narratives, it's reasonable to assume she could have been among the women who visited the tomb, although the Gospel accounts don’t specifically name her.
2. **Mary Magdalene:** She is mentioned consistently across all Gospel accounts as being present at both the crucifixion and the tomb during the resurrection narratives. She is depicted as one of the women who witnessed Jesus’ crucifixion (Matthew 27:56, Mark 15:40, John 19:25) and as one of the women who visited the tomb early on the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1, Mark 16:1, John 20:1).
3. **Mary, the mother of James and James the Less:** She is mentioned at the crucifixion scene in Matthew 27:56 and Mark 15:40 as being among the women who were present. Additionally, she is mentioned as one of the women who visited the tomb early on the first day of the week in Matthew 28:1 and Mark 16:1. In some accounts, she is also referred to as the mother of James the Less and James.



These are the three primary Marys mentioned in the Gospel accounts regarding the events of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. While there may have been other women present as well, these three are consistently highlighted in the Gospel narratives.

WHO WAS SALOME?

Salome is a figure mentioned in the New Testament, primarily in the Gospel accounts of Jesus' ministry and crucifixion. Here's what we know about her based on biblical texts:

1. **Presence at the Crucifixion:** Salome is mentioned in Mark 15:40 as one of the women who were present at the crucifixion of Jesus. The verse reads: "There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome."
2. **Follower of Jesus:** Salome is often regarded as one of the women who followed Jesus during his ministry. She may have been part of a group of women who provided support and assistance to Jesus and his disciples.
3. **Family Connections:** In some interpretations, Salome is believed to be the wife of Zebedee and the mother of James and John, two of Jesus' disciples. This connection is based on passages such as Matthew 27:56 and Mark 15:40, which mention a Salome alongside Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joses.
4. **Request for Her Sons:** In Matthew 20:20-23 and Mark 10:35-40, a woman identified as the mother of James and John (likely Salome) approaches Jesus with a request on behalf of her sons. She asks Jesus to grant that her sons sit at his right and left hand in his kingdom. This incident suggests that Salome had a close relationship with Jesus and desired positions of honor for her sons.

Salome's exact role and significance in the life of Jesus are not extensively detailed in the biblical texts, but she is remembered as one of the faithful followers who witnessed the crucifixion and supported Jesus' ministry.

NON-CANONICAL GOSPELS

Non-canonical Gospels that include accounts of Jesus' birth, life, and teachings, but are not considered part of the New Testament canon recognized by most Christian traditions. These texts are often referred to as apocryphal or non-canonical Gospels.

Some non-canonical Gospels include infancy narratives or birth stories similar to those found in Matthew and Luke, but these texts vary widely in content, style, and theological perspective. Examples include the Infancy Gospel of James (also known as the Protoevangelium of James), the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, and the Infancy Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew.

The term "infancy" is used in the titles of certain non-canonical Gospels to indicate that these texts focus specifically on the infancy or early childhood of Jesus. These Gospels often contain narratives and stories about Jesus' birth, childhood miracles, and interactions during his formative years. The emphasis on infancy highlights the interest in exploring aspects of Jesus' life that are not extensively covered in the canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.



Prominent Non-Canonicals

Here's a list of the most prominent nine non-canonical Gospels with brief descriptions, along with information about their discovery, composition, and authorship:

1. **Infancy Gospel of James (Protoevangelium of James):**

- Description: Focuses on the birth and early life of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Contains narratives about her parents, Joachim and Anna, and the miraculous conception and birth of Mary.
- Discovery: Believed to have been composed in the 2nd century AD. Discovered in its complete form in a Greek manuscript from the 11th century.
- Authorship: Traditionally attributed to James, the brother of Jesus, but considered pseudonymous and anonymous by scholars.

2. **Infancy Gospel of Thomas:**

- Description: Contains stories about the childhood of Jesus, including miracles and interactions with other children.
- Discovery: Believed to have been composed in the 2nd century AD. Discovered among the Nag Hammadi library in Egypt in 1945.
- Authorship: Uncertain. Traditionally attributed to Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, but considered pseudonymous and anonymous by scholars.

3. **Infancy Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew:**

- Description: Contains narratives about the birth and childhood of Jesus, including the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem and events surrounding Jesus' early life.
- Discovery: Believed to have been composed in the 7th or 8th century AD. Discovered in various manuscripts dating from the medieval period.
- Authorship: Uncertain. Attributed to Matthew, one of the twelve apostles, but considered pseudonymous and anonymous by scholars.

4. **Gospel of the Nativity of Mary (Protoevangelium of James):**

- Description: Focuses on the birth and early life of Mary, the mother of Jesus, including stories about her parents and her miraculous conception.
- Discovery: Believed to have been composed in the 2nd century AD. Discovered as part of the larger Infancy Gospel of James and circulated independently.
- Authorship: Uncertain. Considered pseudonymous and anonymous by scholars.

5. **Gospel of Mary (Mary Gospel of Mary Magdalene):**

- Description: Contains dialogues between Jesus and Mary Magdalene, as well as teachings attributed to Jesus.
- Discovery: Fragments discovered among the Nag Hammadi library in Egypt in 1945. Believed to have been composed in the 2nd century AD.
- Authorship: Uncertain. Considered pseudonymous and anonymous by scholars.

6. **Arabic Infancy Gospel:**

- Description: Contains stories about the childhood and early life of Jesus, emphasizing his miraculous deeds from a young age.
- Discovery: Believed to have been composed in the 6th or 7th century AD. Circulated in various manuscript traditions and translations.
- Authorship: Uncertain.



7. Gospel of Bartholomew (Acts of Bartholomew):

- Description: Contains narratives about the apostle Bartholomew and his encounters with Jesus, including teachings and miracles.
- Discovery: Believed to have been composed in the 5th or 6th century AD. Circulated in various manuscript traditions and translations.
- Authorship: Uncertain.

8. Gospel of Thomas:

- Description: A collection of sayings attributed to Jesus, with minimal narrative content. Emphasizes secret teachings and hidden knowledge.
- Discovery: Fragments discovered among the Nag Hammadi library in Egypt in 1945. Believed to have been composed in the 2nd century AD.
- Authorship: Uncertain.
- The Gospel of Thomas is one of the most well-known non-canonical Gospels. Unlike the canonical Gospels, which primarily focus on narrative accounts of Jesus' life, teachings, death, and resurrection, the Gospel of Thomas consists mainly of a collection of sayings attributed to Jesus. It does not contain a narrative account of Jesus' birth, and therefore does not mention the virgin birth.

9. Gospel of Peter:

- Description: Contains a passion narrative focusing on the trial, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus, with distinctive theological emphases.
- Discovery: Fragments discovered in the tomb of a monk at Akhmim in Egypt in the late 19th century. Believed to have been composed in the 2nd century AD.
- Authorship: Traditionally attributed to Peter the apostle, but considered pseudonymous and anonymous by scholars.

These non-canonical Gospels are the most recognized and have provide valuable insights into early Christian beliefs, practices, and interpretations of Jesus' life and teachings, but they are not considered authoritative scripture by most Christian denominations. But, the texts have received considerable attention from scholars due to their content, historical significance, and impact on early Christian thought and literature.

It's important to note that while these non-canonical Gospels provide additional insights into early Christian beliefs and traditions, they are not considered authoritative scripture by most Christian denominations. They are studied by scholars for historical and theological purposes, but their teachings are not considered on par with the canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Additional Non-Canonicals

The exact number of non-canonical Gospels is difficult to determine precisely because there are numerous ancient texts that have been discovered, recovered, or mentioned in historical records. Additionally, some of these texts may exist in multiple versions, translations, or fragments. However, scholars have identified and studied a substantial number of non-canonical Gospels, ranging from well-known texts to more obscure or fragmentary ones.

Estimates suggest that there could be anywhere from 40 to over 100 non-canonical Gospels, depending on how one defines and categorizes them. Some of these texts are relatively well-



preserved and widely recognized, while others are known only through mentions in ancient texts or fragments discovered among archaeological finds.

The study of non-canonical Gospels is a complex and ongoing field of research within biblical studies, early Christian history, and related disciplines. Scholars continue to explore and analyze these texts to better understand the diverse range of beliefs, practices, and interpretations within early Christianity and its broader cultural context.

While there are many non-canonical Gospels beyond those mentioned, these particular texts are often considered foundational or representative examples within the genre of apocryphal or extra-canonical Gospel literature. They provide valuable insights into early Christian beliefs, practices, and interpretations of Jesus' life and teachings, as well as the diversity of religious thought within the early Christian movement.

Scholars have devoted extensive research to these texts, examining their origins, transmission history, theological themes, literary characteristics, and relationship to the canonical Gospels and other early Christian writings. Despite their non-canonical status, these texts remain important sources for understanding the development of Christianity in its formative period.