



**Forest Hill
Church of Christ**

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Matthew Martin, Associate
Douglas Alvarenga, Hispanic

VISIT US SOON!

Sunday:

Bible Study..... 9:30 A.M.
Morning Worship.....10:30 A.M.
Evening Worship..... 6:00 P.M.

Wednesday:

Bible Study7:00 P.M.

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Far East/World Evangelism
Gospel Broadcasting Network
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In Search of the Lord's Way
Kakinada, India
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Truth for the World
Words of the Master (Memphis
Time Warner Cable ch17)

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Is the "Gospel of Judas" True? (Part 2)

Gary Young

The Nature and Significance of the *Gospel of Judas*

The opening words of the *Gospel of Judas* instantly confirm Irenaeus' identification of it as a Gnostic document. The opening words are "The secret account of the revelation Jesus spoke. . . to Judas Iscariot." These words, and terms like them, are extremely common among Gnostic literature.

The Gnostics taught that there was a special secret knowledge (the term "Gnostic" comes from the Greek *gnosis*, "knowledge") that was communicated over and above the revelation that was communicated in the Bible. The nature of that knowledge varied greatly amongst the different Gnostic sects, but was almost invariably characterized as "secret" and/or "hidden," which the Gnostic text or sect now purported to reveal.

These Gnostic documents come from at least the second century A.D., at the time the Gnostic sects were rapidly expanding. There is no evidence that any of these texts was in existence before about A.D. 130, and therefore they were all written well after the writing of the canonical Gospels.

While they are certainly useful for determining the doctrines and practices of these sects, they reveal to us nothing about the origins of Christianity and the doctrines of the first century A.D. church (McKechnie, Ch. 1). There is, therefore, no reason to assert that the *Gospel of Judas* can tell us anything about the belief or practice of the mainstream church of the first century A.D., or indeed of the historical reality of Judas and his relationship with the Lord.

Irenaeus is indeed frequently derided for allegedly suppressing "alternative" accounts of the beginnings of Christianity while promoting the Gospel accounts that were later accepted as canonical. This idea is related to the concept that the church determined the canon of Scripture, accepting some books while rejecting other equally important books.

While the theory might sound good, the fact is that Irenaeus and others defended and promoted the canonical Gospels and rejected other books (including the *Gospel of Judas*), not because of doctrinal preference but because of the evident superiority of the canonical books.

While the canonical Gospels are attested from a very early stage and are cited and attested in early Christian writings in the late-first and early-second centuries A.D., the Gnostic writings are unattested in this period. While the canonical Gospels enjoyed widespread acceptance among all the early churches, the Gnostic documents generally did not receive acceptance from any but the Gnostic sect that originated them. Certainly there is no evidence whatever that the *Gospel of Judas* ever received any acceptance beyond the narrow and rather strange Cainite sect.

Besides its contradiction of the canonical Gospels' accounts of the betrayal of Christ and its lack of attestation and acceptance among the early Christian community, there are several other pertinent points to ask about the *Gospel of Judas*. As it purports to be a secret account of a conversation between Jesus and Judas (but is written in the third person, indicating it was written by neither), we might pertinently ask who did write it? If indeed it were an historical account, how would the details of this secret conversation be known to anyone but Jesus and Judas, neither of whom could have written the book? This brief account is certainly difficult to regard as a remotely historical work; it is quite evident

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Besides its contradiction of the canonical Gospels’ accounts of the betrayal of Christ and its lack of attestation

MY SONS, NO LONGER MY CHILDREN

Dan Winkler

[*Editor’s Note: The following article, copied via “The Key Word”, bulletin of the Stage Road Church of Christ, was written by brother Winkler about six years ago. It demonstrates the great love shared by members of this family. Continue to pray for them in the aftermath of their recent tragedy.*]

His name is “Time.” He’s a stranger we would like to ignore but cannot avoid, an intruder from whom we cannot protect our families. For years our family has been blessed by three wonderful sons! But, now, one has been married for several years, a second is to marry in a few days, and a third is soon to make his way to college. What happened? “Time” paid a visit to our house, took our boys by the hand, and escorted them into adulthood. That has a way of sending one’s thoughts down memory lane. So, if you will indulge the sentimental reflections of an ole dad, when I look back on yesterday.

I’m glad that we, as a family, took the time to say, “I love you.” There is something special about those words. I’m glad that we, as a family, went to elementary plays, summer baseball games, high school football games, etc. What memories! I’m glad that we, as a family, went to Bible school and worship without fail. It gave us something to stand on and stand for. I’m glad that we, as a family, learned the value of hard work. That helps any of us rise above the ordinary.

I’m glad that we, as a family, took the time to laugh together. At best, life is serious and difficult, but “a cheerful heart is good medicine.” I’m glad that we, as family, prayed together. How is it possible to work through life without talking to and being close to God? I’m glad that we, as a family, have been and still are the best of friends!

His name is “Time.” He’s a tough rascal to deal with, but one thing can help: beautiful memories. Not even death can erase the pictures of happiness a family helps paint on the canvas of one another’s heart!

PREACH THE GOSPEL...NOT THE GIMMICKS

Matthew Martin

While thumbing through the near-laughably liberal *Memphis Flyer* newspaper, I came across an advertisement for the "First Congregational Church." The ad focused on a "top-ten" list as to why someone should want to attend their services.

Instead of focusing on how (in their minds) they give praise and reverence to the Father, or how many families are there or what biblical topic they are considering that week, the advertisement instead relied on poor humor, and highlighted their various gimmicks as a way to draw people to their services.

They mentioned how their "Christmas Children's Pageant is almost as good as 'Cats'" and how there "...is so much parking you won't care if the person next to you takes up two spots." Number seven on this list boasted its "arthouse theater," while number four made the statement: "Any church with unicyclists in the basement can't be all bad." Number five even assured the reader that the "Sanctuary is so big, it is easy to sneak in late." I could go on, but I digress...

If there was one thing I learned, during my two years at the School of Preaching, it was that gimmicks only work for the short term. In other words, if you have to use gimmicks to bring people in, then you have to keep using gimmicks (and keep adding new, bigger gimmicks) to get them to stay. Otherwise, people will get bored and will look for another church; a more fun church; one that offers not just unicyclists in the basement, but a whole circus down there (gymnastics for Jesus, anyone).

Yes its true that denominations which employ gimmicks are not scriptural anyway. But sadly this sort of ridiculous sensational gimmicking is being done in some churches of Christ. Where did the Lord's church get the idea that the simple New Testament Gospel is not enough?

What was Christ's command to His apostles before ascending (Mark 16:15-16)? Did he say "Preach the Gospel to every creature...unless they don't want to hear it, then Peter and John should learn to juggle, while James and Andrew take up magic." No! He said, "Preach the Gospel, he that believes and is baptized shall be saved, he that does not believe will be condemned."

Did He say "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but if they won't believe then tell them that one lucky pew will have a \$50 dollar bill under it, that'll get them to obey!" No! He said, you tell them what to do to be saved, if they don't do it, they will be condemned. No mention of gimmicks or pageantry or anything of the sort. Just preach the plain simple Gospel. That's what they did, and the first century church grew because of it.

If the Lord's church is going to grow as a whole, it will not be done with gimmicks or props. It will be done by following the simple three-word command Paul gave in 2 Tim. 4:2: "Preach the word."

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