

Gospel of Thomas: Some historical context and a snapshot of the matrix

(Matrix includes everything in culture, history, religion, economics, politics that presses on the moment vs. the immediate context in which an event happens.)

The Gospel of Thomas was discovered/re-discovered in Nag Hammadi finds but it was widely known to believers in the ancient times. Historically, we see it referred to by earliest Church leaders as they discuss the contents of the New Testament. Remember, the NT was not initially developed by the early church but rather by Emperor Constantine...it came to him as a report on how to understand the movement and so rule over it.

As early leaders in the Christian movement took on the task of the NT (a process which lasted through the 10th Century), they used the Emperor's report as their starting point. There was much controversy over what was to be added. Some of the debate even related to how big the NT should be given it would be hard to publish a large book by hand. It is not clear why the Gospel of Thomas wasn't included at the time but certainly "church" politics/biases played a part then...as it often does.

The Gospel of Thomas is a book of Wisdom Teachings or sayings of Jesus. Many are very similar to the parables of Jesus in the gospels. They don't advise on religion, but rather give pithy insights as to everyday life and the processing of our experience. The sayings are meant to get us thinking about the intangibles of life...much like a proverb. The matrix in which they were spoken is one of Imperial Rule, a patriarchy which sees women as incomplete humans. Jesus' saying need to navigate all this and more. It sometimes affects how he says what he says.

The Gospel of Thomas holds Jesus' main significance as his role as teacher. There is no mention of his death or resurrection or performing healing. In Thomas, Jesus doesn't die. He teaches about our healing ourselves. Jesus doesn't teach about his own significance or about scripture but rather on issues of every life and the Realm at hand.

In Thomas, the focus is NOT the end of the world (or heaven), it is our real purpose as human beings...how we are to live in the present Realm of God, guided by the wisdom of the Child of Humanity.

Did the Thomas in the Bible write this gospel? Like with the Gospel of Mary, there are many men named Thomas and many named Thomas wrote of Jesus. But, there is evidence the real Thomas knew the real writer of John for "John" criticizes Thomas in his gospel. Also, there is evidence Thomas led a strong, unique, and popular movement in the Eastern Mediterranean. So, it is possible but not verifiable that the gospel was written by the Thomas of the other gospels.