

## Q&A

***Q: Fr. Alex, what's the story with the Gospel of Thomas and other stories about Jesus that aren't in our Bible? I've heard that Jesus may have been married and even had a baby—I'm confused about this and have never heard these things until recently.***

Long story short is that you or I could go to Borders or Barnes and Noble today—or decades ago for that matter—and find books in the religion section with titles like “The Gospel of Thomas” and “The Gnostic Gospels.” To us, the stories found inside might be interesting from a literary or historical perspective, but we consider them just that: “stories” in the sense of fiction. The 27 books of our Bible were all composed in the first century (between about 49 – 59 A.D.). They were written shortly after Jesus’ life-time by people who knew Jesus, or were closely associated with those close to Him. There is authority in this. In later centuries, there were other accounts of Jesus’ life written and proclaimed to be important and divinely inspired. The Gospel of Thomas, for instance, is one of these. But these books were written much later than our holy 27 books, and so they did not speak with the same authority or currency—most importantly, they were composed by religious groups that were more cultish than Christian (such as the Gnostics), and they had a very distorted view of Jesus and His mission. The narratives suggest images of the Lord that are out of keeping with our sacred traditions—including bizarre tales like the one you mentioned ... Jesus as a father to a child born by Mary Magdalene. St. Mary was a woman who Jesus lifted up from sin; she was close to Him like so many other woman and men. He helped her come home to the Lord. But that was it—there is no evidence of anything more. The Church always rejected the claims of these other “gospels,” simply because there was no reason to do otherwise.

In 367 A.D., the 27 canonical books of the New Testament that we recognize today were proclaimed to the Christian world by St. Athanasios the Great in an Easter letter/encyclical to his flock. This standard has stood for over 1,600 years for a reason. The truth is forever.

To drive the point home more, stop by a library or book store soon and take a look at what you see inside one of these alternative gospels. You’ll understand immediately why these aren’t recognized by our Church, and you’ll appreciate all the more the profound, simple and life-saving words of our true New Testament.