

Responding to “The Gospel of Judas”
(Talking Points for Pastors)
A Summary by Daniel L. Akin

1. The document though interesting, simply offers an ancient and authoritative source into the thinking of heretical groups who offered alternative understandings of Christianity.
2. The document claims to be written by Judas, though it is clear it is written long after Judas’s death, at least 150 years.
3. The work is intentionally Gnostic, emphasizing mystical and secret knowledge as the way of salvation.
4. The book bears virtually no resemblance to orthodox Christianity. This is why the early church rejected it as neither authoritative nor authentic. Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp who was a disciple of John (!), knew of the book and condemned it as heretical.
5. In the mid- to late 1970s, after more than fifteen hundred years, the ancient text was discovered near the banks of the Nile River.
6. The text is written in Coptic, a language of ancient Egypt, though scholars agree that *The Gospel of Judas* was originally written in Greek, and later translated into Coptic.
7. The book claims to reveal conversations between Jesus and Judas that had been kept secret from the rest of the believing community.
8. Allegedly Jesus said to Judas “But you will exceed all of them. For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me.” Judas would actually help Jesus by betraying Him to those who would crucify Him, thus liberating Jesus from the physical body and freeing Him as spirit.
9. Atonement and redemption are completely absent in *The Gospel of Judas*.
10. The heretic group commonly thought to be associated with the origin of *The Gospel of Judas* was known as the Cainites. This sect attempted to salvage and rehabilitate many characters presented negatively in the Bible—starting with Cain. They attempted to take the negative figures of the Bible and present them in a heroic and positive light.
11. Extravagant claims about the theological significance of *The Gospel of Judas* are unwarranted, and driven by those with an agenda to redefine Christianity.

12. The judgment of Metropolitan Bishop, leader of the Coptic Orthodox Church, is helpful, seeing the media's frenzy as "non-Christian babbling resulting from a group of people trying to create a false 'amalgam' between the Greek mythology and Far East religions with Christianity. They were written by a group of people who were aliens to the main Christian stream of the early Christianity. These texts are neither reliable nor accurate Christian texts, as they are historically and logically alien to the main Christian thinking and philosophy of the early and present Christians."

* For an excellent critique of *The Gospel of Judas* see "From Traitor to Hero? Responding to the "Gospel of Judas" by R Albert Mohler Jr. at www.albertmohler.com (April 7, 2006).