

The Dialogue of the Savior

Translated by Stephen Emmel

The **Dialogue of the Saviour** is one of the New Testament apocrypha texts that was found within the Nag Hammadi library of predominantly gnostic texts. The text appears only once in a single Coptic codex, and is **heavily damaged**. The surviving portions indicate that the general content is a dialogue with Jesus.

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The Savior said to his disciples, "Already the time has come, brothers, for us to abandon our labor and stand at rest. For whoever stands at rest will rest forever. And I say to you, be always above [...] time [...] you [...] be afraid of [...] you [...] anger is fearful [...] arouse anger [...] but since you have [...] they accepted these words concerning it with fear and trembling, and it set them up with governors, for from it nothing was forthcoming. But when I came, I opened the path, and I taught them about the passage which they will traverse, the elect and solitary, who have known the Father, having believed the truth and all the praises while you offered praise.

"So when you offer praise, do so like this: Hear us, Father, just as you heard your only begotten son, and received him, and gave him rest from any [...] You are the one whose power [...] your armor [...] is [...] light [...] living [...] touch [...] the word [...] repentance [...] life [...] you. You are the thinking and the entire serenity of the solitary. Again: Hear us just as you heard your elect. Through your sacrifice, these will enter; through their good works, these have saved their souls from these blind limbs, so that they might exist eternally. Amen.

"I will teach you. When the time of dissolution arrives, the first power of darkness will come upon you. Do not be afraid and say "Behold! The time has come!" But when you see a single staff ... *(3 lines indecipherable)* ... understand [...] the work [...] and the governors [...] come upon you [...]. Truly, fear is the power [...]. So if you are going to be afraid of what is about to come upon you, it will engulf you. For there is not one among them who will spare you or show you mercy. But in this way, look at the [...] in it, since you have mastered every word on earth. It [...] take you up to the [...] place where there is no rule [...] tyrant. When you [...] you will see those who [...] and also [...] tell you [...] the reasoning power [...] reasoning power [...] place of truth [...] but [...]. But you [...] truth, this [...] living [...] and your joy [...]. So [...] in order that [...] your souls [...] lest it [...] the word [...] raise... *(3 lines indecipherable)* ... For the crossing place is fearful before you. But you, with a single mind, pass it by! For its depth is great; its height is enormous [...] single mind [...] and the fire [...] [...] all the powers [...] you, they [...] and the powers [...] they [...] soul [...] [...] in everyone [...] you are the [...] and [...] forget [...] son [...] and you [...] [...]."

Matthew said, "How [...] [...]?"

The Savior said "[...] the things inside you [...] will remain, you [...]."

Judas said, "Lord [...] the works [...] these souls, these [...], these little ones, when [...] where will they be? [...] the spirit [...]?"

The Lord said, "[...] receive them. These do not die, [...] they are not destroyed, for they have known their consorts and him who would receive them. For the truth seeks out the wise and the righteous."

The Savior said, "The lamp of the body is the mind. As long as the things inside you are

set in order, that is, [...], your bodies are luminous. As long as your hearts are dark, the luminosity you anticipate [...] I have [...] I will go [...] my word [...] I send [...]."

His disciples said, "Lord, who is it who seeks, and [...] reveals?"

The Lord said to them, "He who seeks [...] reveals [...]."

Matthew said, "Lord, when I [...] and when I speak, who is it who [...] and who listens?"

The Lord said, "It is the one who speaks who also listens, and it is the one who can see who also reveals."

Mary said, "Lord, behold! Whence do I bear the body while I weep, and whence while I [laugh]?"

The Lord said, "[...] weeps on account of its works [...] remain and the mind laughs [...] spirit. If one does not [...] darkness, he will be able to see [...]. So I tell you [...] light is the darkness [...] stand in [...] not see the light [...] the lie [...] they brought them from [...]. You will give [...] and [...] exist forever. [...] ever. Then all the powers which are above, as well as those below, will [...] you. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth over the end of all these things."

Judas said, "Tell us, Lord, what was [...] before the heaven and the earth existed."

The Lord said, "There was darkness and water, and spirit upon water. And I say to you [...] what you seek after [...] inquire after [...] within you [...] the power and the mystery [...] spirit, for from [...] wickedness [...] come [...] mind [...] behold [...] [...]."

[...] said, "Lord, tell us where the [...] is established, and where the true mind exists."

The Lord said, "The fire of the spirit came into existence [...] both. On this account, the [...] came into existence, and the true mind came into existence within them [...]. If someone sets his soul up high, then he will be exalted."

And Matthew asked him, "[...] took [...], it is he who [...]."

The Lord said, "[...] stronger than [...] you [...] to follow you and all the works [...] your hearts. For just as your hearts [...], so [...] the means to overcome the powers above, as well as those below [...]. I say to you, let him who possesses power renounce it and repent. And let him who [...] seek and find and rejoice."

Judas said, "Behold! I see that all things exist [...] like signs upon [...]. On this account did they happen thus."

The Lord said, "When the Father established the cosmos, he [...] water from it, and his Word came forth from it, and it inhabited many [...]. It was higher than the path [...] surrounds the entire earth [...] the collected water [...] existing outside them. [...] the water, a great fire encircling them like a wall. [...] time once many things had become separated from what was inside. When the [...] was established, he looked [...], and said to it, 'Go, and [...] from yourself, in order that [...] be in want from generation to generation, and from age to age.' Then it cast forth from itself fountains of milk and fountains of honey, and oil and wine and good fruits, and sweet flavor and good roots, in order that it might not be deficient from generation to generation, and from age to age. And it is above [...] standing [...] its beauty [...] and outside there was a great light, powerful [...] resemble it, for it [...] rules over all the aeons above and below. [...] was taken from the fire [...] it was scattered in the [...] above and below. All the works which depend on them, it is they [...] over the heaven above and over the earth below. On them depend all the works."

And when Judas heard these things, he bowed down, and he [...], and he offered praise to the Lord.

Mary hailed her brethren, saying, "Where are you going to put these things about which you ask the son [...]?"

The Lord said to her, "Sister, [no one] will be able to inquire about these things except for someone who has somewhere to put them in his heart. [...] to come forth [...] and enter [...], so that they might not hold back [...] this impoverished cosmos."

Matthew said, "Lord, I want to see that place of life, [the place] where there is no wickedness, but rather, there is pure light!"

The Lord said, "Brother Matthew, you will not be able to see it as long as you are carrying flesh around."

Matthew said, "Lord, even if I will not be able to see it, let me know it!"

The Lord said, "Everyone who has known himself has seen it in everything given to him to do, [...] and has come to [...] it in his goodness."

Judas responded, saying, "Tell me, Lord, how it is that [...] which shakes the earth moves."

The Lord picked up a stone and held it in his hand, saying "What am I holding in my hand?"

He said, "It is a stone."

He said to them, "That which supports the earth is that which supports the heaven.

When a Word comes forth from the Greatness, it will come on what supports the heaven and the earth. For the earth does not move. Were it to move, it would fall. But it neither moves nor falls, in order that the First Word might not fail. For it was that which established the cosmos and inhabited it, and inhaled fragrance from it. For [...] which do not move, I [...] you, all the sons of men. For you are from that place. In the hearts of those who speak out of joy and truth, you exist. Even if it comes forth in the body of the Father among men, and is not received, still it [...] return to its place. Whoever does not know the work of perfection, knows nothing. If one does not stand in the darkness, he will not be able to see the light. If one does not understand how fire came into existence, he will burn in it, because he does not know the root of it. If one does not first understand water, he knows nothing. For what use is there for him to be baptized in it? If one does not understand how blowing wind came into existence, he will blow away with it. If one does not understand how body, which he bears, came into existence, he will perish with it. And how will someone who does not know the Son know the Father? And to someone who will not know the root of all things, they remain hidden. Someone who will not know the root of wickedness is no stranger to it. Whoever will not understand how he came will not understand how he will go, and he is no stranger to this cosmos which will [...], which will be humiliated."

Then he [...] Judas and Matthew and Mary [...] the edge of heaven and earth. And when he placed his hand upon them, they hoped that they might [...] it. Judas raised his eyes and saw an exceedingly high place, and he saw the place of the abyss below. Judas said to Matthew, "Brother, who will be able to climb up to such a height or down to the bottom of the abyss? For there is a tremendous fire there, and something very fearful!" At that moment, a Word came forth from it. As it stood there, he saw how it had come down. Then he said to it, "Why have you come down?"

And the Son of Man greeted them and said to them, "A seed from a power was deficient, and it went down to the abyss of the earth. And the Greatness remembered it, and he sent the Word to it. It brought it up into his presence, so that the First Word

might not fail."

Then his disciples were amazed at all the things he had said to them, and they accepted them on faith. And they concluded that it is useless to regard wickedness.

(38) Then he said to his disciples, "Have I not told you that like a visible voice and flash of lightning will the good be taken up to the light?"

Then all his disciples offered him praise and said, "Lord, before you appeared here, who was it who offered you praise? For all praises exist on your account. Or who is it who will bless you? For all blessing derives from you."

(40) As they stood there, he saw two spirits bringing a single soul with them in a great flash of lightning. And a Word came forth from the Son of Man, saying, "Give them their garment!" And the small one became like the big one. They were [...] those who received them [...] each other. Then [...] disciples, whom he had [...].

Mary said, "[...] see evil [...] them from the first [...] each other.

The Lord said, "[...] when you see them [...] become huge, they will [...]. But when you see the Eternal Existent, that is the great vision."

They all said to him, "Tell us about it!"

He said to them, "How do you wish to see it? By means of a transient vision or an eternal vision?" He went on and said, "Strive to save that which can follow you, and to seek it out, and to speak from within it, so that, as you seek it out, everything might be in harmony with you. For I say to you, truly, the living God [...] in you [...] in him."

Judas said, "Truly, I want [...]."

The Lord said to him, "[...] living [...] dwells [...] entire [...] the deficiency [...]."

Judas said, "Who [...]?"

The Lord said to him, "[...] all the works which [...] the remainder, it is they which you [...]."

Judas said, "Behold! The governors dwell above us, so it is they who will rule over us!"

The Lord said, "It is you who will rule over them! But when you rid yourselves of jealousy, then you will clothe yourselves in light and enter the bridal chamber."

Judas said, "How will our garments be brought to us?"

The Lord said, "There are some who will provide for you, and there are others who will receive [...]. For it is they who will give you your garments. For who will be able to reach that place which is the reward? But the garments of life were given to man because he knows the path by which he will leave. And it is difficult even for me to reach it!"

Mary said, "Thus with respect to 'the wickedness of each day,' and 'the laborer is worthy of his food,' and 'the disciple resembles his teacher.'" She uttered this as a woman who had understood completely.

The disciples said to him, "What is the fullness, and what is the deficiency?"

He said to them, "You are from the fullness, and you dwell in the place where the deficiency is. And lo! His light has poured down upon me!"

Matthew said, "Tell me, Lord, how the dead die, and how the living live."

The Lord said, "You have asked me about a saying [...] which eye has not seen, nor have I heard it, except from you. But I say to you that when what invigorates a man is removed, he will be called 'dead'. And when what is alive leaves what is dead, what is alive will be called upon."

Judas said, "Why else, for the sake of truth, do they <die> and live?"

The Lord said, "Whatever is born of truth does not die. Whatever is born of woman

dies."

Mary said, "Tell me, Lord, why I have come to this place to profit or to forfeit."

The Lord said, "You make clear the abundance of the revealer!"

Mary said to him, "Lord, is there then a place which is [...] or lacking truth?"

The Lord said, "The place where I am not!"

Mary said, "Lord, you are fearful and wonderful, and [...] those who do not know you."

Matthew said, "Why do we not rest at once?"

The Lord said, "When you lay down these burdens!"

Matthew said, "How does the small join itself to the big?"

The Lord said, "When you abandon the works which will not be able to follow you, then you will rest."

Mary said, "I want to understand all things, just as they are!"

The Lord said, "He who will seek out life! For this is their wealth. For the [...] of this cosmos is [...], and its gold and its silver are misleading."

His disciples said to him, "What should we do to ensure that our work will be perfect?"

The Lord said to them, "Be prepared in face of everything. Blessed is the man who has found [...] the contest [...] his eyes. Neither did he kill, nor was he killed, but he came forth victorious."

Judas said, "Tell me, Lord, what the beginning of the path is."

He said, "Love and goodness. For if one of these existed among the governors, wickedness would never have come into existence."

Matthew said, "Lord, you have spoken about the end of everything without concern."

The Lord said, "You have understood all the things I have said to you, and you have accepted them on faith. If you have known them, then they are yours. If not, then they are not yours."

They said to him, "What is the place to which we are going?"

The Lord said, "Stand in the place you can reach!"

Mary said, "Everything established thus is seen."

The Lord said, "I have told you that it is the one who can see who reveals."

His disciples, numbering twelve, asked him, "Teacher, [...] serenity [...] teach us [...]."

The Lord said, "[...] everything which I have [...] you will [...] you [...] everything."

Mary said, "There is but one saying I will speak to the Lord concerning the mystery of truth: In this have we taken our stand, and to the cosmic are we transparent."

Judas said to Matthew, "We want to understand the sort of garments we are to be clothed with when we depart the decay of the flesh."

The Lord said, "The governors and the administrators possess garments granted only for a time, which do not last. But you, as children of truth, not with these transitory garments are you to clothe ourselves. Rather, I say to you that you will become blessed when you strip yourselves! For it is no great thing [...] outside."

[...] said [...] speak, I [...]."

The Lord said, "[...] your Father [...]."

Mary said, "Of what sort is that mustard seed? Is it something from heaven or is it something from earth?"

The Lord said, "When the Father established the cosmos for himself, he left much over from the Mother of the All. Therefore, he speaks and he acts."

Judas said, "You have told us this out of the mind of truth. When we pray, how should

we pray?"

The Lord said, "Pray in the place where there is no woman."

Matthew said, "'Pray in the place where there is no woman,' he tells us, meaning 'Destroy the works of womanhood,' not because there is any other manner of birth, but because they will cease giving birth."

Mary said, "They will never be obliterated."

The Lord said, "Who knows that they will not dissolve and ... *[2 lines missing]*?"

Judas said to Matthew, "The works of womanhood will dissolve [...] the governors will [...]. Thus will we become prepared for them."

The Lord said, "Right. For do they see you? Do they see those who receive you? Now behold! A true Word is coming forth from the Father to the abyss, in silence with a flash of lightning, giving birth. Do they see it or overpower it? But you are even more aware of the path, this one, before either angel or authority has [...] Rather, it belongs to the Father and the Son, because they are both a single [...]. And you will go via the path which you have known. Even if the governors become huge, they will not be able to reach it. But listen - I tell you that it is difficult even for me to reach it!"

Mary said to the Lord, "When the works [...] which dissolve a work."

The Lord said, "Right. For you know [...] if I dissolve [...] will go to his place."

Judas said, "How is the spirit apparent?"

The Lord said, "How is the sword apparent?"

Judas said, "How is the light apparent?"

The Lord said, "[...] in it forever."

Judas said, "Who forgives the works of whom? The works which [...] the cosmos [...] who forgives the works."

The Lord said, "Who [...]? It behooves whoever has understood the works to do the will of the Father. And as for you, strive to rid yourselves of anger and jealousy, and to strip yourselves of your [...], and not to ...

(next 18 lines virtually indecipherable)

... he will live forever. And I say to you [...], so that you will not lead your spirits and your souls into error."

END

The Dialogue of the Saviour (120-180AD)

The Dialogue of the Saviour was discovered, along with other Gnostic texts, in the Nag Hammadi collection in Egypt in 1945. The original text was greatly damaged, but it appears to be a dialogue between Jesus and some of His followers, or book of sayings bearing some similarity to the Gospel of Thomas. The text seems disjointed at points, and jumps from topic to topic without continuity. For this reason scholars have surmised that the text may have been assembled from a number of separate documents. Scholars date the text to the mid to late 2nd century.

Why Isn't It Considered Reliable?

The Dialogue of the Savior appears far too late in history to have been written by an eyewitness to the life of Jesus. In addition, the text was discovered in a collection of Gnostic documents, and Gnosticism was widely confronted as heretical by the early Church Fathers. The Dialogue of the Saviour also appears to be a rare and narrowly accepted document (even for its time), as it exists in only one recovered Codex.

How Does It Corroborate the Life of Jesus?

In spite of the late appearance of this Gnostic text, the Dialogue of the Savior does affirm many tangential aspects of the canonical eyewitness accounts. Jesus is described as the “only begotten son” of God, and the “Savior” and “Lord”. Jesus is also described as having many disciples (including Matthew, Mary and Judas). He is described as teaching these disciples about prayer, the creation of the universe and the end times.

Where (and Why) Does It Differ from the Reliable Accounts?

Much of the Dialogue of the Savior is preoccupied with a question and answer session addressing how Matthew, Judas and Mary might attain salvation through "gnosis", (the acquisition of secret knowledge limited to a select few believers). This is consistent with other Gnostic documents rejected by the Church Fathers. The text also describes the material world as an unintended evil; again a reflection of Gnostic theology.

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