

# Expository Files



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## **The Single Resource For Relevance**

Warren E. Berkley

One of our popular buzz words is *relevant*. We want the information we consume to be relevant, to relate (connect) to what we need. In matters generally considered to be religious, you will hear the cry for relevant worship and relevant preaching. What is this about?

**If something is relevant it is capable of being applied.** It is information or instruction presented in such a fashion, we can use it. This would require simplicity. And this means the information or instruction must be delivered so that it connects with what people think, say and do.

**It is presented in such a fashion as to encourage application.** Especially in preaching and teaching, it is important for the presenter to press his points in such a way, people in the audience are encouraged to do what is recommended and avoid what is condemned. Audiences should be led to self-examination, motivated to act and challenged to do better.

**It has a bearing on one's life.** Some information is merely academic and may cater to general curiosity, but has no real (direct) bearing on how you live your life. Not everything that is true is relevant. Academic information (data, facts) may well lead to practical teaching and be necessary to arrive at that destination. But ultimately, what is relevant must bear directly upon the matters of one's daily life: *being saved from sin, honoring Christ, being a good parent, worker, neighbor, friend, church member, etc.*

Finally, something may be clever, creative, contemporary, charismatic and cute – but still not be relevant to what we need. Guard against *so-called* relevance.

If you seek relevant instruction for your life and to present to others, there is a single resource for relevance.

*“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:16,17)*

### ***Who Has The Mind Of Christ? 1 Cor. 2:1-16***

First Corinthians chapter two is a text often mishandled. First, there is a context. Paul is writing by inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the troubled church at Corinth. He knew they were divided (1:10), and that their division was a symptom of their exaggerated and carnal esteem for men. The term *humanism* would not be out of place to describe the culture in Corinth and the root of corruption in the church. Paul responds by exalting **divine wisdom above human**, and quoting the prophet who said, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord,” (1:31).

The second chapter begins with a memo (reminder) to the saints at Corinth, that when Paul delivered the gospel to them, **the main thing was Jesus Christ and Him crucified**. Paul’s work there (see Acts 18) was not about competing with the highly esteemed wisdom and oratory of men. Paul didn’t care to enter into competition with the highly acclaimed styles of public speaking in the Grecian culture. He came to tell them about Jesus Christ and Him crucified, that their “faith should not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God,” (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

Next (1 Cor. 2:6-16), Paul affirms **the work of the Holy Spirit through the delivery of the gospel message (though Paul and other inspired men)**. When you come to verse 6 and the phrase, “we speak wisdom,” that “we” is not everybody or every Christian or every preacher. Based on the previous paragraph, the content of this passage and the teaching of the New

Testament everywhere, “we speak wisdom” is a claim that pertains to the apostle Paul and the other inspired men through whom the truth of the gospel was delivered and written.

**Who spoke the wisdom of God in the first century?** Not everybody. Even some who were Christians spoke things that could not be classified as the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 15:12). Christ said the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into all the truth (see John 16:13). The apostles and a limited number of people upon whom they laid their hands, were inspired by the Holy Spirit to deliver the message we have in the New Testament! (See 2 Tim. 1:6; Eph. 3:1-5). “...who are the **we**? Does every preacher speak the wisdom of God? Our own experience testifies that he does not. The ‘we’ must be understood contextually; the ‘we’ are those to whom God gave his revelation through the Spirit (2:10-13). These were the apostles and prophets,” (Mike Willis, A Commentary On First Corinthians, p.#55).

Now apply this to 1 Cor. 2:6-16, considering these examples:

*The hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory (v.7) was revealed through the work of the apostles. See this in Romans 16:25,26 and Eph. 3:1-5.*

*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him (v.9).* Men could not – through their original thought processes – know the content of the gospel (see 1 Cor. 1:21). Those things God prepared (the gospel plan) had to be revealed by God. The truths of the gospel had to be revealed (just as one human must reveal his thoughts in order for others to know them, see verse 11).

*But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit (v.10).* The pronoun “us” should not be opened up to take in all men or all Christians or all preachers. **It has to do with the revelation of the truth through the apostles.** We are privileged to have that body of truth today in written form (the New Testament).

*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God (v.12).* “We” is the apostles and inspired men through whom the gospel was given. Those men (which would include the writers of the New Testament)

received the Spirit who is from God, not in hints or nudgings but “freely given.”

*These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual (v.13).* The revelation of the gospel through these inspired men was not nebulous, subjective, vague or poorly defined. Human wisdom did not select the words, the Holy Spirit did. “The Holy Spirit is the member of the Godhead who did the work of revelation. The apostles and prophets did not speak their personal thoughts; they spoke what the Holy Spirit revealed for them to speak.” (Willis, p.#63).

So, “the natural man” in verse 14, who “does not receive the things of the Spirit of God,” is **the uninspired man**. The conclusion? The apostles and inspired writers and teachers guided by the Holy Spirit had “the mind of Christ.” We have the literary result of that work in our New Testaments.

## **“In the Beginning was the Word”**

### **A Study of the Logos Doctrine**

By Kyle Pope

The gospel of John begins with a series of declarations about Jesus’ deity and eternal nature. The apostle, through the direction of the Holy Spirit, expresses this making use of an expression that was well known in the ancient world but unknown in Scripture (in exactly the same way) prior to this. John speaks of Jesus as **“the Word,”** who was **“with God”** and **“was God”** (1:1). John then tells us: 1. **“all things were made through Him”** (1:3a); 2. **“without Him nothing was made that was made”** (1:3b); 3. **“in Him was life”** (1:4). This “Word,” John continues: **“became flesh and dwelt among us”** (1:14); **“He came to His own”** (1:11a) yet, **“His own did not receive Him”** (1:11b). Sometime later, to refute false teaching which denied that Jesus came in the flesh, in his first epistle, John begins by referring to Jesus simply as **“the Word of life”** (I John 1:1).

The Greek word which is translated “Word” in this text is the word *logos* (λόγος). Five hundred years before Christ came into the world, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus used the word to describe what he envisioned as a universal force of reason which governed the universe. He felt that “all things happen according to this Logos” (Fr. 50, from Hippolytus, *Refutation*

of all Heresies, IX, 9, 1). Later, the philosophical school known as the Stoics expanded and popularized this idea in the ancient world.

Among Greek-speaking Jews the Logos came to be viewed as a force sent from God. In the Apocryphal book called the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the Hellenistic Jewish writer describes the death of the firstborn in Egypt saying - “thine Almighty word (logos) leaped down from heaven out of thy royal throne, as a fierce man of war into the midst of a land of destruction” (18:15, KJV). The first century A.D. Alexandrian Jew Philo blended Greek and Jewish ideas together. In writing about the creation of the universe, Philo compared God’s creation to the building of a great city. The orderly arrangement of this great city, Philo attributed to “the Logos of God” (*On the Creation*, 24).

As early as the first century A.D. interpretations (or paraphrases) of religious passages known as *Targums*, began to be written down in Aramaic for Jews who no longer spoke Hebrew. In the *Targums* the Jews used the Aramaic word *memra* meaning “word” as a personal manifestation of the presence of God. When Exodus 19:17 tells us that - “Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God” the *Targums* interpret this to mean that he brought them - “to meet the Word (*memra*) of the Lord.” When Psalm 2:4 declares - “He who sits in the heavens shall laugh” the *Targums* interpret it to mean - “And the Word (*memra*) of the Lord shall laugh them to scorn.”

What the apostle John appears to do in the use of this common term is much the same thing that Paul did in speaking to the Greeks in Athens. As he speaks to the wise men of the Areopagus he declares - “... I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you” (Acts 17:23). Paul was not sanctioning all that they taught or practiced in their worship of the “UNKNOWN GOD,” instead he was teaching them the truth, using their own misconception as a starting point.

The apostle John does the same thing in His reference to Jesus as the Logos of God. Unlike the Greek notion of the Logos as an impersonal ordering force, John declares that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). Throughout his gospel he goes on to explain that this One who is the Logos of God was a personal entity who lived and taught among

His creation. While the Jews perhaps were closer in their concepts of the Logos, John also clarifies their misconceptions. The Word of God was not simply a personified manifestation of God, John tells us that the Logos was the creative force of God, which was with God but was God Himself (John 1:1). Most often in Scripture, the phrase “word of God” refers simply to what God declares, John uses Logos at the beginnings of the gospel and his first epistle in a special way to teach both Jews and Greeks the truth about who Jesus is.

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***“Go Therefore and Make Disciples”***  
***Matthew 28:18-20***  
***By Jon W. Quinn***

"And Jesus came up and spoke to them saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.' And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. ...and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you: He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but He who has disbelieved shall be condemned. Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

As you read the above paragraph you found it familiar if you have been a Bible student for very long at all. But you will be hard pressed to locate it in your Bible because it is not just one passage, but actually a combination of three separate passages which deal with the same commission; that of our Lord to His apostles. This compilation can be found in *The Fourfold Gospel* by J.W. McGarvey, though I have used the New American Standard Version instead of the King James Version which he uses. (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:46,47).

It was a beginning of a new era. A new covenant had been ratified by the blood shed by the Son of God on the cross. The redemptive price had been paid. The time for the Law of Moses was past. It had served its purpose and had been fulfilled. It had spoken of the coming of Jesus. He had come. He

had kept its commandments. He had fulfilled its prophecies. He had made the sacrifice which did what the sacrifice of bulls and goats could never do. We now, not in prospect as under the Law but in truth, could be saved from our sins. Consider the Great Commission:

### **Jesus Has All Authority**

Jesus is absolute head of His church in every detail (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:22,23). Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and earth. The things we do and speak must be grounded in His authority. It is upon the basis of Jesus' authority that right things are right and wrong things are wrong.

It is true that the world changes its ideas and standards constantly. In a rush to keep up with the world, many denominations soon do likewise, changing their doctrines to fit contemporary ideas of the day (cf. Marriage: Matthew 19:4-6; same sex? Lifelong? - maybe man changes it, but the Lord has not!).

Even some Churches of Christ have abandoned the authority of the One whose name they wear in order to attract those who would not otherwise be attracted. But have you ever noticed that Jesus never sought to please the world by the things He taught and did? Jesus is Lord! Let His word determine the path we shall take through life; that same word by which He sent His apostles out into the world (1 Corinthians 2:1,2; Colossians 3:17).

### **Go Into All The World**

The gospel is for all (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; Galatians 3:28). The Law of Moses had been given just to the Jews. Even during the personal ministry of Jesus, the focus was always on "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew 10:5,6). But both the Law and the ministry of Jesus were preparatory in nature, making way for the universal gospel (John 10:16; Isaiah 56:6-8). The Law had been a barrier to such, but it has been removed (Ephesians 2:13-18).

It is as the prophet Isaiah had said it would be: "And all the nations shall stream into it." (ISAIAH 2:2). Jesus, in the "Great Commission," announced that the time of which Isaiah had spoken seven centuries before had now arrived (Acts 10:34,35, Colossians 1:23).

## **We Must Spread the Gospel**

(Mark 16:15; I Corinthians 1:18). It is always our obligation to make sure that what we teach is the gospel of Christ. There are many other gospels, but to preach them makes us enemies of God (Galatians 1:6-9). The gospel's message is not pop psychology, leftist or right wing social and/or political agendas, recreational, or secular (Luke 12:13-15). It has to do with convicting of sin and saving souls. It means proclaiming the love and grace of God by which we were redeemed. It means a call to repentance and obedience. It includes the message of the holiness of God and the judgment to come (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

## **Making Disciples**

Our goal is to help turn people into followers of Christ (Matthew 28:19). Discipleship is not for the lukewarm or weak-willed. It is for those with the fortitude to pay the price, even when it means bearing a heavy cross. A disciple is one who follows Jesus. We seek to look at things the way He does; at sin, at others, at God and at His Word, and at ourselves.

Some today are discounting obeying the doctrines of the Scripture saying the important thing is to develop a heart like Jesus. They are correct about the need to become within what Jesus is, but they are sadly mistaken in thinking that this possible if one does not seek to obey God to the same degree that Jesus did. One who is like Christ within becomes like Him without (Matthew 12:35).

## **Baptizing Them in the Name of the Father; The Son and the Holy Spirit**

(Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16). The apostles were right when they taught baptism for the remission of sins! (Acts 2:38). Jesus made it quite clear about baptism's role in the gospel. He said that baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is what we do in making believers into disciples. He said that this was true for "all nations." He said that when this is done that the baptized person "shall be saved."

He also said that if we do not believe then we shall be condemned, so by all means, believe Jesus! Believe what He said about everything! Believe what He said about baptism. Teach what Peter did at Jerusalem as the "Great Commission" began to be carried out. What Peter told his listeners to do was what Jesus had told him to preach.

## **Teaching To Observe All Jesus Taught**



(Matthew 28:20). (2 Timothy 2:2). There is nothing in the teachings of the New Testament that is not included in the "teach them to observe all that I have commanded you." When we obey the apostolic doctrine, then we are obeying the commands of Jesus.

Many times men have not been as faithful in maintaining the integrity of the gospel with which we have been entrusted. One thing that a faithful preacher does is to encourage always obeying the Lord in everything .

### ***The Parable of the Unjust Steward***

***Luke 16:1-13***

***By Jeffrey W. Hamilton***

You are not the only one who finds the Parable of the Unjust Steward confusing. It has puzzled many people through the ages. How is it that an unfaithful steward, about to be relieved of his position, gains praise from his employer when he ends his career by stealing more from him?

In order to better understand this parable, we need to look at the context in which it was presented. The Parable of the Unjust Steward is the fourth story given in a series that begins in Luke 15. "Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them."" (Luke 15:1-2). The Pharisees and the scribes could not match Jesus' knowledge of God and the Bible so they resorted to a common trick, they sought to besmirch his reputation. His personal reputation was solid so they attacked through association. If a man hangs around with sinners, well then obviously he has something in common with them; he, too, must be a sinner!

Jesus responds by telling four parables. The first is the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:3-7). The parable tells us that every soul is precious to God and is worth great effort to save. The Pharisees and the scribes had the wrong viewpoint. They saw men and women who sinned. Jesus saw people who needed to be saved.

The second story is the Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10). With this parable Jesus reminds us that we will put forth a lot of effort to a task that we deem valuable enough. The coin that the widow lost was only a drachma, about a day's wage. Even though she had nine other coins, she made a very

thorough search for the lost coin and then ecstatically announced to her neighbors her fortune in finding it again. If people put that much value in a small piece of silver, of what then is a human soul worth to God? If people get that excited about finding a lost piece of silver, how much more excited is God over the recovery of a lost soul?

The third story is the famous Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). In this story we learn that God wants us back even when we turn against him. God is able to forgive and forget all past wrongs when a sinner returns to him. The sinners seeking out Jesus were represented by the lost son. The Pharisees and scribes were represented by the older son who was too caught up in his own righteousness to see the value in another person's return.

Finally, we arrive to the fourth story, the Parable of the Unjust Servant (Luke 16:1-13). While we might be confused by the story, keep in mind that the Pharisees and scribes understood the point. They knew that Jesus was talking about them. "Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him" (Luke 16:14).

### **Analyzing the Parable**

The Parable of the Unjust Servant is not the only time that Jesus used a story about an unrighteous person to illustrate a point about righteousness. The Parable of the Unrighteous Judge in Luke 18:1-8 is another such case. But to understand Jesus' point, we need to break down the symbolism to see principle being illustrated.

The lord in this story is easily recognized as the Lord God. To Him each of us are stewards of God's creation and the blessings God gives to us. When God created the world, He gave mankind dominion over it. "Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth"" (Genesis 1:28).

A steward is a fit description of our roles on earth. A steward does not own the things he manages. In the same way God gives us our lives to manage, but our lives and everything that we have belongs to God. "And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.

But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:42-48).

With the blessings God has granted to each of us comes a varying amount of ability. We each have different talents to use and God expects us to use those abilities well. "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (I Peter 4:10). One of the major duties God has given to Christians is the spreading of the gospel. "Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful" (I Corinthians 4:1-2).

We naturally expect that a servant entrusted with a master's possessions and given critical tasks would be faithful in fulfilling the trust the master placed in the servant. But how many of us are truly faithful stewards of God? Have we not all wasted precious time on the job, time that could have been profitably used in the Master's service? We have all bypassed opportunities that could have brought great profit to our Master. Instead, we often apply our talents toward things that our Master is not interested. In short, we "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Just like the man in the parable, each one of us are unjust stewards.

The unjust steward didn't want to work for a living; he was too lazy to put forth that much effort. Doesn't that describe you and I? How many of us look for the easiest way out, the way that requires least effort? The unjust steward refused to beg; he had too much pride. Here too most of us find there are things beneath our dignity to do.

Being forewarned that he is about to lose his job, the unjust steward brilliantly provides for himself by making use of his lord's resources. But note carefully that the lord doesn't commend the mismanagement of his possessions. "So the master commended the unjust steward because he had

dealt shrewdly" (Luke 16:8). Jesus is not praising his unrighteous actions. The admiration is for the brilliant planning.

We too have been warned that we don't have much time left for our stewardship. Life is short. It will not last forever. "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (James 4:14). In real terms, it won't be long before we will have to stand before our Lord and give an account of our stewardship. "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). "So then each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12).

All parables are aimed toward a particular point. They start to break down when they are stretched too far or applied to the wrong point. In essence, Jesus is stating that the ungodly people in this world know how to get the most from worldly things that, truth be told, they don't even own; but, the so-called godly people don't know how to get the most from spiritual things. "For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light" (Luke 16:8). The Pharisees were squandering precious resources. There were people in their midst who needed to be brought back to God and they refused to see their value.

### **Application**

If we are to receive praises from God in the Judgment, we need to make the most of the resources that God has given us to our best advantage. We are not aiming for a better life in this world because life here is temporary. We won't be around long to enjoy it. The only lasting treasure is our heavenly home. "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21). Importantly, what benefits God also benefits us in the long run. If we use God's gifts to us to provide for ourselves in the hereafter, then we are not wasting our Lord's resources; we are doing God's will.

"And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home" (Luke 16:9). The friends of whom Jesus is speaking are not worldly friends, but spiritual friends, for they are awaiting to receive us into an everlasting home. As people of God, we need to use the things of the physical realm to

accomplish the spiritual goals of Christ. "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (I Timothy 6:17-19). It is our obedience to Christ that creates a lasting friendship with him. "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you" (John 15:14).

Jesus also informs us that God is watching what we do with the little things that He gives us that we call our life to see if we are faithful enough to handle more important things. "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?" (Luke 16:10-12). We use this principle in business. You don't put a young man, fresh from college, in charge of your company. You start him out on small jobs. If he can handle it, you move him up. The fact is that people tend to behave in the same manner, whether dealing with little or much. A person who is willing to steal small change will have not restraint if an opportunity arises to steal a large fortune. Thus, we can view this life as a test for promotion to the next life. "For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away" (Matthew 25:29). If we can't make profitable use of our borrowed lives from God, why should we be given eternal life?

The Pharisees and scribes true problem was that they were too caught up in their current lives. They had lost the proper perspective. They lost sight of the spiritual goal and made a priority of living in the physical realm. "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16:13). Something must give. You have to make a choice regarding who you will serve. What will you do with the life God has loaned to you?

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## ***What is the Gospel of Judas?***

***Mark Roberts***

The Gospel of Judas is an ancient book written between AD 300 and 400 in an Egyptian language known as Coptic. It was found by a farmer in 1978. Ultimately, it reached the hands of scholars who have now completed its translation, under the auspices and funding of the National Geographic Society (see *USA Today*, "Long-lost gospel of Judas recasts 'traitor,'" 4/6/2006). The Gospel itself may be a copy of an older work, because its ideas about Judas are denounced in a late second century work by a man named Iraenus. He warns of fictitious gospels in his book *Against Heresies* (see ch. XXXI.-Doctrines of the Cainites).

It is an interesting read, although only 80% of the gospel is legible so there are still holes and lines missing. The basic ideas do come through however. In the Gospel of Judas you will read of a rather unkind Jesus laughing at the apostles for their stupidity several times, hear a very different explanation of the creation of the world from what we read in Genesis, and of course (the part that has received so much media attention), find out that Jesus commissioned Judas to betray Him, making Judas out as a hero instead of traitor.

If that sounds weird, you should go see for yourself. It is a rather short work and easy to read. The Society's website provides an English language translation.

Go here (<http://www9.nationalgeographic.com/lostgospel/index.html>) and give it a try. Nothing beats actually reading a Gnostic gospel. It is a unique experience!

### ***A Gnostic Gospel? What is that?***

The Gnostics were a group of people in New Testament times who were kind of a secret society. They believed the physical body was bad, that salvation comes by understanding one's divine origins, and that only an elite few will be saved. They thought most Christians were deceived, in error, and doing it all wrong. Only the Gnostics were getting it right. Naturally, they wrote down their particular "take" on New Testament themes and ideas, even creating a Christ who taught their doctrines. These writings, of which

there are many, are often called Gnostic Gospels, and are, to say the least, often very bizarre. Again, this is why it is a good idea to actually read the Gospel of Judas. The reader will quickly see how different these Gospels are from the New Testament.

### ***So why aren't the Gnostic Gospels in the New Testament?***

The answer to that question is simple: they are not old enough. Even secular history confirms that the New Testament was completed shortly after the first century (perhaps as early as AD 70) so these gospels written hundreds of years later just are not old enough to be authentic New Testament material. They were not written by any of the apostles or other eye-witnesses of Jesus, two important standards for material that is truly biblical. Remember, anyone can write a story, title it "the Gospel" and circulate it. That doesn't make it an authentic Gospel, worthy of inclusion in the Bible!

### ***Why is there such a fuss about the Gospel of Judas?***

Obviously, there will be some interest in a book that recasts Judas Iscariot as a hero, instead of portraying him as the rat who betrayed Jesus. However, there really isn't much to get excited about with the Gospel of Judas. It offers no new insights into Jesus Christ because its writer never knew or met Jesus, living hundreds of years after Jesus. All in all, it is a rather eccentric little book that does not say much that scholars didn't already know about Gnostics and Gnosticism.

However, the media and some Bible critics have tried to "make hay" out of the Gospel of Judas, using it to prop up some kind of Bible conspiracy theory. For example, Michael White of the University of Texas says "Scripture, like history, was codified by the winners, by those who emerged with the greatest numbers at the end of three centuries." Other writers and professors have joined in to say that the Gospel of Judas proves Christianity was more diverse than many have thought, and that there were lots of books that could conceivably have been in the New Testament but they were (unfairly) excluded. In the process, of course, the New Testament comes off looking like a book put together arbitrarily by men to advance a certain view of Jesus. This accords very well with the agenda of Dan Brown's best-seller *The DaVinci Code* and the impending release of the film based on that book may well account for why the Gospel of Judas' translation was published at this time.

## ***Should the Gospel of Judas or other Gnostic Gospels be included in the Bible?***

That is an excellent question for which there are two responses. First, for people of faith there is the issue of trusting God. The Bible claims it has all we need to be right with God (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and that it will be preserved and protected by God forever (1 Peter 1:23-25). For the Christian, there is no such thing as a "lost Gospel" or "lost books of the Bible" because if they were meant to be in the Bible they wouldn't and couldn't be lost. We trust God not to allow such to happen to His Word. Second, for people who do not (yet) accept the Bible as being an inspired book from God there is the evidence, both from the Bible and from secular history, for the Bible's completion and canonization well before the middle of the second century. For example, a man named Marcion preached a different version of Christianity, going to Rome in 144 AD to start an alternative Christianity community. His false teaching forced other Christians to make lists of what books were, and were not, accepted as truly inspired from God. There was no conspiracy, and there was no voting. The apostles had clearly instructed and informed the New Testament church about the need to recognize true writings from fake ones (note Galatians 6:11), and the early church readily accepted those inspired writings for what they were: the word of God. There are plenty of manuscripts, papyrus writings, and fragments of writings that date back to the first century or early second century (like the John Rylands Fragment or Magdalen Papyrus) to verify that Christianity was a first century phenomenon, and is not the result of some sort of conspiracy in the fourth century. Further, from the writings of various Christians in the second and third centuries (long before the Gospel of Judas or any councils met to discuss and debate or vote) we know the content of the Bible was a settled issue. The church simply did not produce the Bible. The Bible produced the church.

## ***Can we learn anything from the Gospel of Judas?***

Some who are traditionally Bible skeptics are "blessing" the Gospel of Judas as if it should be put on par with Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. For example, the *National Geographic* website says *"The Gospel of Judas gives a different view of the relationship between Jesus and Judas, offering new insights into the disciple who betrayed Jesus. Unlike the accounts in the canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, in which Judas is portrayed as a reviled traitor, this newly discovered Gospel portrays Judas*



*as acting at Jesus' request when he hands Jesus over to the authorities."* We wonder if *National Geographic* and other Bible critics who are so ready to "authenticate" the Gospel of Judas are as ready to believe in all that the Gospel of Judas says? For example, it says Jesus did miracles, that people have an eternal soul, that angels exist and that Adam and Eve were real people. It also accepts without questioning that Jesus was a real and genuine historical person. Is *National Geographic* on board with these ideas from the Gospel of Judas, or do they just get to pick and choose what they want to believe out of it?

The Gospel of Judas will make a splash for a short time, and then the media will move on to something else. Unfortunately, the effect of its translation and surrounding publicity may be to undermine people's faith in the Bible's inspiration. But careful study and careful investigation will see the Gospel of Judas for what it is (the work of men), and more, will see the Bible for what it is: the very word of God. Truth has nothing to fear. Investigate the Gospel of Judas and the Bible for yourself. Hopefully, the translation of this Gnostic Gospel will provoke many to search for and find the real Jesus in the real Gospels contained in the New Testament.

***Final Page***  
***The Faulty History of the DaVinci Code***  
***By Jon W. Quinn***

{Note: Lord willing, next month the special topic article will be a fuller treatment of "The DaVinci Code". Note this month's special topic article "What is the Gospel of Judas" for a related article}.

The "History" of The DaVinci Code Proven Faulty by Ancient Manuscripts  
By Jon W. Quinn

Though there are others, four excellently preserved ancient manuscripts dating from about 200 AD completely disprove the contention made in "The DaVinci Code" that no one thought of Jesus as Lord until the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. Constantine, in a shrewd political move, joined with church leaders and doctored and altered manuscripts, and changed the thoughts of the world about the nature of Jesus. That is supposedly the genuine historical setup for the novel and the movie.

That is the point. The fiction in the DaVinci Code story is supposedly based on genuine history. If so, faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior; Son of God and the source of our eternal hope is vain. He was nothing more than a philosopher who married Mary Magdalene and had children and they grew old together.

But discoveries of ancient, undoctored manuscripts prove that not only is the story of the DaVinci Code fiction, it is also based on fictional history as well.

Papyrus Bodmer II (around 200 AD) - contains most of John's Gospel: 1:1--6:11; 6:35--14:26, 29-30; 15:2-26; 16:2-4, 6-7, 16:10--20:20, 22-23, 20:25--21:9. This manuscript consists of 75 leaves as well as some fragments. Bible students familiar with this text will quickly realize that this manuscript includes the wonderful identification of Jesus as the Word made flesh; that He pre-existed His incarnation in the flesh; that He was with God and was God before the creation of the world (John 1:1-3; 14). The DaVinci Code is built on a faulty premise that no manuscripts ever read this way before 325 AD. Modern belief of faithful Christians about Jesus is correct. The DaVinci Code is wrong!

There is, in fact, over 5,000 existent ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Three other very notable ones are the Chester Beatty manuscripts, so named in honor of their discoverer who found them in Egypt in 1930. They also date from around 200 AD, again long before the Council of Nicea. They are:

P 45 was originally a codex which contained all Four Gospels and the Book of Acts. Unfortunately, what has survived are two leaves of Matthew, seven of Luke, two of John, and thirteen of Acts.

P 46 consists of eighty-six nearly perfect leaves, out of a total of 104, which contain Paul's epistles. Philemon and the Pastoral Epistles (I & II Timothy, Titus are missing, but Hebrews is included.

P 47 contains Revelation 9:10 to 17:2, except one or more lines is missing from the top of each page. This constitutes a little under half of the book of Revelation.

Again, these wonderful documents prove that our faith in Jesus as God's Son was not an invention of the Council of Nicea. The sad thing is that many are being led to believe that the historical background to "The DaVinci Code" is accurate, and if it is, then Jesus is not who we have thought Him to be. But the background history is not true, and that is provable.