

Lost Books 2

- If you could ask God any question, what would you ask?
- What are some things you think are not answered in Scripture and why might God have left them unanswered?
- Why do we often feel a need to fill in the blanks rather than rest trustingly in God's silence?
- Many ancient documents were written to fill in the blanks concerning the background of Jesus' parents, Mary and Joseph, and about Jesus' childhood.
- Among these are books like Pseudo-Matthew, the Proto-Gospel of James, the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, and the History of Joseph the Carpenter.

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- In these writings Jesus' divinity and virgin birth are supported through the many miracles He reportedly performs.
- The writings seemed harmless, but they were harshly condemned by the Church Fathers because they contradicted Scripture, didn't teach the Gospel clearly, and could easily lead people astray.
- These writings now provide the battle ground for Christianity in the 21st century, they provide the "new information" showcased on the History Channel and A&E at Christmas and Easter.
- According to Jeffrey Kloha a professor at Concordia Seminary St. Louis: "Previous generations fought over the Bible. For better or for worse, the battle used to be over creationism, Jonah, the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and how many Isaiahs there might be. Above all, however, the battle was fought over the first century and Jesus."

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- He continues, “Historical criticism attacked the text and replaced its authority with reconstructed sources, but historical criticism has now run its course. To be sure, there is still a Jesus Seminar, but "the Quest for the Historical Jesus" did not bring an end to historic, creedal Christianity. The Jesus of history could not be pried away from the church, and so the church is now the target. The battleground has changed. The nature of Christianity in the second century, rather than the first century, is debated. What was Christianity like after Jesus? Or, as it is more often stated, what were "Christianities" like?

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- “It is no longer assumed that the same Christian faith was preached everywhere by all. Rather, some took Jesus and ran one way, some another. Some died out early, like the Nazoreans. Others died out later, like the so-called Gnostics...The Gnostics, it is argued, were viciously attacked by what later were called "orthodox" or "catholic Christians" and were persecuted out of existence.”
- Is orthodox Christianity merely one possible outcome of the teachings of Jesus?
- Bart Ehrman's way of framing the issue is typical: "What if it had been otherwise? What if some other form of Christianity had become dominant, instead of the one that did?"

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- Let's take a brief look at some pictures of Jesus, Mary and Joseph from these "alternative" Gospels.
- First we'll look at the infancy Gospel of Thomas paragraphs 2-5 – what impression of Jesus as a child is conveyed?
- Next look at the Protoevangelium of James – who is this about? In paragraphs 1-7 we have Mary's youth and upbringing in the Temple.
- Read paragraphs 8-9, what history does this "fill in" for us?
- Read paragraph 11, what does this intersect with in Scripture?

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- Finally, lets look at Pseudo-Matthew, you'll note that the first several paragraphs are letters between Jerome the translator and a pope, the narrative begins at the heading "chapter 1."
- Once again who is this about? Read chapters 13, 16, and 17 how does this compare with Scripture?
- These documents are hyperlinked in the LHM study guide but they are on our website as Word documents because I think they're easier to read.

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- We have a number of apocryphal stories about Jesus' childhood, but what sort of a child was Jesus really? Luke gives us one brief but genuine glimpse when He was twelve years old.
- Let's read Luke 2:41-52
- There is a huge difference between the way Jesus' attitude is conveyed in the apocryphal gospels and how it's conveyed here in Luke's account.
- How would you describe that difference?
- What facts can we gather about Jesus' childhood from Luke's passage?
- What things remain unknown?
- The final verse speaks of Jesus growing in favor with God and man. How does that truth undercut the way He is portrayed in the apocryphal gospels?

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- From the moment of His conception, Jesus had all His divine attributes and powers at His disposal, but He refrained from using them throughout His childhood. Jesus only began to demonstrate His divine power after He was baptized. The apostle John writes, “This, the first of His signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested His glory”
- Read John 2:1-11
- This was Jesus’ first miracle, but it was certainly not His last. “And He went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. So His fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought Him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and He healed them” (Matthew 4:23-24).

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- John closes his Gospel with these words, “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31). “Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25)