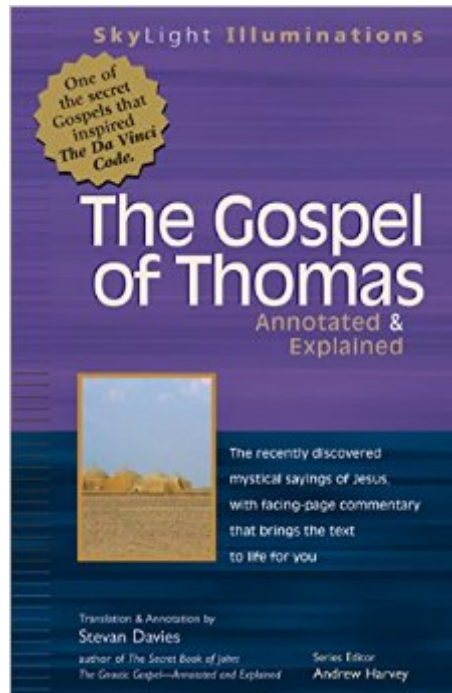


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# The Gospel Of Thomas: Annotated & Explained (SkyLight Illuminations)



## Synopsis

The recently discovered mystical sayings of Jesus, with facing-page commentary that brings the text to life for you."The Gospel of Thomas really is, I believe, the clearest guide we have to the vision of the world's supreme mystical revolutionary, the teacher known as Jesus. To those who learn to unpack its sometimes cryptic sayings, the Gospel of Thomas offers a naked and dazzlingly subversive representation of Jesusâ™™ defining and most radical discovery: that the living Kingdom of God burns in us and surrounds us at all moments."â•from the Foreword by Andrew HarveyThis ancient text can become a companion for your own spiritual journey. In 1945, twelve ancient books were found inside a sealed jar at the base of an Egyptian cliff. One of those texts was the Gospel of Thomas, one of the most important religious archaeological discoveries of the twentieth century. While illuminating the origins of Christianity, it raises the question whether the New Testamentâ™™s version of Jesusâ™™ teachings is entirely accurate and complete.Written at the same time as the canonical Gospels, the Gospel of Thomas portrays Jesus as a wisdom-loving sage. The aphoristic sayings emphasize the value of the present, teaching that the Kingdom of God is here and now, rather than a future promise or future threat. It presents a new way of looking at the challenging and intriguing figure of Jesus, and reminds us that the Divine can be found right here on earth.Now you can experience the Gospel of Thomas with understanding even if you have no previous knowledge of early Christian history or thought. This SkyLight Illuminations edition offers insightful yet unobtrusive commentary that explains references and philosophical terms, shares the inspiring interpretations of famous spiritual teachers, and gives you deeper understanding of Thomasâ™™s innovative message: that self-knowledge and contemplation of the nature of this world are the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Stevan Davies maintains the online Gospel of Thomas Homepage and is the author of the 1983 book *The Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom*, distinguishing himself as one of the leading scholars on the Gospel of Thomas. The chief virtue of Davies is that he stays close to what the Gospel of Thomas is saying rather than attempting to read into the text an over-arching gnostic, ascetic, or mystical motif. The result is a commentary filled with fresh insights, such as the humor of saying 72, the sexual innuendo of saying 22, the vegetarian doctrine of sayings 11&87, and the incompetent sower of saying 9. Davies is concise in his commentary, providing the text of Thomas in large type on the right side, with comments by Davies (and the occasional quote) on the left side. I have read most of the books in English on the Gospel of Thomas, and I can say confidently that this is the best commentary available to date and a must-read for anyone who is interested in this fascinating text.

Prof. Stevan Davies was one of the first scholars to take the Gospel of Thomas seriously as a first century text. An acknowledged expert in his field, he is fascinated by early Christianity, has few preconceptions as to its earliest form, and is always willing to try out new ideas. This book contains a solid translation of the Gospel of Thomas, a good introduction, plus a new age preface by Andrew Harvey. The great strength of the book is the saying by saying commentary. Davies does not try to give a unified interpretation of the Gospel of Thomas, but to "offer suggestions, share observations, and participate in a reader's seeking..." Prof Davies has a way of wheedling out the system of thought that lurks beneath the text, and he looks at the sayings as clearly as he can, disregarding religious or scholarly commonplaces. This is one of the three or four best books on the Gospel of Thomas.

I can thoroughly recommend this book for three reasons: 1) its simplicity of text; and 2) its ability to put NT passages into context; and 3) it serves as poignant personal reader for introspection and meditation. Never mind exegese, dogma and historic church teachings. Make up your own mind with a refreshing text that still speaks to us on a very personal and direct level, unhindered by tradition.

In 1945, twelve ancient texts were found in a sealed jar at the base of an Egyptian cliff. One of these, The Gospel of Thomas, is presented an expert translation accompanied with extensive interpretation in this impressive edition of *The Gospel Of Thomas Annotated & Explained* by Stevan Davies (a learned professor who has intensively studied the Gospel of Thomas for over twenty years). This is a seminal work that challenges a great many religious preconceptions within Christian literature and Biblical Studies. The Gospel Of Thomas offers a unique and sometimes contradictory perspective on the Kingdom of God (claiming that it is here and now rather than a future promise or threat), and sheds new light on the perception of Jesus Christ. *The Gospel Of Thomas Annotated & Explained* is very highly recommended reading for anyone seeking to better understand the these long-hidden aphoristic words attributed as the teachings of Jesus Christ.

--Simon Peter said to them: Mary should leave us because women are not worthy of the life. Jesus responded: Look, I'll lead her in order to make her male so that she can become a living spirit as you males are. For each woman who makes herself male will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.--When I've read this passage to my biblical studies and history classes in seminary, they can usually agree readily that this might not have been the best document to include in the canon of scripture, at least when thinking about it from a 'preachability' standpoint, particularly if one tends toward literalist interpretations. But many of the passages in the Gospel of Thomas defy simplistic interpretation and understanding because they really are of a different world and different worldview, and have not had a long history of hermeneutic development as have other, equally difficulty canonical passages. The Gospel of Thomas gained a significant audience during the first decades after its discovery in the Egyptian desert in 1945. Part of a collection that has come to be called the Nag Hammadi scriptures, they were discovered only a few years prior to the Dead Sea Scrolls, another set of documents that has been pivotal in increasing our understanding of the religious culture of the time two thousand years ago. One scholar classified the Gospel of Thomas along with most other non-canonical gospels as failing to gain widespread acceptance not primarily because of the content, but because of the style - the four canonical gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are all narrative in their development; they tell stories and narrate a history in addition to giving the wisdom of Jesus. The Gospel of Thomas, like many of the other, is more a collection of sayings, more on the order of the book of Proverbs or Ecclesiastes than Mark or John. According to Stevan Davies, 'The format of the Gospel of Thomas is little more than a disorganised list.... The Gospel of Thomas is about as primitive a form of text as there can be: a simple list with one thing following

another in a manner that is much more reminiscent of oral tradition than of literary construction.'The Gospel of Thomas is perhaps best understood as a Gnostic text (though there are some who would dispute that). Andrew Harvey, series editor of the Skylight Illuminations set in which this book falls, writes: 'The Gospel of Thomas is more than the most exciting archaeological find of the last century, even more than another gospel to add to the four canonical ones. It is far more than another Gnostic text, or one that carries on the tradition of Jewish wisdom sayings, or, as some have also claimed, a cross between the two. These are scholarly descriptions and distinctions, fascinating and helpful in their way, but they do not begin to describe the extraordinary importance of the Gospel of Thomas, or to show how it can be used today by all sincere seekers to awaken their divine identity and to focus its powers on a radical transformation of the world.'There are 114 passages (not quite verses in the traditional sense, but closer to verse-size than chapter-size). Each one is here presented in new translation by Davies, laid on with only a few (sometimes only one) per page, with commentary on the facing page. This commentary is primarily looking at social, historical, philosophical and theological ideas rather than linguistic and translation issues; thus, it is accessible to the general reader, but will need to be supplemented for the scholar. Davies avoids jargon and terminology with which only scholars would be comfortable, again in an effort to make the Gospel of Thomas generally accessible to non-professional readers. Those who are looking for forbidden fruit might look elsewhere. As Davies points out in the introduction, we have no proof that this book was deliberately excluded by those councils and decision-makers who solidified the canon as we now have it - indeed, they might not have even been aware of the existence of the Gospel of Thomas, which might have been a more regional text in circulation and popularity. Still, its rediscovery has not provoked widespread movements to reopen the canon. It has provided fascinating insight into the early Christian world, and provided a new lens through which to assess how some people understood the person and phenomenon of Jesus. This is a very good text to use to be introduced to the Gospel of Thomas, to some of the less-traveled by-ways of early Christianity, and to ideas of spirituality that are both Christian and foreign. As for the opening passage -- that is actually the conclusion of the Gospel of Thomas. Remembering that the writers (and intended audience) would not have taken the terms 'male' and 'female' to be literal, flesh-and-blood attributes is the key to understanding this passage.

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