

## A Biblical and Historical Perspective on *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Gospel of Judas*

Characteristic of Completeness: Authority of the Bible

Related Scriptures: 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; Galatians 1:6-12; Colossians 2:8; 1 Timothy 4:1-3;  
2 Timothy 4:3-4; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 2:26; 1 John 4:1

Introduction:

- A. This last Friday was the premiere of what is expected to be a blockbuster movie, *The Da Vinci Code*, directed by Ron Howard and starring Tom Hanks. The movie is based on the novel, ► *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown,<sup>1</sup> an enormous bestseller.

I've read the book and seen the movie. Dan Brown himself assures us that the movie captures the key elements of the book. Brown says of the movie, ". . . it's all there—the Louvre, Saint-Sulpice, Chateau Villette, Westminster Abbey, Rosslyn Chapel, the codes, the sacred feminine, and the quiet invitation to think about faith, religion and history with a fresh, open-minded perspective."<sup>2</sup>

As you may know, *The Da Vinci Code* is controversial. Movie director, Ron Howard affirms, "It's very controversial. What Dan Brown did with the novel, we didn't back away from in making the movie."<sup>3</sup> Some say it has a dangerous agenda. ► Darrell Bock, a noted New Testament scholar and professor at Dallas Theological Seminary ► says, "It is nothing less than a conscious effort to obscure the uniqueness and vitality of the Christian faith and message."<sup>4</sup>

Another noted Bible scholar, ► Paul Maier characterizes *The Da Vinci Code* as, "packed with historical error, deception, and falsehood, as well as outright hostility to the truths of Christianity."<sup>5</sup>

What are these guys all worked up about? ► Let me give you some examples. One of the main characters of *The Da Vinci Code* is a religious historian named Leigh Teabing. Teabing denigrates the authority of the Bible as we know it. That's the key issue we're dealing with this morning: ► the authority of the Bible. Teabing undermines the authority of the Bible by passing off the following assertions as facts. In conversation with Sophie, a female character in the book, Teabing ► says,

"The Bible is a product of man, my dear. Not of God. . . ."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland: Doubleday, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Dan Brown, "How I Cracked the New Code," *USA Weekend*, May 12-14, 2006, 7.

<sup>3</sup> Available from <http://www.christianitytoday.com/global/printer.html?/movies/news/blog-060515.html>: Internet; accessed 16 May 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code*, (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2004), 95.

<sup>5</sup> Paul L. Maier, from the jacket of *Breaking the Da Vinci Code*.

<sup>6</sup> Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, 231.

▶ “. . . More than eighty gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion . . .”<sup>7</sup>

▶ “. . . The Bible as we know it today, was collated by the pagan Roman emperor Constantine the Great. . . .”<sup>8</sup>

▶ “. . . Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet . . . a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless. A mortal.”<sup>9</sup>

▶ “Nonetheless, establishing Christ’s divinity was critical to the further unification of the Roman empire and to the new Vatican power base. ▶ By officially endorsing Jesus as the Son of God, Constantine turned Jesus into a deity . . . whose power was unchallengeable.”<sup>10</sup>

▶ “Because Constantine upgraded Jesus’ status almost four centuries after Jesus’ death, thousands of documents already existed chronicling His life as a mortal man. ▶ To rewrite the history books . . . Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ’s human traits and embellished those gospels that made Him godlike. ▶ The earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned.”<sup>11</sup>

▶ “Fortunately for historians . . . some of the gospels that Constantine attempted to eradicate managed to survive. ▶ The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the 1950s hidden in a cave near Qumran in the Judean desert. And, of course, the Coptic Scrolls in 1945 at Nag Hammadi.”<sup>12</sup>

▶ “. . . The scrolls highlight glaring historical discrepancies and fabrications, clearly confirming that the modern Bible was compiled and edited by men who possessed a political agenda—▶ to promote the divinity of the man Jesus Christ and use His influence to solidify their own power base.”<sup>13</sup>

▶ “. . . almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 235.

- B. I suspect you can see how this is antagonistic toward the Bible as we know it. ► But you may wonder why Bible scholars would get all worked up about a work of fiction. There are a number of good reasons.
1. First, while ► the author of the book, Dan Brown, acknowledges that this is a fictional work, he said in an interview on *Good Morning America* that he believes the historical background and assertions in the book to be true based on his research.<sup>15</sup> So Brown seems to agree with the derogatory assertions about the Bible made by his character, Teabing, whom I quoted earlier.
  2. Second, ► some of the historical references in the book are to things that do in fact exist or to things that did actually happen, so an air of truth and credibility is given to the work. For example, in 1945 some ancient religious scrolls were indeed discovered at a place in the Egyptian desert called Nag Hammadi. Perhaps that's why some readers are assuming the book to be true and coming to the conclusion that the Bible is an unreliable product of some conspiracy. One man is reported to have said that, "now that he has read the book, he will never be able to enter a church again."<sup>16</sup> Also, I discovered a website where conversations among readers of *The Da Vinci Code* are recorded. Here a couple of entries:
    - a. One reader ► says,
 

“*The Da Vinci Code* is an amazing eye opener. It truly lets you in on how much the church actually made up along the way. . . . And the information in the book is as it says in the front before the prologue, fact.”<sup>17</sup>
    - b. Another reader ► says,
 

“I just finished *The Da Vinci Code*, and I am so glad this book is out there. . . . I had known before I read this book that the Bible was largely made-up, a story almost. But I had no idea the extent.”<sup>18</sup>
  3. ► Third, *The Da Vinci Code* is really a new version of an old argument. It's basically a popularized and fictionalized form of an idea that has been kicked around for years. The basic idea is this: We traditional Christians have got Christ all wrong. We've got Christ wrong because our Bible is wrong, or at

<sup>15</sup> *Good Morning America*, November, 3, 2003, available from [http://www.danbrown.com/novels/davinci\\_code/breakingnews.html](http://www.danbrown.com/novels/davinci_code/breakingnews.html); Internet, accessed 18 May 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted by Erwin W. Lutzer, *The Da Vinci Deception*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale Publishers, 2004), xix.

<sup>17</sup> Available from <http://images.fbrtech.com/dnew/Italy2001/Postcards/Milan1.html>; Internet; accessed 22 October 2004.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

least too narrow. And the Bible is wrong because it is a product of an ancient power-grabbing conspiracy to exclude from the Scriptures and to destroy certain sacred writings that reveal a very different truth about Jesus.

That may sound outlandish, but that's pretty much the contention of ► Dr. Bart Ehrman in his *nonfiction* book titled, *Lost Christianities*.<sup>19</sup> Ehrman chairs the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina. Ehrman contends that there were many forms of ancient Christianity and many sacred writings distributed among those who followed Jesus. There was a lot of fighting among these different forms of Christianity, but eventually one shrewd, power-hungry group prevailed. According to Ehrman, this ► group,

*... produced polemical tractates [nasty letters] in opposition to other Christian perspectives, forged sacred texts to provide authorization for their own perspectives (forgeries, that is, claiming to be written by Jesus' own apostles), ► and collected other early writings into a sacred canon of Scripture to advance their views and counteract the views of others. ► It is out of these conflicts that the New Testament came into being, a collection of twenty-seven books taken to be sacred, inspired, and authoritative.”<sup>20</sup>*

Consequently, ► the sacred scriptures of other forms of Christianity were lost. They are the “lost Christianities.” But some of them have now been found. Among them are the ► Gnostic writings discovered in 1945 at Nag Hammadi. The Gnostic writings include ► the Gospel of Philip and, most notably, the Gospel of Thomas.<sup>21</sup> Ehrman calls the find at Nag Hammadi, ► “the most significant collection of lost Christian writings to turn up in modern times.”<sup>22</sup> Teabing, the character in *The Da Vinci Code*, cites these two Gnostic gospels in support of his assertions which include the idea that Jesus actually married Mary Magdalene and had children, and that Mary Magdalene was intended to be the real leader of the early church, not Peter.

These lost-but-found gospels are called Gnostic gospels because they reflect a religious belief called Gnosticism. I'll say a little more about Gnosticism in a moment. Ehrman calls it *Christian* Gnosticism, and he contends that we ought to be tolerant and embrace it as just another valid expression of Christianity.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, you can go to your local bookstore today and buy ► *The Gnostic Bible* that contains these Gnostic Gospels.<sup>24</sup> And in one of my

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<sup>19</sup> Bart Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>21</sup> Ehrman, xi-xii; Bock, 62.

<sup>22</sup> Ehrman, 53.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 256-257.

<sup>24</sup> *The Gnostic Bible*, eds. Barnstone and Meyer, (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2003).

wife's former classes at Arizona State University, a professor suggested that the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas was just as authoritative as anything in our Bibles.

- I. All this raises some important questions. ► Like, how *did* we get our Bible? How *did* writings such as the Gnostic Gospels come about? Why *were* they excluded from the Bible? Was there really a conspiracy?

Let me try to answer these questions by providing a very basic ► chronology of events. For the sake of time, this will be very condensed and oversimplified, but nonetheless helpful.

- A. All 27 books of the ► New Testament were written in the first century, from as early as the 40s and 50s AD, to as late as the 80s and 90s.<sup>25</sup> The books were distributed separately among churches for study.
- B. All 27 books of the New Testament were written by ► an apostle of Jesus, or by a very close associate of an apostle. These men were inspired by God such that what they wrote is exactly what God wants us to know.

There were two qualifications for being an apostle. First, an apostle had to have seen the resurrected Jesus with his own eyes. An apostle was an eye witness who had been with the resurrected Jesus—seen Him, heard Him, and, in some cases, even touched Him. Second, an apostle had to be specifically commissioned by Jesus to be an apostle.<sup>26</sup>

As for the writers of the gospels in the New Testament, Matthew and John were apostles. Mark and Luke were not apostles, but Mark was a close associate of the Apostle Peter, and Luke was a close associate of the Apostle Paul.

- C. Later, in the second and third centuries, ► a number of other writings began to appear in Christian circles, apart from the 27 books that were already in use. These writings included the Gnostic gospels and other Gnostic writings.<sup>27</sup> It is important to note that these Gnostic writings were penned generations *after* the 27 books in our New Testament.<sup>28</sup>
- D. A reason these Gnostic writings began to be circulated among Christians is because they often bore the names of apostles; therefore, they seemed to carry the authority of apostolic authorship. For example, the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Philip were supposedly written by the apostles Thomas and Philip. Only one problem. They are almost universally recognized as forgeries. They're fakes. They were not written by

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<sup>25</sup> Wayne House, *Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 16-17.

<sup>26</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press and Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1994), 906.

<sup>27</sup> See Ehrman, xi, xii, for dates.

<sup>28</sup> Bock, 64.

these apostles. We have no clue who wrote them. Even the most liberal scholars today, such as ► Bart Ehrman, acknowledge this. He says, “Almost all of the ‘lost’ Scriptures of the early Christians were forgeries. On this, scholars of every stripe agree, liberal and conservative, fundamentalist and atheist.”<sup>29</sup>

- E. Strangely, ► these Gnostic writings generally include few historical or geographical details that could be subject to independent corroboration.<sup>30</sup> They’re mostly sayings, some of them rather bizarre.

For example, here are a couple of sayings from the Gospel of Thomas taken from ► *The Gnostic Bible*.

*Yeshua [Jesus] said, “Blessings on the lion if a human eats it, making the lion human. Foul is the human if a lion eats it, making the lion human.”<sup>31</sup>*

Strange.

Here’s another ► saying about how to enter the kingdom of God:

*Yeshua [Jesus] said unto them, “When you make the two into one, and when you make the inner like the outer and outer like the inner, ► and the upper like the lower, and when you make the male and female into a single one, so that the male will not be the male and the female be female, ► when you make eyes in the place of an eye, a hand in the place of a hand, a foot in the place of a foot, and image in the place of an image, then you will enter the Kingdom.”<sup>32</sup>*

Strange sayings written by an unknown person, deceitfully posing as an apostle. We don’t know who wrote them, but chronologically, it could not have been anyone who was with Jesus or who was commissioned by Him.

- F. The ► theology represented in the Gnostic writings is also clearly opposed to traditional Christian doctrine.

A basic tenet of Gnosticism is that spiritual things are good and material things are evil. It’s an idea borrowed from ancient Greek philosophy. The highest Gnostic god could have nothing to do with the creation of matter because matter is evil. To the Gnostic, Jesus did not die in payment for our sins. In fact, our problem is not sin; it’s ignorance—an ignorance that keeps us from achieving eternal life. We need to attain a higher level of secret knowledge called “gnosis.” “Gnosis” is a Greek word for

<sup>29</sup> Ehrman, 9.

<sup>30</sup> Lutzer, 22.

<sup>31</sup> *The Gnostic Bible*, 46.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

knowledge. Jesus was not a Savior, but a revealer who came to show us how to attain this mysterious, mystical “gnosis.” This “gnosis” comes from within each person, and its authority transcends that of Scripture or the apostles. No one can challenge the “gnosis” of an individual who receives it. We are saved not by the work of Christ, but by the knowledge or “gnosis” of our own divine character.<sup>33</sup> Gnosticism did not emerge as a philosophical system until a half-century after the death of Christ.<sup>34</sup>

- G. Understandably, ► church leaders in the generations following the apostles called out such Gnosticism as a heretical opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ. For example, toward the end of the second century, a church leader named ► Irenaeus wrote multiple books against the Gnostic heresies.<sup>35</sup> Others followed such as ► Hippolytus, Tertullian, and Epiphanius in the second, third, and fourth centuries.<sup>36</sup>
- H. Something Irenaeus wrote in the second century is of particular interest today. Irenaeus specifically called out ► the “Gospel of Judas” as a heretical piece of fiction being circulated by the Gnostics in his day.<sup>37</sup> This is noteworthy because, until recently, we didn’t have a copy of *The Gospel of Judas*.

An ancient, bound papyrus containing the Gospel of Judas written in Coptic first turned up in the 1970s in Egypt; then, it floated around among antiquities traders and ended up in a bank vault in Hicksville, New York.<sup>38</sup> It finally surfaced again in July 2001 when its restoration and translation began.<sup>39</sup>

An English translation along with some commentary has just been published under the title, ► *The Gospel of Judas*.<sup>40</sup> Concurrently, the National Geographic Society, the publisher of the book, featured the discovery of *The Gospel of Judas* in its most recent ► May 2006 issue of *National Geographic* magazine. Along about the same time, a two-hour television program was aired and articles with provocative titles appeared in newspapers.<sup>41</sup> For example, the title of a ► front-page article in the April 7, 2006 issue of *The Arizona Republic* reads, “Judas a Hero?”<sup>42</sup> The subtitle reads, “Text

<sup>33</sup> Bock, 76-84; Ehrman, 64-65; D. Edmond Hiebert, “An Exposition of 1 John 1:1-4,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 145 (April 1988): 199-200; Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, (Dallas, London, Vancouver, Melbourne: Word Publishing, 1982), 66-71.

<sup>34</sup> John DelHousaye, “A Biblical Perspective on *The Gospel of Judas*,” given at Phoenix Seminary, 22 April 2006.

<sup>35</sup> Shelley, 48.

<sup>36</sup> Bock, 62.

<sup>37</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, (i 31, 1), quoted by DelHousaye.

<sup>38</sup> Andrew Cockburn, “The Judas Gospel,” *National Geographic*, vol. 209, no. 5 (May 2006): 81; Rodolphe Kasser, “The Story of Codex Tchacos and the Gospel of Judas,” *The Gospel of Judas*, eds. Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer and Gregor Wurst, (Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2006), 47-76.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> *The Gospel of Judas*, eds. Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer and Gregor Wurst, (Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2006).

<sup>41</sup> The seemingly orchestrated release of *The Da Vinci Code* movie, *The Gospel of Judas* book, the National Geographic magazine, the television program, and the newspaper articles with provocative titles does raise a question about whether all this is primarily about scholarship or financial gain.

<sup>42</sup> Mike Cronin, “Judas a Hero?” *The Arizona Republic*, April 7, 2006, Page A1.

authenticated by UA scientists says Jesus asked his apostle to hand him to Romans.” I looked up the word, ► “authenticate.” It can mean to prove something “worthy of acceptance or belief as conforming to fact or reality.”<sup>43</sup> So it almost sounds like the content of *The Gospel of Judas* was somehow determined by UA scientists to be worthy of acceptance or belief. But the scientists didn’t authenticate the *content* of the document at all. The only thing the scientists authenticated was that the document is old, dating back to around 300 A.D.<sup>44</sup> In this, *The Gospel of Judas* is unremarkable; it’s just another in the list Gnostic gospels already exposed as heresies by early church fathers.

What makes ► *The Gospel of Judas* rather distinctive is its uniquely bizarre content. It is supposedly a secret dialogue between Jesus and Judas Iscariot in the final days of the week leading up to the crucifixion. In it, Judas is cast as a hero, the greatest of all the apostles, who actually did Jesus a favor by ensuring His crucifixion, thus helping Him shed His evil body, in keeping with Gnostic thinking.<sup>45</sup> In it, Jesus rejects the God of Israel<sup>46</sup> and attacks the Christian church and its leadership.<sup>47</sup> In it, Jesus is cast as a spokesperson for a Gnostic philosophy that did not exist at the time of His ministry on earth.<sup>48</sup> In it, we are led to believe that Judas was the only apostle who really understood Jesus; all the others were dead wrong.<sup>49</sup>

No wonder Irenaeus, over 1,800 years ago, described *The Gospel of Judas* as purely “fictitious history.”<sup>50</sup>

- I. So the existence of ancient Gnostic writings is no secret, and ancient Christian opposition to such writing is no secret. The only thing that’s relatively new is that we discovered a few more of these Gnostic writings in 1945 at Nag Hammadi, and in the 1970s in Egypt. Their primary value is in revealing more about the heresies that church leaders struggled against.
- J. By the fourth century, church leaders moved to formally recognize the books that were to be included in what we now know as the New Testament. It’s a process known as canonization. The books included are collectively called the canon. This canonization was motivated, in large measure, to protect churches from the false doctrine

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<sup>43</sup> *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v., “authenticate” and “authentic.”

<sup>44</sup> Cronin.

<sup>45</sup> *The Gospel of Judas*, 43: Jesus says, “But you will exceed all of them [the other apostles]. For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me.”

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 21: After his disciples pray, Jesus laughs at them and explains, “I am not laughing at you. <You> are not doing this because of your own will but because it is through this that your god [will be] praised.” This is a demeaning reference to the God of Israel.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 26: In describing the leaders of the Christian church it is said, “[some] sacrifice their own children, others their wives, in praise [and] humility with each other; some sleep with men; some are involved in [slaughter]; some commit a multitude of sins and deeds of lawlessness.”

<sup>48</sup> DelHousaye.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>50</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, (i 31, 1), quoted by John DelHousaye, “A Biblical Perspective on *The Gospel of Judas*,” given at Phoenix Seminary, 22 April 2006.

represented by the Gnostic writings being deceitfully circulated with forged apostolic authority.

Church leaders recognized the books of the New Testament using three criteria relating to their authors, content, and use. Books in the New Testament canon are those which, a) were written by apostles or their close associates; and, b) reflect doctrine consistent with the teaching of Christ and His apostles in the first century; and, c) were widely used and accepted in the Church.<sup>51</sup>

Bible scholar Bruce Metzger says, “These three criteria . . . for ascertaining which books should be regarded as authoritative for the Church came to be generally adopted during the course of the second century and were never modified thereafter.”<sup>52</sup> In A.D. 367, a church father named Athanasius was the first to apply the term, “canon” to the list of 27 books we have in the New Testament today.<sup>53</sup> This ► canon was ultimately formalized at the Council of Carthage in A.D. 397.<sup>54</sup>

That’s the story of how we got the New Testament. If you’d like to dig deeper into some of this stuff, I recommend two books. The first is ► *Breaking the Da Vinci Code* by Darrell Bock. The second is ► *The Da Vinci Deception* by Erwin Lutzer.

II. ► In light of the perfectly reasonable and defensible history of the formation of the New Testament, and in light of the untenable nature of the Gnostic writings, why would anyone think the New Testament is a product of conspiracy today? Aside from the fact that conspiracy theories sell books and movie tickets, let’s consider why the idea of some kind of Gnostic cover-up would be appealing.

A. Consider claims of a Gnostic. “Jesus was a wise teacher, but not my Savior.” “I don’t have a sin problem.” “No one has the right tell me what my truth is.” “Traditional Christianity is narrow-minded.” “The traditional church is on a power trip.” “I just need to get in touch with the divine spark within me.” “The Bible has some good ideas, but I don’t take it literally.” “I can be spiritual without letting it interfere with my pursuit of pleasure.”

These statements all reflect Gnostic ideas. Do these Gnostic ideas strike a sympathetic chord in our American culture? Indeed, they do. A conspiracy behind the New Testament would be a handy way to legitimize these ideas. That might explain the conspiracy theory.

B. There’s another way to explain the “new” conspiracy theory. The Apostle Paul explains it this way in ► 2 Timothy 4:3-4:

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<sup>51</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: It’s Origin and Development*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 251-253.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

<sup>53</sup> Bock, 110.

<sup>54</sup> Shelley, 83.

<sup>NLT</sup> **2 Timothy 4:3** For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to right teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever they want to hear. <sup>4</sup>They will reject the truth and follow strange myths.

There is nothing new under the sun.

III. What ► should be the response of Christians to *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Gospel of Judas*?

- A. In my opinion, arguing at length with skeptics about all this is not likely to accomplish much. Among those desperate to find some basis for their disbelief in orthodox Christianity, I suspect many will cling to most any rationalization, no matter how flimsy. I would graciously, politely point them to the resources I have already mentioned and perhaps pass along a transcript of this message.
- B. Also there is no reason to fear.
1. There is no reason to fear questions about your faith. If *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Gospel of Judas* cause you to question your faith, that can be good. If your faith is so fragile that it can't take questions, then perhaps it's time to rebuild your faith on more solid ground. God's Word is able to stand up to the most difficult questions.
  2. Nor do I think we need to fear that the church is on the brink of devastation and needs us to save it. The Gnostic gospels proved impotent 1700 years ago, and their tired, modern regurgitations will not prevail. I know this not because I'm prophetic or smart. But because Jesus said,
- <sup>NAU</sup> **Matthew 16:18** “. . . I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”
- C. And while being ready and able to explain our faith is important, our most powerful apologetic continues to be our love for one another. Again, this is not my idea. Jesus said it this way:

<sup>NAU</sup> **John 13:35** “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”