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your guide to once-hidden works and their impact on the Bible

Lost Books of the Bible

FOR
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Dr. Daniel L. Smith-Christopher

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Dedications

From Daniel: This book is dedicated to Zsa Zsa, whom I married in 1992 because I'm no dummy!

From Stephen: I dedicate this book to the memory of my father, with love.

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Introduction

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The phrase “lost books of the Bible” is an oxymoron. If a book is really lost, then how does anyone know about it? Good question, right? In some cases, there are some genuinely “lost” books because historians and scholars know the title and maybe a quotation here and there from other ancient sources, but the writing itself isn’t available because it didn’t survive into the modern world. However, if that were the only kind of writing covered in *Lost Books of the Bible For Dummies*, it would be a very short book!

In most cases, of course, the lost books aren’t really lost; they’re simply rarely read, forgotten, or only recently rediscovered. That is, the main subject of this book is the ancient Jewish and Christian religious writings that didn’t end up in the Hebrew Bible (what many Jews refer to as the “TaNaK,” an acronym from the Hebrew words for “Torah, Prophets, and Writings”), the Christian Old Testament, or the Christian New Testament.

About This Book

If you’re intrigued by the idea that the Bible was a “selection” of writings and that there were some writings “not selected,” then this book is for you!

In this book, we attempt to summarize most, if not all, of the religious writings that have survived from ancient Jewish and ancient Christian writers. But if you want to know about those books not included in the Bible, then you clearly won’t be satisfied with short summaries! So, this book is intended to be your *starting* point on your journey of discovery. From here, you can go to the various writings themselves (all available in English) and dig into them for yourself.

Here’s what you can expect from this book:

- ✓ A basic introduction to the process that led to the formation of the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and the New Testament
- ✓ A summary of most of the writings that are available for study and that aren’t in the Bible

- ✔ An explanation of the differences among the available non-biblical writings, especially because some of them arguably came close to being included while others were definitely less popular
- ✔ Suggestions of ways to understand some of the more difficult-to-read writings
- ✔ Suggestions of how to start your own exploration of the world of non-canonical writings

In short, this book starts you on a journey of discovery of lost books that won't be so "lost" when you finish!

Conventions Used in This Book

In this book, we use the following general conventions that you should be aware of:

- ✔ When we introduce a new term in a chapter, we *italicize* it.
- ✔ Keywords appear in **boldface**.
- ✔ Web sites and e-mail addresses appear in `monofont` to help them stand out from the rest of the text.

As well, some terms, abbreviations, and other elements of this book may be confusing without some explanation, so the following sections clear up additional conventions used in this book.

"Canon" and "non-canonical"

The word "canon" comes from the Greek and typically refers to a set of measurements, like a "ruler" or "yardstick." But it also can refer to a set of measurements used to reproduce a copy of something. When the early Christians started using the term (sometime after 100 CE, it seems), it eventually came to mean the "set list" of writings that were to be included in the Bible. Problem is, people started using "canon" before lists were drawn up, so no one is absolutely certain what the early Christians thought was their "canon" until the first actual list of writings appeared around 367 CE.

All writings that didn't make it into the canon of the Old or New Testaments or the Hebrew Bible are therefore known as *non-canonical* writings. Bottom line: This entire book is all about non-canonical writings! For a terrific resource

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