

# Scholar Dr. Daniel B. Wallace Contributes to New Publication of Papyrus with Early Sayings of Jesus

*CSNTM Founder and C.E.O., Daniel B. Wallace, assists in dating papyrus fragments containing the oldest text of the Sermon on the Mount and the Gospel of Thomas*



*The Center FOR THE STUDY OF  
NEW TESTAMENT Manuscripts*

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## Who, What, When, Where?

An early papyrus containing texts from Matthew, Luke, and the Gospel of Thomas has now been published as one of the oldest fragments containing canonical material to survive the past two millennia. Over a decade ago, Wallace along with eight graduate students spent countless hours deciphering the fragment, determining its source(s), and offering a preliminary dating. Editors, Wallace, Jeffrey Fish (Baylor University), and Michael Holmes (Bethel University, Museum of the Bible), along with papyrologist and paleographer Ben Henry, each dated this fragment to the second or possibly early third century, making it the oldest manuscript containing text from Matthew 6 and Luke 12 (the Sermon on the Mount). This syncretistic text of the "Sayings of Jesus" has now been published in the newest volume of the Oxyrhynchus Papyri, volume LXXXVII (87), as the third entry, P.Oxy. 5575.

## Why Is This Significant?

Wallace summarizes, "When a Christian work, written within a century of the completion of the New Testament, is published—a document that is the oldest text from the Sermon on the Mount, as well as the oldest text containing material from the Gospel of Thomas, and these sources apparently woven into a single discourse—the significance of this unique artifact can hardly be overestimated."

As Holmes noted in a post on the Text & Canon Institute's website, this unusual papyrus stimulates "questions and possibilities [that] overflow."

## Delving Deeper Into Details

After being assigned as the initial investigator of P.Oxy. 5575, Wallace gathered a team of

graduate students to decipher the manuscript, identify the text, and determine when it was written. Altogether, Wallace's team put in more than 1000 hours over the span of several months. It was during this time that team member Rory Crowley discovered the papyrus included material from the Gospel of Thomas. This discovery was, according to Wallace, "surprising and rather significant." After discussions with Fish, it was decided to postpone this extraordinary revelation until the papyrus was published. Following this initial research phase, Fish and Holmes completed the editing for distribution.

### Synthesizing Insights

The newly published P.Oxy. 5575 provides a unique syncretic account of the gospels of Matthew, Luke, and the Gospel of Thomas and is now dated as the earliest of all extant manuscripts with any material from Thomas. Wallace adds that "Although this is not technically a New Testament papyrus (it's syncretistic, including portions from Matt 6, Luke 12, Thomas 27, and perhaps one or two others), that it includes portions from these books, and presumably as a single discourse, at such an early date is astounding."

New Testament scholar Mark Goodacre (Duke University) recently commented on this fragment in his NT Pod podcast series. Concerning its "mixed" content, he stated: "This [fragment] is just a fascinating piece, and it reminds us that the reality in Antiquity was often a bit more complex than our simple models allow."

While the implications of this artifact will be wrestled with for some time, its invaluable discovery has also opened the door for widespread questioning and speculation about early Christian communities and their texts.

### About CSNTM

The Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts is a non-profit organization in Plano, Texas, committed to preserving ancient New Testament Manuscripts for a modern world. By digitizing ancient manuscripts for preservation, duplication, and research purposes, CSNTM stands at the forefront of biblical, modern translation and is a leading organization in digitizing the Greek New Testament. To learn more about CSNTM and keep up with the latest discoveries, expeditions, opportunities, and more visit [csntm.org](http://csntm.org).

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