**THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS**

In these last days a papyrus manuscript was unearthed, written in the Coptic language, titled “*The Gospel of Judas*.” The gospel of Judas truly has caused turmoil therefore we need to clarify some points regarding this subject.

**The Alleged Gospel of Judas**

It was written in the middle of the second century AD in the Greek language. A Coptic copy was discovered on Mount Karara, next to Menya, in upper Egypt. It was discovered by coincidence. The discovered copy is a papyrus manuscript written in Coptic 300 AD. This is not the original, yet it is the only copy currently extant in the world, and certain parts are missing from this decrepit copy. The writing at the end of the book (transcribed in Coptic) clearly states: the gospel of Judas.

Many books were published on this manuscript overseas. One of them is titled: “*The Lost Gospel: The quest for the gospel of Judas Iscariot*.” This book does not promote the gospel as a true gospel, but simply writes from an historic scientific viewpoint, allowing the reader to make the decision. It includes the arguments, debates, and inquiries regarding this issue.

A second book is: “*The Gospel of Judas*,” it is against the issue. This one’s direction is not simply scientific, but leans toward rejecting this gospel and proving that this gospel is not valid.

When we say that this gospel is in not valid, we do not mean that the manuscript is fabricated these days as an ancient manuscript. No, regarding its antiquity it is an ancient book. Regarding the fact that it is written in Coptic, this is true. Yet, Judas Iscariot is not the one who wrote this.

**How Could Judas Iscariot be the Author?**

If Judas committed suicide after betraying the Lord Christ, then when did he write it? Especially since it writes of the final hours before Crucifixion.

The problem with this alleged gospel is that it claims that Judas was given a command by the Lord Christ Himself to betray Him; He was telling him, people will curse you but you will prevail over them, and receive great glory because you will do a great deed, to sacrifice me, and thus the sacrifice of salvation will occur. Thus he will perform a great task, being the cause of the salvation of humanity.

The author of this book claims that Jesus to Judas, “You will come to rule over them... You will exceed all of them. For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me.” This is a direct quote from the gospel of Judas of which I have a complete copy translated from Coptic into English.

**Excerpts from the Gospel of Judas**

Time would not allow us to mention all what is written in the entire book, but I shall mention some passages published by the Sydney Morning Herald in April 2006 at Sydney. They also published an interview with me responding to these claims on the April 7th 2006 issue on the front page and continuing on page eleven.

The most important phrase mentioned is that Jesus tells Judas:

***“You will exceed all of them. For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me.”***

“All of them” here refers to the apostles. “The man that clothes me” is a ludicrous expression, we do not say that Christ was clothed in a human, but we say that God the Word incarnated and that His divinity united to His humanity.

Regarding people who propagate this gospel as true —this gospel does not deny that Christ was crucified, because He says, “For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me.”

There is also another passage where Jesus says:

***“You will be cursed by the other generations—and you will come to rule over them.”***

At another passage, Christ took him aside privately saying:

***“Step away from the others and I shall tell you the mysteries of the kingdom. It is possible for you to reach it, but you will grieve a great deal.”***

He is telling him that the apostles know nothing, come, you are the one who will understand the mysteries of the kingdom, since you are the one who could reach it, even though you will grieve greatly.

**What might be cause for writing a book with the sole intention of making a hero out of Judas for sacrificing Christ?**

**The Author is a Cainites:**

The Cainites are a Gnostic sect from the middle of the second century. These Cainites defend and justify Cain, the son of Adam, who killed his brother Abel. They justify the Sodomites, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, who at the time of Lot practiced homosexuality, and so God burned their cities. They also justify Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who offered profane fire during the days of Moses the prophet, and so the earth opened up its mouth and swallowed them, descending alive to the abyss. They had contended with Aaron over his priesthood, while God is the one who had chosen Aaron; they caused a rebellion against Moses the prophet. They also justify Esau, who sold his birthright for a meal of lentils; we know that Jacob is the one who took the blessing. Therefore, the drama is being played out, justifying Cain, justifying the Sodomites, and justifying Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Whenever they find a criminal, murderer, villainous or perverted person in the history of humanity, they make a hero out of him, and wrong those who condemned or judged him.

The gospel of Judas is replete with mocking and ridicule toward the other eleven apostles of Christ. Christ chose twelve, and only one came out good, could this be? Jesus Christ told His apostles: “*Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.”*[[1]](#footnote-1) Will He choose eleven failures and only one successful person, what then is the point of the eleven?

However, Christ chose Judas among the twelve to show us what a traitor might do, and to make him fulfill this role. Yet, Christ did not propel him, but rebuked him saying: *“The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.*”[[2]](#footnote-2)

It is not only the gospel of Judas that was written by the Gnostics, they also wrote the gospel of Philip, the gospel of Peter, the gospel of the Egyptians, the gospel of Mary, the gospel of the Acts of the Apostles. They wrote many books, perhaps over fifty books that they claim are Holy Scripture or gospels.

St. Irenaeus, around the year 180 AD wrote regarding this gospel, saying that it is a gospel full of fictitious history. He said that the church only accepted four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These were written, according to the concurrence of historians, between 65 AD and 95 AD. I actually have a manuscript of St. John’s Gospel dating back to the year 200 AD, and excerpts of manuscripts of the same gospel dating back to 125 AD.

We have nothing of the gospel of Judas before the year 300 AD. Moreover, the only copy is the Coptic copy which was lately discovered, and the time of its writing does not precede 150 AD, meanwhile, the Gospels were written between 65 and 95 AD.

**Evaluating The Four Gospels Through Consensus Since the Era of the Apostles:**

Amid all this clamor, should we not have an authoritative reference? One person holds a book claiming it as a gospel, and we hold a book saying that it is a gospel, what source could we refer to?

Our authoritative source is the Holy Bible in its entirety, where we find written that, *“The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,”*[[3]](#footnote-3) and also, “*Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone*.”[[4]](#footnote-4) Did Christianity develop out of a vacuum? For example many of the prophecies concerning Christ were mentioned in chapter 53 of the book of Isaiah. Furthermore, all Old Testament Scripture testifies to Christ. They prophesy of His birth at Bethlehem, the massacre of the babes of Bethlehem, His entry into Egypt, even His tomb, etc..

Therefore, we have to set a principle: when the gospels multiply we rely on consensus. Consensus is very important. The churches unanimously agreed that these are the four true gospels, and this consensus was continuous from the era of the apostles to our days. It never occurred that there was a consensus before Nicaea which was reversed after Nicaea. Even Arius. who denied the divinity of Christ and was condemned at the council of Nicea, did not claim that there was another gospel beside the four or that there are any fabrication in the four gospels. Rather, the same versus he used were the very same which the fathers used to respond to him. They either interpreted the verses he misused, or used other verses which he tried to avoid. All this and he never claimed that they did not exist. Neither were the verses which he used removed from the Bible, remaining to this day, although he misinterpreted them in his exposition. Despite this, the church retained them as is, because it could not change anything. Therefore, the consensus, from the beginning of the apostolic era to this day is on the four gospels.

This is one point. Another is that there is research done on the oldest manuscripts, as we have previously mentioned.

**Christianity is Built on the Testimony of the Prophets**

There is a backbone in Christianity: it did not manifest out of a vacuum, but was built on the testimony of the prophets, before the coming of Christ by hundreds of years or thousands of years. Not less than four thousand years of symbols and prophecies. These were recorded in the Torah and what followed, before Christ’s coming by one thousand-six hundred years. The testimony of these scriptures to Christ could not be overlooked, especially since it accurately mentions events that occurred after the prophecy by thousands of years, or at least hundreds of years.

**Prophecies Regarding Judas:**

Did Christ order Judas to betray Him? Is Judas a traitor or not?

In respond I place before you the following question: has anyone proof from the Old Testament Scripture that Christ ordered Judas to betray Him?

I know the answer is absolutely not, and yet I open the challenge for debate.

Therefore, let us turn to the antithetical question: Are there prophecies in the Old Testament that confirm that Judas betrayed Christ?

This is the point we need to examine presently.

Let us begin with the book of Psalms, quickly taking the quotes that refer to Judas Iscariot. If someone asks how we know that it refers to Judas, if it does not, then please indicate to whom it refers…

**The Psalms:**

* **Psalm 41**, “*Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me*.”[[5]](#footnote-5) Here, he is speaking about a specific friend who has betrayed Him.
* **Psalm 55**, *“For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me; then I could hide from him. But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in the throng*.”[[6]](#footnote-6) I would have tolerated it, if this was an enemy, but since it is one of my disciples I am sad. This is a rebuke loaded with sorrow and sadness.
* Psalm 55, “*His words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords*.”[[7]](#footnote-7)
* **Psalm 109** in which we find a prophecy about a specific person. I have never heard till our days words with more disgust of a living human than these words. Here the Son addresses the Father saying:

*Set a wicked man over him, and let an accuser stand at his right hand. When he is judged, let him be found guilty, and let his prayer become sin*.  *Let his days be few, and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children continually be vagabonds, and beg; let them seek their bread also from their desolate places. Let the creditor seize all that he has, and let strangers plunder his labor. Let there be none to extend mercy to him, nor let there be any to favor his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off, and in the generation following let their name be blotted out. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the LORD, and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. Let them be continually before the LORD, that He may cut off the memory of them from the earth; because he did not remember to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart. As he loved cursing, so let it come to him; as he did not delight in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing as with his garment, so let it enter his body like water, and like oil into his bones. Let it be to him like the garment which covers him, and for a belt with which he girds himself continually. Let this be the LORD’s reward to my accusers, and to those who speak evil against my person*.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Notice He is not speaking of a group of people, but of a specific person. This person will die quickly and another person will take his place. St. Peter used the prophecy mentioned in this psalm about Judas in the book of Acts. It says, “*Let there be none to extend mercy to him, nor let there be any to favor his fatherless children”* although God is the one who commanded people to care for the fatherless and widows. Because this man’s children are coming out like him, traitors and thieves; therefore there is no mercy for them from God, nor from humans.

If someone claimed that these words were about King Saul, for example, we shall prove that after Saul’s death King David sent to search for any of his children, to honor his beloved friend Jonathan the son of Saul whom he grieved greatly over. They brought to him Mephibosheth, the Son of Jonathan, whom he honored by eating at the table of the king. Therefore, this does not apply to Saul.

The Psalm continues, “*Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the LORD, and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out”.* What is his mother’s fault? Here fault is that she did raise him up properly! She raised him up to become a thief, as it says in the gospel according to St. John that “*He was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it*.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

The Psalm continues, “*because he did not remember to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart.”* This is a prophecy about persecutingChrist, while it is written, “Blessed is he who considers the poor.”[[10]](#footnote-10) So, he lost his apostolic duty.

Now we reach the harshest expression: “*As he clothed himself with cursing as with his garment, so let it enter his body like water, and like oil into his bones”.* Cursing entered like oil into his bones. Either this means that it broke-out in the bones, or, since marrow is a fatty substance, so the curse was the very marrow inside his bones. Marrow is where blood cells are produced, and so he has a curse generator inside himself.

**The Book of Zechariah:**

Let us now see in the book of Zechariah regarding the price with which they priced the Lord Christ.

*“Then I said to them, ‘If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; and if not, refrain.’ So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said to me, ‘Throw it to the potter’ -- that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD for the potter.”*[[11]](#footnote-11)

Let us see what is mentioned in the **Gospel According to St. Matthew** regarding this issue:

*Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” And they said, “What is that to us? You see to it!” Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself [He fell into despair]. But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, “It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood.” And they consulted together and bought with them the potter’s field, to bury strangers in. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, “And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, and gave them for the potter’s field, as the LORD directed me.*”[[12]](#footnote-12)

We have an important pause here, but first let us clarify why he mentioned Jeremiah the prophet (and not Zechariah). The book of Jeremiah was followed by the books of the Minor Prophets. They gathered them all into one volume, so that when you held the volume it was titled, “The Book of Jeremiah.” After the book of Jeremiah and the Lamentations ended the books of the Minor Prophets would follow. Therefore, this title was applied to the entire volume, although it contained books by other prophets. This is similar to, for example, how some people call the entire Old Testament, the Torah. This is a very popular title, although the Torah is only the five books of Moses. The is not an issue to dispute.

The point I want to pause at here is: someone might contest that Matthew could have written whatever he wanted, because he was furious with Judas. But no, notice that he wrote, “*Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood* ***to this day***.” This means that in the days the gospel according to St. Matthew was written, this field maintained its title as the Field of Blood. Otherwise, had he written, “To this day,” the Jews would have risen to question him about this unknown field. When he writes, “To this day,” in the Bible, this means two things. First, that this gospel was written at a time very close to the events, and second, at least those living in this area know the story behind this field and its name.

Notice that from a tactical perspective, when he says, “***To this day***” it makes a great difference. It means that the writer, during his days, was confident that the Jewish reader will not be able to contest his words. Another example, regarding the Resurrection, St. Matthew wrote, “*This saying is commonly reported among the Jews* ***until this day***”[[13]](#footnote-13) here saying “until this day” makes none of the Jews deny or object to the fact because it is a renowned fact. This logical scope of our dispute over these cases could not be overlooked.

**Committing Suicide Proves that Judas did not Write a Gospel:**

The book of Acts most clearly confirms that Judas committed suicide and that the Jews at that time did not deny this fact. It is written:

*And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said,“Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus;“for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry.”(Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out.And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.)“For it is written in the book of Psalms: ‘Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it’; and, ‘Let another take his office*.’[[14]](#footnote-14)

Apparently, when Judas hanged himself, or threw himself from atop the mountain, he fell on a sharp stone which split open his stomach, and so all his entrails came out.

What concerns us greatly here is: “***And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem***”; Judas’ suicide was widely known by all. These words were spoken immediately after Christ’s Resurrection and Ascension to heaven. The incident was still very fresh. Regardless of when these words were written, when the book of Acts says, on the mouth of St. Peter, that, “*And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem*,” the residents of Jerusalem, mostly Jews, could have contested him.

This was written between 65 and 95 AD, St. Peter was martyred 68 AD.. Let us suppose it was written 200 AD -which is not true, but this is only a supposition- wouldn’t the Jews of the whole world contest against the abovementioned words of St. Peter saying that they have never heard about it. Where then was Josephus the Jewish historian, or Philo the Jewish philosopher? None of the Jewish historians even claimed that what is written in the books of the New Testament did not take place.

The only thing the Jews are puzzling over till this day is the Resurrection of the Lord Christ, because when He arose he appeared to His disciples and apostles only, because seeing the risen Lord is seeing eternal life. To this day, the Resurrection is the only thing they are unable to believe. **They neither denied that they crucified Christ, nor that He was crucified, nor that Judas committed suicide. Where in Jewish history did they say that Judas did not commit suicide? Therefore, he could not have written a gospel!!**

I highlight the following words of St. Peter: “***And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood***.”

Therefore, Zechariah’s prophecy, when cross-referenced with the gospel of St. Matthew and the book of Acts, is very crucial. Logically, we have two central phrases one in the gospel of St. Matthew and the other in the book of Acts. The first phrase: “*Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood* ***to this day***” where the phrase, “*to this day*” proves that St. Matthew wrote his gospel before the devastation of Jerusalem, because after the devastation, the Jews were no longer in Jerusalem. Furthermore, if he writes this, at any era, the Jews dispersed throughout the world would protest that they have never heard such things, but no one did. The second essential phrase is, “***And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem***.”

Therefore, what was written by St. Matthew, along with St. Luke in the book of Acts, on the tongue of St. Peter, and relying on prophecies in the psalms: “*Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it*’; and, ‘*Let another take his office*,” and regarding the potter’s field, shows that the writers of the New Testament are not simply people who are telling a story. One said that all the people know the fact he mentioned and the other said that what he wrote is known to all to this day.

Certainly, it is known that the Jews wanted to grab hold of any Christian and that they were first to attack Christians. Therefore St. Paul in referring to them in his Epistle to the Thessalonians says: “*The Judeans,who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us* [the apostles]; *and they do not please God and are contrary to all men,forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost*.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

The phrase “*contrary to all men*” means that even Jews outside Judea, throughout the world are contrary to all people in the entire world.

Does this mean we hate Jews? No, Christ said, “*Love your enemies*”[[16]](#footnote-16); we love them, but we tell them that they are wrong. There is no need to use any type of force against any person in the world, Jew or non-Jew. We call for peace and for love. Yet, Christians suffered much from the Jews, who awaited to attack them. The Jews would never have allowed the apostles to write these books and say, “*it became known”* and *“to this day*,” without objecting.

**Will the Alleged Gospel of Judas Devastate Christianity:**

We thank God that His Holiness Pope Shenouda III is very attentive to this issue. One hundred and twenty pages have reached him (as he announced at last Wednesday’s meeting) from his children oversees regarding this issue. Furthermore handed it to His Holiness a copy of “*The Gospel of Judas*”. His Holiness is concerned with this issue and will respond to it, being the teacher and the judge of the world over (this is one of his titles, since the times of St. Athanasius and St. Cyril and our great first patriarchs).

I am very assured that as God promised, “*In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border*”[[17]](#footnote-17) His Holiness is the pillar of faith at the sea of Alexandria.

The Gospel of Judas could never devastate Christianity. It simply contains a collection of illogical absurdities. We continue to offer a logical challenge: find (if you could) prophecies from the Old Testament, in other words, divine revelation that indicate that Christ is the one who made Judas betray Him! We have seen the antithesis in the Old Testament. Over time, this will reveal the frailty of the contents of *The Gospel of Judas*.

Gnosticism is a mental religion, relying on Platonic thoughts. Its followers blended Helenistic philosophy with Christianity in an offensive way. The church rejected and condemned the Gnostic writings regarding them as heresies.

*The Gospel of Judas* will never devastate Christianity because Christianity was founded on The Rock of all ages who promised, “*On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*”[[18]](#footnote-18)

And Glory be to God Forever, Amen.

1. Jn 6:70-71 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Mk 14:21 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Rev 19:10 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Eph 2:20 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ps 41:9 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ps 55:12-14 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ps 55:21 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ps 109:6-20 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Jn 12:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ps 41:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Zech 11:12-13 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Mt 27:3-10 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Mt 28:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Act 1:15-20 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. 1Th 2:14-16 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Mt 5:44 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Isa 19:19 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Mt 16:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)