

The Gospel of Judas

Judas: Betrayer or Confidant?

by Brad Harrub, Ph.D.

Skeptics and atheists have unleashed yet another assault on Christianity. Just days after proclaiming that Jesus may have walked on ice instead of water, we are now asked to believe that Jesus' betrayer was a good guy. This latest charge stems from thirteen papyrus sheets bound in a leather covering that were found in a cave in Egypt. This ancient text is being referred to as "the gospel of Judas" (Vergano and Grossman, 2006). And so, once again, we find the media more than willing to plant seeds of doubt—insinuating that the Bible is incomplete, and misrepresents the man who betrayed Jesus.

The controversy centers on part of the manuscript in which Judas allegedly is given private instruction by Jesus, and is granted a vision into what the future holds for Jesus. One key passage has Jesus telling Judas: "You will exceed all of them. For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me." Thus, rather than acting out of greed or malevolence, he was simply following the deceptive "plan" that he and Jesus had prearranged.

Undoubtedly, this front page news story will have many questioning the authenticity and accuracy of the Bible. Was Judas really in cahoots with Jesus? Many will second guess whether the gospel accounts in the New Testament are indeed accurate—placing more faith in this "front page" story than the infallible Word of God. Satan must be thrilled to have the popular media on his side.

If nothing else is gleaned from this latest round of attacks on God's Word, we Christians should rest assured the Bible is complete. God in His infinite wisdom through inspired men was able to get His Word into our hands. We can know that the Bible we are holding today is exactly what He intended for us to hold (see Bruce, 1960, pp. 19-20; Kenyon, 1940, p. 288; Metzger, 1978, p. 185; Westcott & Hort, 1964, pp. 564-565).

Ancient manuscript experts and dating tests show the codex to have been written between A.D. 300-400—two to three hundred years after the close of the New Testament. This find in no way indicates that the Bible is incomplete, or that it has misrepresented who Judas truly was. In responding to Jesus' question as to who the angry mob was seeking, John 18:5 states: "They answered Him, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus said to them, 'I am He.' And Judas, who betrayed Him also stood with them." God's Word describes Judas as a thief (John 12:6) and a betrayer (Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; John 18). We are also told that Satan entered him (Luke 22:3). What's more, would this confidant hang himself after throwing down those thirty pieces of silver—if he and Jesus were really just carrying out a plan? Does this sound like someone who had become the closest confidant to Jesus?

Given the amount of fictional writing today, it is not hard to speculate that this writing was the fiction of that day. Or perhaps it was written by

someone who was seeking fame through controversy. Regardless, Christians can know that this "gospel" is not a part of God's Word. It was rejected as heretical and ridiculous 1800 years ago, and so it stands today. We have been given everything pertaining to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3)—before the appearance of the so-called gospel of Judas. [Editor's Note: A more in-depth analysis of "the gospel of Judas" will appear on our Web site in the near future.]

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