

Did Judas Write a Gospel ?

Paul, speaking to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, charged them to “be on guard for . . . all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers . . . for I know that . . . savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock” (Acts 20:28 – 29). One of the tasks of elders/ministers is to guard the flock against such attacks. Many times these wolves attempt to destroy the sheep by casting them into confusion concerning the word of God, which is so foundational for our faith that Jude refers to it as “*the Faith once for all delivered to the saints*” (Jude 3).

Paul’s warning did not take long to come to pass. Already during his day, and in the early centuries of the New Testament church, a group called the *Gnostics* began to emerge. The Gnostics taught, among other things, that Jesus did not come in the flesh, setting them clearly outside the pale of Christianity (1John 4:2). They wrote prolifically over the next approximately 300 years.

In 1945, an important discovery known as the Nag Hammadi Library was made in Egypt, giving scholars, for the first time, early copies of these Gnostic texts, some of which bore the name of “gospels” (of Thomas, of Phillip, of Truth). More recently another set of documents was unearthed, which includes a document called *The Gospel of Judas*.

It is this Gospel of Judas, which has received so much media attention in the past few weeks particularly, and which prompts this short statement. Chief among the claims of this document is that Judas in his betrayal was actually working with Jesus’ full knowledge and approval by helping Him to “sacrifice the man that clothes me.”

Beloved congregation, do not let your faith be shaken by the news of this “discovery.” These “gospels” are not true gospels. They are not from the time of Christ (the gospel of Judas was not written until around 150 years after Jesus death). Though the liberal media is hailing this as providing earth shattering new information regarding the relationship between Judas and Jesus, it really does nothing of the sort. It was not written by Judas, or by an eyewitness of the wicked deeds of Judas. Its scholarly value lies in the information that it gives us about the Gnostics themselves, not about Judas or Jesus.

Further, the Gnostic writings were universally rejected as heretical by early church fathers such as Tertullian and Irenaus (ear-uh-nay’-us), who makes explicit reference to the Gospel of Judas as a heresy of the Cainites, a group of Gnostics that elevated Cain and other characters condemned by the Old Testament as actually being worthy of praise.

Incidentally, the Gnostics also produced the Gospel of Thomas and other writings which are a source of the recent re-vitalization of Gnostic teachings, such as those popularized in Dan Brown’s book (and soon to be movie) “*The DaVinci Code*.” Be assured, all of the Gnostic texts are non-Christian and are no challenge to the truth of the Christian faith, once for all delivered to the saints.