



## Refuting the Gospel of Judas

**Rev. Fr. Abraam D. Sleman**  
**Coptic Orthodox Church of St. Mark**  
**Jersey City, New Jersey, USA**  
**<http://www.CopticChurch.net>**

On April 7, 2006, the National Geographic Society announced the discovery of Codex Tchacos which includes what is called "The Gospel of Judas". The media has handled the news with much propaganda. Many articles, books and websites have dealt with this issue emphatically.

**Before answering what is called, "The Gospel of Judas", we would like to mention that "The gospel of Judas" is not "The Epistle of Jude" that is included in the holy Bible.** The "Epistle of Jude" is a canonical writing and has been accepted by the Christian church at large. It was written by "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James" (Jude 1, NIV). He is not Judas the Iscariot (John 14:22). "The Epistle of Jude" was written 70 AC and is composed of one chapter.

Some have thought wrongly that the discovery of the Judas Gospel will have a radical effect on the Christian theology and the Gospel of Judas will be in competition with the four known canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The fact is that the Gospel of Judas adds nothing and has no effect on the Christian theology. It is just one of the Gnostic writings that were rejected by the Christian church from the beginning because of their false writings.

In answering the Gospel of Judas, we will deal with some of the issues related to this topic:

- 1- Its History and Discovery
- 2- Its Author and Contents
- 3- Its Teachings About God the Father
- 4- Its Teaching About Jesus Christ
- 5- Its Teachings About Judas
- 6- Its Teaching About Material
- 7- Its Teachings About Good and Evil

## 1- Its History and Discovery

**The Gospel of Judas is a part of a codex.** The codex has folded pages, bound at one side and contains a lot more information than scrolls. It is different than the ancient scrolls as the scroll of Isaiah which the Lord Jesus Christ read from in the synagogue (Luke 4:20) and the Red Sea Scrolls. Evidently, the Gospel of Judas is more recent than the scrolls used in Jesus' days on earth.

**According to what the National Geographic Society announced, the Codex that contains the Gospel of Judas was discovered in a cave near El-Menya 1970.** It has been handled between many of antiquities dealers and scholars in the United States and Europe.

**During the long journey of the codex, it was kept in a safe deposit box of one of the banks.** Frieda Nussberger Tchacos, an antiquities dealer, bought the codex on 2000. Seeing the codex in a bad shape, she transferred it to an organization in Switzerland concerned with old arts. A team of scholars was formed to preserve the codex and make some scientific studies on it to know the most of the text of Judas Gospel.

The National Geographic Society revealed a copy of the Gospel of Judas and published the English translation of its text.

**The discovery of the Gospel of Judas was not a surprise to the scholars. It was known in the second century.** One of the early church fathers, Irenaeus (AD 125-202), wrote about the Gospel of Judas in his work against heresies. He said, "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."

## 2- Its Author and Contents

**The author of the Gospel of Judas is not Judas the Iscariot.** It is well accepted by the scholars that the Gospel of Judas has been written about the year of 180 AC while Judas died on or about the year of 30 AC. Evidently, the codex was written after many years of Judas and the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not possible to identify the specific author. However, it is clear from the text of the Gospel of Judas that it was written by someone who embraced an ancient belief known as Gnosticism.

**The Gospel of Judas is written in Coptic.** However, this is not an evidence of its validity. Coptic was the dominant language in Egypt at the time of writing the codex and for many centuries.

The codex contains not only the Gospel of Judas, but also a text titled James (otherwise known as the First Apocalypse of James), the Letter of Peter to Philip and other writings.

The Gospel of Judas is similar to the Gnostic literature found in other areas along the Nile, including the Nag Hammadi library that contained nearly forty-five Gnostic texts, the *Gospel of Mary*, the *Gospel of Peter* and other texts. The discovered codex contains not only the Gospel of Judas, but also a text titled James (otherwise known as the First Apocalypse of James), the Letter of Peter to Philip and other writings.

There are many of the wrong Gnostic teachings in the Gospel of Judas. A careful study of this Gospel leads to the findings of its errors.

### 3- Teachings About God the Father

**The Gospel of Judas includes a wrong Gnostic view of God the Father.** The author Claims that God, the Father of Jesus is "Barbelo". "Barbelo", in Gnostic writings is the first emanation from the divine essence and mother of all Aeons. This view is in contrast with the view of God "Yahweh" the Old Testament and "The Father" in the New Testament.

The Gospel of Judas claimed, [Judas [said] to him, "I know who you are and where you have come from. You are from the immortal realm of Barbelo. And I am not worthy to utter the name of the one who has sent you."]

In fact, the name "Barbelo" is no where in the Bible. Moreover, it is well know that the name of God revealed to Moses in the Book of Exodus is "Yahweh". God further said to Moses, 'You are to tell the Israelites, "Yahweh, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my name for all time, and thus I am to be invoked for all generations to come.'" (Exodus 3:15, NJB).

**The Lord Jesus Christ is begotten from the eternal heavenly Father, not from "Barbelo" as claimed.** Christ is the ruler over Israel, "whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." (Micah 5:2, NIV). He came from the Father as He said,

"I came from God. I came from God the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father." (John 16:27-28, NIV).

The lord Jesus Christ spoke of the God the Father many times. At the night of His betrayal, He said to God the Father, "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world." (John 17:6, NKJV). Moreover, He said, "And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:26, NKJV).

**The Gospel of Judas includes a wrong Gnostic view of God as the creator.** The author of the Gospel of Judas claimed that the supreme God was completely spirit. This God propagated other deities (*Aeons*). One of these deities gave birth to an imperfect divine being and is called the Demiurge ("half-creator"). Finally, this imperfect divine is the one who created the universe.

The Gospel of Judas said, "Saklas said to his angels, 'Let us create a human being after the likeness and after the image.' They fashioned Adam and his wife Eve".

**In the Gnostic view, "Saklas" is an imperfect Aeon, emanated from "Barbelo". The name "Saklas" means the "Foolish One".**

**This Gnostic view is not acceptable by Christians and Jews.** It contrasts with the story of creation in the Book of Genesis, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness' .... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:26-27, NIV).

#### 4- Teachings About the Lord Jesus Christ

**The Gospel of Judas includes also a wrong Gnostic view of the Lord Jesus Christ and portrays His blessed person in a wrong way.**

For example, we read in the Gospel of Judas, "Often he did not appear to his disciples as himself, but he was found among them as a child."

**This is not an acceptable view of the perfect humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ.** "This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God" (1 John 4:2, NIV).

**The Gospel of Judas introduced the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who mock His disciples.** The Gospel of Judas said, "When he [approached] his disciples, gathered together and seated and offering a prayer of thanksgiving over the

bread, [he] laughed. The disciples said to [him], 'Master, why are you laughing at [our] prayer of thanksgiving? We have done what is right.'"

**This view is against what is known about the kindness of the Lord Christ and His encouragement to the little.** Quoting from Isaiah, St. Matthew said, "He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory." (Matthew 12:19-20, NIV).

**The Gospel of Judas claimed that no one has ever known Jesus.** The author attributed to the Lord Jesus his sayings to His disciples, "Truly [I] say to you, no generation of the people that are among you will know me."

**This claim is against the fact that the disciples knew who Jesus is and believed of Him as the Christ of God.** They said to Him, "Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God." (John 16:30, NIV).

**St. Peter confessed his faith and the faith of the disciples in the Lord Jesus Christ in a way that reveals their right knowledge in Him.** He said to Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven." (Matthew 16:16-18, NIV). Evidently, because St. Peter had been hold the right knowledge and belief; the Lord Jesus praised His confession and announced that this confession was revealed to him from the God Father.

## 5- Teachings About Judas

**The Gospel of Judas includes wrong teachings about Judas the Iscariot. The author portrays Judas as the strong, perfect and honored disciple.**

The Gospel of Judas claimed that Jesus said to His disciples, "[Let] any one of you who is [strong enough] among human beings bring out the perfect human and stand before my face." They all said, "We have the strength." But their spirits did not dare to stand before [him], except for Judas Iscariot. He was able to stand before him, but he could not look him in the eyes, and he turned his face away."

**Moreover, the author portrays Judas as someone who was 'worthy' to know more.** He claimed, that the Lord Jesus told Him the secrets of the kingdom apart from the other disciples.

The author claimed about the Lord Jesus, "Knowing that Judas was reflecting upon something that was exalted, Jesus said to him, 'Step away from the others and I shall tell you the mysteries of the kingdom.'"

**This claim contrasts what is written in the Holy Gospels and the testimony of the disciples and the apostles.** The Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you" (Luke 8:10, NIV).

**The apostles preached the good news of Jesus out of having a real knowledge and encounter with Him.** At the beginning of His epistles, St. John wrote, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched... We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:1-4, NIV).

**Judas is portrayed in the Bible in contrast of the view of the Gospel of Judas.** The Lord Jesus Christ described him as "the son of perdition". He said, "Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." (John 17:12, NKJV). According to St. John, Judas is a thief. St. John said, "This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it." (John 12:6, NKJV).

**Unlike the accounts in the canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the relationship between the Lord Jesus and Judas is portrayed falsely in the Gospel of Judas.**

**The author tried to justify the betrayal as a service Judas offered to Jesus.** He claimed that Jesus said to Judas, "But you will exceed all of them, for you will sacrifice the man that clothes me. Already your horn has been raised, your wrath has been kindled, your star has shown brightly."

This claim is in contrast with the truth revealed about Judas and his doomed destiny in the Hebrew and Greek texts in the Bible.

**The Lord Jesus was going to be surrendered and killed regardless of the betrayal of Judas.** In the mean time, the betrayal is condemned by the Lord

Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born." (Mark 14:21, NIV).

**Quoting from the Book of Psalms, St. Peter spoke about the destruction of Judas and the choice of other one in his place.** He said, "It is written in the book of Psalms, 'May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it'" (Acts 1:20, NIV).

**The book of Psalms includes many other verses that clearly point out to Judas and his role in the betrayal of the Lord Jesus Christ.** Some of these are, "Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me." (Psalm 41:9, NIV). "If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God." (Psalm 55:12-14, NIV). "His speech is smooth as butter, yet war is in his heart; his words are more soothing than oil, yet they are drawn swords." (Psalm 55:21, NIV). "He wore cursing as his garment; it entered into his body like water, into his bones like oil. May it be like a cloak wrapped about him, like a belt tied forever around him." (Psalm 109:18-19, NIV).

**It was for the gain of money that Judas betrayed Jesus not because of an agreement with Him as it was claimed.** It is very evident that what Judas did was a detestable act not the other way.

**St. Matthew narrated the real story of betrayal.** "Then one of the Twelve -the one called Judas Iscariot -went to the chief priests and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over." (Matthew 26:14-16, NIV). "When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility." So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself." (Matthew 27:3-4, NIV).

This story of St. Matthew is confirmed by the prophecy of Zechariah hundreds of years before Christ came to earth. Zechariah said, "I told them, "If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it." So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"-the handsome price at which they priced me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the

house of the LORD to the potter.” (Zechariah 11:12-13, NIV). He precisely could prophecy the amount of money paid to Judas and the destiny of the money.

**The Gospel of Judas contradicts itself and confirms the betrayal of Judas.** According to the Gospel of Judas also, Judas received the price of his dishonesty at the time of betrayal of the Lord Jesus.

The narrative of betrayal according to the Gospel of Judas is as follows: “Their high priests murmured because [he] had gone into the guest room for his prayer. But some scribes were there watching carefully in order to arrest him during the prayer, for they were afraid of the people, since he was regarded by all as a prophet. They approached Judas and said to him, “What are you doing here? You are Jesus’ disciple.” Judas answered them as they wished. And he received some money and handed him over.” Claiming that the place of Jesus’ betrayal was the guest room shows the ignorance of the author about the temple and the place of Jesus’ betrayal.

## 6- Teachings About Material

**The impact of the Gnostic teachings about material on the Gospel of Judas is very clear. As in Gnostic understanding that material things are evil, the Gospel of Judas considered the body of Jesus was evil.** For this wrong understanding, the author claimed that the Lord Jesus wanted to get rid of His body. The Gospel of Judas claims that Judas would be exalted above the other apostles, presumably because he helped to free Jesus from His body.

The gospel of Judas claimed that Jesus said to Judas, “But you will exceed all of them. For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me. Already your horn has been raised, your wrath has been kindled and your star has shown brightly...”

**This understanding is in contrast with the Christian faith that the body of Christ is holy.** Moreover, God will change our bodies to on the likeness of the glorified body of Christ. St. Paul said, “We eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.” (Philippians 3:20-21, NIV).

This claim is also in contrast with Christian faith that Christ offered His body not to get rid of it but to be a sacrifice to carry the sins of world. “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24, NIV). “When

this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God." (Hebrews 10:12, NIV).

### 7- Teachings About Good and Evil

**As the author of the Gospel of Judas failed to introduce the sound doctrines, he failed also to distinguish between good and evil.** For him, the act of betrayal is a sacrifice worthy to be honored and rewarded.

The saying of Isaiah in (Isaiah 5:20) is rightly applied to such confusion. Isaiah said, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." (Isaiah 5:20, NIV).

Acquitting Judas is a detesting act for "acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent - the LORD detests them both." (Proverbs 17:15, NIV). "You have wearied the LORD with your words. "How have we wearied him?" you ask. By saying, "All who do evil are good in the eyes of the LORD, and he is pleased with them" or "Where is the God of justice?" (Malachi 2:17, NIV).

### Conclusion

**Evidently, the Gospel of Judas is found as a trial to pervert the Gospel of Christ.** St. Paul warned of such kind of teachings and said, "Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!" (Galatians 1:7-9, NIV).

Such false teachers who introduce destructive heresies bring destruction on themselves and their followers. St. Peter said, "But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute." (2 Peter 2:1-2, NIV).

**Fr. Abraam D. Sleman**  
**frsleman@CopticChurch.net**  
<http://www.CopticChurch.net>