

The Gospel of Judas

Gospel of Judas Authenticated After 1,700 Years

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By Samantha Zee

April 6 (Bloomberg) -- An ancient manuscript known as the Gospel of Judas," which was lost for almost 1,700 years, has been authenticated and translated, providing a new view of the relationship between Jesus and the apostle who betrayed him.

The leather-bound papyrus manuscript, believed to have been copied down in Coptic probably around A.D. 300, was found in the 1970s in the desert near El Minya, Egypt. The 66-page manuscript also contains a text titled James, a Letter of Peter to Philip, and a fragment of a fourth text scholars are calling the Book of Allogenes, according to the National Geographic Society.

Unlike accounts in the New Testament Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, in which Judas is reviled for his traitorous act, this gospel portrays Judas as acting at Jesus' request when he hands Jesus over to authorities. The 26-page Gospel of Judas was written on 13 sheets of papyrus, both back and front.

"A document of this age allows you to open a door to the past and it excites everyone, and it has a narrative that turns the traditional story on its head," said Terry Garcia, executive vice president for Mission Programs for the National Geographic Society, in an interview.

Restoration, Interpretation

The Maecenas Foundation for Ancient Art and the Waitt Institute for Historical Discovery were also part of the international effort to authenticate, conserve and translate it.

"The gospel is electrifying because what was found is remarkable," said Craig Evans, a professor of the New Testament at Acadia Divinity College, Acadia University, in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada. He worked on interpreting the translated text.

"It shows Judas wasn't a traitor, he wasn't a villain, he was the greatest disciple because he did what Jesus wanted him to do," Evans said. "The story tells us of the diversity of Christian thinking and suggests there is more to the story of Judas. It will open a new line of questioning for scholars."

Pages of the papyrus manuscript will be on public display at the National Geographic headquarters in Washington for about six weeks, Garcia said.

The Waitt Institute, a non-profit group created by Ted Waitt, the founder and former chief executive officer of Gateway Inc., provided about \$1 million in the form of a grant to the National Geographic Society to help preserve and restore the manuscript.

Safe-Deposit Box

Garcia expects that a further \$1 million to \$2 million will need to be spent on restoration.

The manuscript circulated among antiquities traders, moving from Egypt to Europe to the U.S. It was held in a safe-deposit box in Long Island, New York, for 16 years before being bought in 2000 by Zurich-based antiquities dealer Frieda Nussberger-Tchacos.

When attempts to resell the manuscript fell through, Tchacos, alarmed by the manuscript's rapidly deteriorating state, transferred it to the Maecenas Foundation for Ancient Art in Basel, Switzerland, in February 2001 for conservation and translation.

The original Greek text of gospel, which was then translated into Coptic, is thought to be written sometime between the more well-known gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and A.D. 180, when the first known reference to the Gospel of Judas is recorded.

Radiocarbon Dating

It was mentioned in a treatise, *Against Heresies*, by Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon, criticizing those whose views about Jesus and his message differed from those of the mainstream Christian Church.

The Gospel of Judas was authenticated as a genuine work of ancient Christian literature through radiocarbon dating, ink and handwriting analysis and infrared imaging techniques, Garcia said. The manuscript that included the gospel, now known as Codex Tchacos, will be delivered to Egypt and housed in Cairo's Coptic Museum.

In the text, Jesus challenges his disciples to look at him and understand what he really is, though they turn away. In a key passage, he tells Judas that “you will exceed all of them. For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me.”

“The document was in pieces and the pages were shuffled,” Garcia said. “Restoring the work was like assembling a jigsaw puzzle.”

“The gospel demonstrates that there was a very diverse point of view,” Garcia said.

“It shows that there wasn't a monolithic viewpoint of what Jesus' life and teachings meant,” he said.

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The Text of Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.31.1 reads as follows:¹

1. Others again declare that Cain derived his being from the Power above, and acknowledge that Esau, Korah, the Sodomites, and all such persons, are related to themselves. On this account, they add, they have been assailed by the Creator, yet no one of them has suffered injury. For Sophia was in the habit of carrying off that which belonged to her from them to herself. They declare that Judas the traitor was thoroughly acquainted with these things, and that he alone, knowing the truth as no others did, accomplished the mystery of the betrayal; by him all things, both earthly and heavenly, were thus thrown into confusion. They produce a fictitious history of this kind, which they style the *Gospel of Judas*.

Conclusion by Dr Rick:

One should not be surprised at such a discovery as this only supports the scriptural warnings that many false teachings were upsetting the faith of believers in the first century. The final statement of there not being a monolithic view of Jesus is correct due to heresies against the truth. See my more extensive response to the following article in the next two pages.

¹ <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103131.htm>

The Gospel of Judas TODAY Article in Singapore

My Response to *The Gospel of Judas* TODAY Article in Singapore

From: rickgriffith@pacific.net.sg
Subject: **Gospel of Judas**
Date: April 8, 2006 6:22:21 PM GMT+08:00
To: news@newstoday.com.sg

Dear Weekend Today:

I refer to your 8–9 April article on the unveiling of the Gospel of Judas this week. Much of what was written is very helpful. However, a few additional comments are in order.

One correction concerns the quote by the anonymous "Protestant reverend" in the New York Daily News that the value of this text "is that it reveals the diversity and vitality of early Christianity." Such a statement assumes the author of the Gospel of Judas to be a Christian. It would be more accurate to point out that the Gospel of Judas was not written by a Christian, but by a Gnostic outside Christian teaching. Gnostics taught that salvation was not by faith in Jesus Christ, but in a secret knowledge (from the Greek term "gnosis" for "knowledge"). Having read the Gospel of Judas in its entirety, I find little Christian teaching in it.

It is true that the early church was diverse and vital. It encompassed Egyptian Christians in Africa, congregations throughout Israel and Mesopotamia, and stretched across the Roman Empire as far as England. This included Christians of many cultures. However, the Gospel of Judas does not illustrate this diversity as it teaches the opposite of Christian belief in that it makes Judas the hero of the passion narrative in contradiction to the New Testament.

The discovery of this document only supports warnings from the New Testament itself. There were many attacks against the teachings of Jesus Christ in the first and second centuries, and this is one of them. The New Testament repeatedly refers to false teaching. In fact, 19 of the 27 books of the NT responded to heretical beliefs (e.g., 2 Tim. 4:3–4). For example, one early heresy taught that the resurrection had already taken place (2 Tim. 2:18). In like manner, the church did not consider the Gospel of Judas orthodox then, nor does it consider such teaching "Christian" now.

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