

Gospel of Judas
and
DaVinci Dumpster Diving

by
Rabbanim Mar Michai and Mar Andreos

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GOSPEL OF JUDAS

Authentic Scripture or Gnostic Fairytale?

OFFICIAL STATEMENT
from the
PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM

National Geographic magazine recently revealed a dilapidated manuscript which refers to the relationship between the Messiah and Judas Iscariot, the disciple known in the Canonical (original) Scriptures for betraying Messiah.

The media and certain scholars are referring to this manuscript as the "Gospel of Judas", even though it is not, and never has been, a part of the Canonical Gospels. National Geographic claims that the document has been authenticated through radio carbon dating and ink analysis. The manuscript was not discovered until the 1970's near El Minya, Egypt. Research indicates that the manuscript was actually written in Coptic (and not Aramaic or Hebrew) around 300 C.E. (A.D.), which was almost 270 years after the Crucifixion.

Certain individuals have stated that they believe the Coptic version is a translation of an earlier Greek text which they believe to have been written around 180 C.E. by a gnostic group - again several years after the Crucifixion and deaths of the first century Apostles. The document is in an advanced state of deterioration and exists in more than a thousand crumbling fragments. Scholars have attempted to piece the fragments together in order to translate it into other languages, although more than twenty percent of the manuscript is nowhere to be found.

There have been a number of discoveries of text composed by various non-Christian groups of the third and fourth centuries, after the time of the Canon of Scripture being closed. Many of these texts have been proven to be forgeries, being composed by heretical groups that were in opposition to the historical first century Church.

The text does not date back to the time of Messiah and has nothing to do with the real, historical facts of the first century. The manuscript in its more than one thousand fragments, does not agree with the authenticated first century Scriptures of the original Church. It can not

be considered as legitimate since we know that, according to the authentic Scriptures, Judas committed suicide on the day of the Crucifixion. Due to the fact that the manuscript is not even close to being dated around the time of the original, Sacred Gospels, it is fair to say that this is the work of either a gnostic or dissident group, and is thus considered to be fiction. There were several gnostic groups of this type during the third and fourth centuries.

Perhaps the only thing of value for this document is the way in which it is able to shed some light on the teachings and beliefs of gnostic groups; however, the manuscript is unable to add or take away from the historical accounts given in the Holy Scriptures. Around 180 C.E. Bishop Irenaeus of Lyons dismissed the text as not being authentic, although the general media continues to refer to this as a "new discovery". The so-called "Gospel of Judas" is not a part of the authentic belief system of the first century. The manuscript in question has no impact on the traditional Scriptural beliefs of Believers, thus the text is considered to be a gnostic fairytale.

From the Patriarchate of Jerusalem
6 April 2005

DAVINCI DUMPSTER DIVING

By H.G. Rabban +Mar Andreos

People love a good story. If the story has plenty of plot-twists, all the better! The Church has had its share of storytellers some of them have been real whoppers as well. The stuff that makes Alice in Wonderland seem almost plausible.

One of the most pervasive themes of this religious pulp fiction is the idea that the Church has been hiding secrets from the people for generations and these truths are all hidden in very strange places. Rennes Les Chateau in France, in some inner recesses in the Vatican, or wedged in a cave somewhere in the Holy Land. That one day this magical information will come to light and everyone will know that Joseph was Yeshua's/Jesus' biological father, that Yeshua and Mary Magdalene had a love-child whose biological descendant sits on the throne of England, or the more recent - Yeshua was an alien. Sounds like some people have lodged their heads permanently down the "rabbit hole" and can no longer see daylight.

It is very popular to believe that vital truths of the Church have been omitted and that someone will find the "truth" like a religious version of the X-Files. It makes for entertaining reading but it is not founded on truth.

Much of this controversy comes from the fact that most Westerners do not know the attention to detail that is paid to the care and preservation of Church writings. The idea that vital truths were placed in clay pots and left undiscovered for generations may be true to the Western audience but to the Churches of the East the truth is quite different.

The collections of Church writings are the lifeblood of the Church. The information they contain are too important to allow them to be pillaged by an oppressor or to be left in an alcove somewhere that anyone would find them.

The first thing we need to remember is that many false writings, which we would normally think would be burnt, would not necessarily be treated this way in Semitic cultures, such as if a heretical text were to contain the Name of God, for example. The text could not simply be burnt due to the mistreatment of the Name of God. Modern scholars say the name could be excised from the text to be either buried or burnt by a rabbi or Kohein. The average person would not be allowed to do this. Also worn out copies of texts would not necessarily be burnt. Sometimes these texts were sealed away in pots and container and left to bio-degrade

through time and replaced by new copies that had been painstakingly produced.

Now, for the sake of argument, say a person came across either the pots that held the heretical writings left to bio-degrade or the old worn out manuscripts, they would believe they discovered a major find. This discovery goes into the black market for a pittance to find its way into the hands of Western scholars. Some believe the text to be real, others would believe them to be forgeries, or some people would create cults and theologies and conspiracies all based on what essentially was the ancient version of a trash bin.

Another popular legend is that during the Crusades the Knights Templar acquired all the "Treasures of Jerusalem" and they are now either in the depths of the Vatican or they are hidden under a rock or shrub somewhere in Western Europe.

Do you honestly believe for a moment that the truths of the ancient Church could for one moment be lost to a band of barbarians at the gate? That its truths are waiting for some Indiana Jones wanna-be to set all things right? This kind of story may be popular but to the Church of Jerusalem, this has as much religious weight as Barney and the Teletubbies. The Church of Jerusalem communities have their writings they have always had their writings. Nothing was lost so nothing can be found.

If you went outside on trash day, and found a group of archaeologists sifting through your garbage, aside from worrying about identity theft, you would equate this to some very mixed up people. If later you were watching the news and you saw one of those very same archaeologists pronouncing a major archaeological find that will turn the Church on its ear and he produced scraps of waste paper that had been in your trash, you would probably not only be embarrassed but also laugh that the mainstream media were paying so much attention to such a find. If later you read popular books describing theories regarding your old used grocery list and your TV Guide, you would clearly think someone was in need of their medication. If a major Hollywood studio purchased the rights to your trash and released a major motion picture based on it, you would think you were going crazy. If the Church had to make public releases denouncing the finds in your garbage you would believe the world had officially gone insane.

The problem with any find is that modern day scholars imply meaning to what they have found. What they have is speculation and unless they were the original author or lived in the same era and community that produced the writings, then all they have is the subjective opinion of the truth of the find and not the objective truth.

So for the Church of Jerusalem we will watch as the West gets worked up into lather over these “finds”, but just like Shakespeare wrote, we will view it as “Much Ado about Nothing”

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