

It has not been my desire to use precious space in this publication to talk about things as frivolous as *The Gospel of Judas* and *The Da Vinci Code*. However,

the popularity of these stories and the questions they raise, make it prudent to take up the subject. Especially, in light of their popularity among those who claim to believe in The One True God.

The most important thing for everyone to keep in mind, about these current books, is the fact, they are works of fiction. *The Gospel of Judas* is a book written to suit the ideas of its writer(s). The author and/or publisher of *The Da Vinci Code* may want to make it seem as if their book is at least a speculation into a possible truth; but the bottom line is, this book does not even contain as much truth as some of the well known Indiana Jones tales. The simple fact this book is so much fantasy and mystery, is one of its greatest selling points. The idea that there are secret societies and grand adventures to be known and experienced, has excited the human imagination for a very long time! So, what is the big deal about this book? Well, nothing really. It's simply the usage of very treaded upon story telling techniques, revolving around a base idea which is centuries old!

For those unfamiliar with *The Da Vinci Code*, there is only one point of any importance, and that is the fact the book presents the fictional idea that Jesus and Mary Magdalene had a child together. The idea that Jesus left on this earth a physical bloodline, or that there were physical relationships in Jesus' life is nothing new, indeed. These tales have been told for a very long time in the attempt to discredit and/or mock Jesus' life. What disturbs me this time around, is the fact so many people are asking why this idea is so wrong! There have been statements made about the fact this subject has been taboo, and many are glad it can finally be spoken about. However, the problem is not the subject of Jesus having a child is taboo, or that the "church" may consider it sacrilege to even suggest. The problem is, because we do not know the truth of God's Word, we do not understand what this would mean.

DECODING THE TRUTH

PART I

One of the first things people have to understand is, both of these books come from a Gnostic view. What this means for those who believe in the

Word of God (Genesis through Revelation) is that these books have nothing to do with our walk with God! This view may surprise many people who claim to be Christians, but just because these books tell stories about characters central to Christian belief, doesn't mean they are Christian in any way!

We must understand that if you believe in The God Who created the universe, and especially if you believe our God is one God (James 2:19) and there are no others, then you in no way believe what a Gnostic believes. To be Gnostic is to believe in a totally different nature of God. Which is to say, you do not really believe in The One True God of the universe which the Bible explains to us. If you are Gnostic, then you certainly do not believe in the truth of who Jesus is, what He came to this earth to give, and what He is returning for. If you claim to be a follower of Jesus as The Messiah, then you might as well be reading the Karan as to be reading either of the two books so popular in our media today, because they are all based on false philosophies which do not line up with the true Word of God.

The first thing which the popularity of these two books, among believers in Jesus, shows us, is just how Biblically illiterate we have become! This issue is not simply about enjoying a work of fiction, these books are a denial of Jesus' work! This, we would not do, if we really knew our Bibles and had a real relationship with God. Jesus said in Matthew 10:33-34, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Jesus was not talking about the simple issue of being willing to say His name or confess that He lived on this earth. Jesus is telling us, if we confess that He is who He said He is, then we would be confessed as one of His before God The Father. However, if we deny the truth of Jesus as the only Messiah, then we will be denied as one of His before

The Father in heaven. This is important, and a cornerstone of what true Christians believe; but the idea that we need Jesus to confess us before His Father has no relevance to a Gnostic.

You see, the truth of the matter is simple. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." The very reason Jesus was crucified was because it was clearly understood that Jesus claimed Himself to be the long awaited Messiah of the Jewish nation! Jesus clearly told us, in more than one place and in more than one way, that He was The Messiah and only through Him there is salvation. This brings us to the simple truth which all believers should understand. Jesus was exactly who He said He was or He was a stark raving lunatic! There is simply nothing in between. He was not simply a "great prophet" or one of many guides or saviors to this world. If it were true that Jesus was simply a great prophet or just one of many saviors, then He clearly did not understand this fact. That would mean He was as mixed up and confused as anyone has ever been! How could a man confused that badly about himself ever be a guide to anyone else? How do you choose what is good about what He said and what is simply Him babbling about things even He doesn't understand? We must choose which side of this argument we are on, because Jesus clearly told us, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Matthew 12:30 Jesus' guidance left no room for other ways of salvation!

Why does this mean so much to the issue of being a fan of one or both of these current media fads? Again, because both are Gnostic at their core, and if we believe in the true nature of who Jesus really is, then we should find these books a mockery of God Himself. This is not, as some have suggested, about making a subject the church claims is heresy an acceptable conversation. The church can't save your soul! This is about you, personally choosing who you believe Jesus really is! Simply put, if we are for these kinds of books, then we are against the Word of God.

You see, people want to argue that the church, which canonized the Bible we read today, simply left out certain "other" books. This is certainly true.

However, there was, and is a good reason for doing exactly that! These "other books" they speak of, do not show us the same God as the Hebrew scriptures of the Old Testament. To that, some will argue that the church only chose those books which agreed with their theology, and that is misleading. It's the insinuation that the Bible was carved out of a vast number of books by those with their own special agenda, to make Jesus seem to be The Messiah; but again, the criteria was, in reality, whether a book showed The True Messiah or whether it was of someone else's agenda. Books like *The Gospel of Judas* come from a very different foundation. Jesus could not be The Messiah true Christians believe He is and the man described in Gnostic books like *The Gospel of Judas*. It all comes down again to a simple choice. You either believe that Jesus was The Messiah, the Old Testament prophesied would be given to all the world through the chosen people of God (Israel), or you believe Jesus was something altogether different! So it's not a matter of leaving out certain books and putting others in it. There is no reason to mingle Gnostic books with the Bible. Gnostic books should be separate, because they tell a totally different story. The fact Gnostics wish to add their "other" books, instead of taking the no mixture stance, is evidence they only wish to confuse, not teach truth!

You may think you are serving The One True God who created the universe; but if that is true, then why would you be entertained, or interested in the destructive thoughts of man? Paul asks the rhetorical question in Romans 6:2, "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" It's important that you realize what a different path you are choosing when you choose a Gnostic way. I don't say this to scare people into simply following the traditional path of the Christian religion. In fact, I say this because this issue shows us just how badly we need to be clear on what we believe and not blindly follow things which become the popular way. We need to be careful who we are yoking ourselves with, (II Cor. 6:14) and on this particular subject, the first question you need to look into is, what does it mean to be Gnostic?

The answer to the question, what is Gnosticism, can be very detailed, and the details will vary de-

pending on who you ask. This is simply because to be Gnostic is to believe there are many ways to "ascend" from this life. Exactly where you go, or what that place is called, will vary greatly from group to group. Who you follow to find the way of "ascension" can, and will vary greatly. However, the base philosophy is all the same, and it has unfortunately invaded much of our churches teaching long before the release or "revelation" of these two current works.

The base facts are simple. The Bible tells us there are only two basic paths in life. The first is the narrow way, and the second is the broad way. Both of these ways were described by Jesus in Matthew 7. The narrow way is described as narrow because it is truth. Simply put, there is truth and then there is everything else. The everything else is the broad way. This is to say, there is a true path to salvation which you must find, and stay on. Then there are multiple other thoughts about how to better yourself or get into heaven upon death. These other thoughts are all the thoughts of man, and the Bible tells us the ways which seem right to a man only lead to destruction, not heaven. (Prov. 16:25)

The Bible's story tells us that after the flood of Noah's day, man began to build an all encompassing false religion. Humans were all of one language and they all had the mind to pitch in. God cared for their souls and the souls of future generations of humans. So, God insured that man would have the opportunity to follow the truth, instead of simply being forced into believing this one false religious belief. What God would do is responsible for not just the inability of that days all encompassing false religion to swallow all mankind, but also to keep future attempts from succeeding. God's actions at the Tower of Babel is why even the "Universal," or as it is better known, "Catholic" church was unable to take in all the world. How did God do this? God confounded the languages of man. Upon this occurrence, men decided to go their separate ways and form varying societies all over the world. This meant Satan had to change his course. He was not going to scoop up all of humanity in one blow. So, Satan has helped further false religions all over the world, but Satan must deal with the cultural differences which exist. This means, as the thoughts of man guided human

false religion, there would be various types of gods which man would choose to worship.

Jesus told the Pharisees in Matthew 12:25, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:" Jesus said this because, after casting out devils, the Pharisees believed Jesus did so with the power of Satan. Jesus went on to say in verse 26, "And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?" This truth brings us to a simple understanding. If Satan is going to build the kingdom on this earth he wishes to build, it is important for all false religions to get along somehow. Now, Satan does not always have success in this area. Some of the biggest wars in the world have broke out over perceived differences between false religions. However, this has not stopped Satan from trying. Satan understands that if he is going to maintain a standing kingdom, he must get men to cooperate on, at least, some of the most basic levels. This shows itself no where better than in the worldwide dislike for God's chosen people, and this general dislike, or all out hatred, shows us the greatest evidence that the Jewish people are the chosen people of God just as the Old Testament describes. God has given us information which insures Satan cannot do his work without confirming the truth. He who has an ear let him hear!

All through the ages, and even today, there is great hatred for Jews among the world. Satan cannot make the Jews part of his kingdom, so it's important that he attempt to destroy them. God knew when He established Israel that He was making them a lightning rod of a kind, and this is why God makes both the promise to protect them on their good land if they would serve Him, or protect them by scattering them if they did not receive God's plan of protection while on the good land. God's Word shows us that those who follow God need God's protection, because Satan is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. (I Pet. 5:8) One of the greatest ways in which Satan devours us is by leading us off track. This means, because God does not force Himself on us, God cannot protect us if we are not willing to yield our lives to Him and His guidance. When Israel failed to look to The Lord, God would not be slack concerning His promises. This would seem

like a paradox to man, but with God all things are possible. (Matt. 19:26) Through what the spiritually blind would only see as punishment, God would provide protection by scattering Israel. Those in Israel, who were serious about serving the ways of God, would never again take the laws of God for granted, but fight tooth and nail to preserve them. If you think God has rejected Israel, you should find it interesting that as Adolf Hitler was killing literally millions of Jews, he had little to no urgency to get rid of the Christians. We should find it interesting that the Vatican stood idly by during all this. We should also see that even after all the hatred the world has shown to the Jews, the circumstances have brought them full circle, back to the land of Israel, just as God promised. Even as terrorism and war is dragging down much of the rest of the world, Israel, as a nation, is thriving and growing like nowhere else!

Now, Satan still believes he can win, and in his effort to pull his kingdom together, Satan attempts to create a binding tie through man's false religions, which is, in many ways, also a controlled human action on a governmental level. Now that is a whole book in and of itself. However, on the religious level, Satan has guided man down the path of what is Biblically described as Baal worship. The word "Baal" in its simplest form means "a master," and when you see the word "Baal" in the Bible, it is, many times, talking about the simple idea of people worshipping multiple gods; yet it is the system of religion they have chosen that is really their master, in spite of what the specific gods are or are called. If man worships only one god, he can become very bitter toward others who do not accept that god; but if man worships many gods, then there is always room for more. This is shown clearly in the Bible.

One of the things Israel fell into at times, was the practice of worshipping the gods of their neighbors. Many of these gods would come to be placed in the temple of God at times. Other temples to other gods were even built on the hills around Jerusalem, and this fact is not the reason God chose to destroy Jerusalem in the time of the kings. It is the reason God was forced to destroy Jerusalem. Jerusalem was to be the place where God would place His name, and God told us clearly in Exodus 20:4-6, "Thou

shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." There is no room for plurality in the worship of The True God, because God is truth, and the truth tells us there are no other gods. We worship God or we are being mastered by a system of man.

Now, there are those humans who deny the very existence of God or any gods at all. That is one category of man's thoughts. However, Paul says in Romans 1:20, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:" This means because God created us all, it's hard to deny the existence of God in our lives; and it should be noted, many people who claim there is no God, still find a system to worship whether they realize it or not. We should also understand, worshipping something like science is no stranger than worshipping a carved stick or stone. There really is no difference, because it's the base idea that is being worshiped anyway. You are simply choosing the form of god which makes you most comfortable.

This is also why it makes sense that, to many humans, it seems foolish or just impossible to try and take the "there is not God" path! In the end, they all fall into exactly what is described in the next three verses of Romans 1, "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." So what is Gnosticism? In many ways, it's simply a description of the thoughts of man, among those who do not deny the existence of God, but still deny God by corrupting the nature of who He really is!

When man was created, he was given a simple choice between the two paths we talked about earlier. Man could simply stay in the state God had created them and God would guide them, or they could take of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Taking of the tree was a way for man to go his own way and try things on his own. If man was going to be responsible for his own actions, then man would need the basic knowledge of right and wrong! When Eve talked with the serpent in the garden, the serpent told her, God did not want man to take of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Genesis 3:5 It is important that we realize this was not a lie! This is exactly why God did not want man to take of the fruit. God knew, and had told man, if they ate of the fruit they would not even make it through that very day without failing to be responsible for the knowledge they would receive. This was a knowledge which God had, and until they could be taught by God, they needed to not be like God in having this knowledge and the heavy responsibility it brought. We as humans still clearly understand this concept, and it's shown in the fact we hold parents responsible for the criminal actions of their children. It's hard to believe Eve did not understand this simple concept as she looked at the tree and thought it was desirous to make one "wise." In the end, she chose to take matters into her own hands by taking the fruit, and therewith the responsibility of the knowledge it gave.

In spite of all the differing stories surrounding varying Gnostic beliefs, the above idea is the fundamental difference between what the Bible teaches and what Gnostics believe. The word "gnosis" is a Greek word which means, "knowledge." "Gnosticism" is a modern term to describe a very ancient religious belief. In fact, it goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. It's the lie that with enough knowledge or wisdom, we can save ourselves and/or become gods. The irony is, we already have more knowledge of what is right and wrong than we can handle, and that is the very reason we need salvation through the work of a Messiah! The idea that with enough knowledge, wisdom, and/or understanding, a human can find their own path of redemption, or godhood, is foolish. Satan said, God

didn't want humans to take of the tree because they would "...be as gods, knowing good and evil." Satan knew Eve would take this as meaning something more like the idea that what the tree could give would make them gods, not just like God in this one aspect! Knowledge and the lack of perfection in using that knowledge, or the all out desire to ignore knowledge and be evil, is our problem not our solution. However, fostering the same belief Satan did in the mind of Eve is really the tie that binds all the false religions in the world! So, Gnosticism, in many ways, is the modern description of what creates all false religions in the first place.

Because that is all the space I have for this time, I will have to close with that. However, this is in no way the end of the conversation, because it is important that we endure sound doctrine and not just do or not do something because someone tells us to. We need to understand who Jesus really is, and the work He came to do. We also need to understand that Jesus will return one day and we want to be ready to meet Him!

Now, I have no idea just how many parts there will be to this series of writing; but in the next edition, we will talk more thoroughly about the finer points of Gnostic belief. It's also my intent to cover much of the Gnostic ideas which have slipped into the church over the centuries, which Jesus, as well as the Apostles, warned us about. Through it all, we will be covering the most important parts and why all this is wrong. This is best done simply by way of teaching what is right! When we are finished, I hope we will all have a clearer picture of just how bad it can be for us to simply follow the crowd when it comes to what we choose to believe or even "enjoy." The two current books drawing so much attention today show us just how big a crowd can be; and though we may believe there is safety in numbers, Jesus told us not to follow the broad way the crowd is going down.

Until next time, may The God of grace and mercy guide you into all truth as you study His Word!

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