

Tall Tales About Jesus

By David Feddes

Jesus is such a gripping figure that all sorts of stories exist about him. A place in northern Japan claims to be the spot where Jesus is buried. Harold Netland, an expert on world religions and long-time resident of Japan, tells what the local legend says about Jesus:

After growing up in Galilee [in northern Israel], Jesus came to Japan before beginning his public ministry. He returned to Galilee at age thirty-three and began preaching a heavenly kingdom: namely, Japan. When he encountered trouble with the Jewish leaders, Jesus left Galilee and returned to the town of Shingo, near beautiful Lake Towada. According to the legend, Jesus' brother, Isukiri, was crucified in Jesus' place on the cross. Jesus lived in northern Japan until his death at age 106. Local townsfolk point out the grave where he was supposedly buried.

Should we believe what those Japanese villagers say about Jesus instead of what the Bible says? Of course not. The gospel accounts in the Bible were all written in the first century. This is confirmed by analysis of ancient manuscripts. Not even the most skeptical analysts deny that all four New Testament gospels about the life of Jesus were written within the lifetime of people who knew Jesus. In contrast, the story in the Japanese village is just a local legend that somehow sprang up centuries later and cannot compare with the historical accounts of Jesus.

The Ahmadiyya sect of Islam says Jesus was crucified but did not die. He only swooned. Jesus revived in the cool tomb and was cured of his wounds by a special ointment. Jesus fled Palestine and journeyed toward India, to what is today Kashmir. He later died naturally of old age and was buried there. You can visit the alleged place of his burial and donate money. About 20 million people follow this view.

The Quran and other Muslim writings, produced more than 600 years after Jesus' death and resurrection, say that Jesus was born of a virgin, did amazing miracles, and was a great prophet. However, they insist that Jesus did not claim to be God's Son. They also claim that Jesus was not crucified, because God would not let his prophet suffer such pain and disgrace. Someone else—Judas—was made to look like Jesus and was crucified. Jesus went directly to heaven, and will return to judge the world and establish Islam.

The book of Mormon, written by an American 1800 years after the New Testament, claims that Jesus came to peoples living in America. Mormonism also teaches that God the Father has a physical body and that Jesus was produced by a physical union of God and Mary.

People of many different places and religions have their own ideas about Jesus. Few reject Jesus outright or believe nothing at all about him. Many Hindu shrines and homes include an image of Jesus. Some Hindus fit Jesus to Hindu thinking and make him an avatar or one among the millions of Hindu gods, not the only Son of the only God, as Jesus declared himself to be.

Some Buddhists, such as the Dalai Lama, see Jesus as a fully enlightened being or as a high-level *bodhisattva* whose aim was to share Buddhist enlightenment with others, not as the Savior who died for our sins and rose again that we might also receive immortal resurrection bodies.

The Da Vinci Code

The Da Vinci Code is a mystery novel that sold millions of copies and made millions of dollars for author Dan Brown. Like any popular mystery, *The Da Vinci Code* offers many plot twists and secrets. The main mystery of the novel, the deepest secret it claims to reveal, is the secret of the real Jesus.

According to the novel, “almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is wrong.” When the mystery of Jesus is solved, it turns out that Jesus got married. He and his wife, Mary Magdalene, produced offspring. These offspring were taken to France and became part of a royal line.

According to the novelist, Jesus was not really God come to earth as a human. Rather, church leaders made up the deity of Christ a few hundred years after Jesus died. These leaders wanted to increase their own power, so they declared Christ to be God and poured their efforts into hiding the real truth.

The Council of Nicea, meeting in 325, declared Jesus to be the only begotten Son of God, the second person of the divine Trinity. “Until that moment in history,” says the author of *The Da Vinci Code*, “Jesus was viewed by his followers as a mortal prophet... a great and powerful man, but a *man* nonetheless.”

Dan Brown’s mystery story has entertained millions of readers, and a film version entertained millions of moviegoers. If you read the book or see the movie, keep in mind that what you’re getting is fiction, not fact. However, Dan Brown claims to offer more than fiction. The book claims, “All descriptions of ... documents ... in this novel are accurate.” *The Da Vinci Code* is more than an effort to entertain people and make money. It is an effort to promote a view of Jesus that differs from the Bible and the Christian church. It is a deliberate attack on what Christians for many centuries have believed about Jesus.

Dan Brown claims that Jesus’ earliest followers saw him as just a great man and only in later centuries did some people make up the idea that Jesus is God as well as man. But Brown has it backward. The Bible books were written by eyewitnesses within a few decades of Jesus’ time on earth; the writings Dan Brown refers to were produced long afterward by deviant groups that had no personal connection with Jesus.

Mark and John

The gospel of Mark was written within two or three decades of Jesus's resurrection. Does it say Jesus was only a great man? No, listen to the very first words: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1). Evil spirits who encountered Jesus were terrified and cried out, "You are the Son of God" (Mark 3:11).

All through his ministry, Jesus had been going around acting and talking like he was God. He would say to people, "Your sins are forgiven." How did he have the right to say someone's sins were forgiven unless he was the one that all sins are committed against, namely, God?

When Jesus was on trial, the high priest asked, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" "I am," said Jesus (Mark 14:61). When Jesus died, the Roman centurion standing near the cross exclaimed, "Surely this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39).

These things were written just a few decades after Jesus's resurrection. Many eyewitnesses were still alive. Again and again in Mark, Jesus was called "the Son of God. *The Da Vinci Code* is obviously wrong to claim that Jesus' deity wasn't invented until the year 325, at the Council of Nicaea.

Now listen to the gospel of John, written by Jesus' closest friend. Referring to Jesus as "the Word," John declares, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:1,14). Jesus said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). His opponents got the point and objected, "You, a mere man, claim to be God" (John 10:33). They didn't believe Jesus, but they knew he was claiming to be God. That's why they wanted to kill him.

Throughout the Gospel of John, we hear Jesus saying things that equate him with the Lord of the Old Testament. Jesus declares, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11). The Old Testament says in Psalm 23:1, "The Lord is my shepherd." So when somebody says, "I am the good shepherd," he is saying, "I am the Lord." Jesus says, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). Psalm 27:1 says, "The Lord is my light and my salvation." So when somebody says, "I am the light of the world," what is he saying? "I am the Lord." Again and again, Jesus uses titles for himself that are applied to God in the Old Testament.

After Jesus' resurrection, Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). When John states his purpose for writing this gospel, he says, "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:31).

Jesus' earliest friends and followers heard him claim to be God as well as man, and they made this clear in the writings of the Bible. Only later did others make up a different Jesus and write new stories denying Jesus' deity and contradicting the original facts of the Bible.

Contrary to Dan Brown's tall tales about Jesus in *The Da Vinci Code*, the earliest Christians, including Jesus' closest friend, knew Jesus as the Son of God. When the Council of Nicea declared that Jesus is divine along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Council was not making up something new. It was restating what John and Jesus' other friends, the authors of the New Testament, had been saying all along. The Council was reaffirming the deity of Jesus and the truth of the Trinity to counteract false ideas cooked up by a renegade leader named Arius. It was not just the council of Nicea 300 years later which spoke of Jesus as God. All four gospels show Jesus saying what only God could say and doing what only God could do. In John's gospel, it was an eyewitness to Jesus' resurrection who called Jesus "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

If you don't want to accept Jesus as God, you can always find a way out. You can reject the New Testament, and you can focus on stories and ideas written long afterward. You can even dream

up things on your own and write a novel, such as *The Da Vinci Code*. You can say whatever you want to say about Jesus—but that doesn't change the truth.

The truth about Jesus is that he was and is God and man. He came into this world to show us God's love, to die as a sacrifice to pay for our sins, and to defeat death through his resurrection and return to glory. The biblical truth about Mary Magdalene (the woman alleged in *The Da Vinci Code* to be Jesus' wife) is that Jesus saved Mary Magdalene from demons that possessed her. Mary loved Jesus as her Savior and friend, not as her husband. Mary Magdalene was the first to see Jesus alive after his resurrection, but she never had children with him. If you've got your own agenda, you can make up any fiction you like. But Jesus doesn't change with every tall tale, and truth doesn't change with every popular novel.

The Da Vinci Code claims to be based on real documents from the past that speak about Jesus. Some of those documents still exist, but they are tall tales people came up with long after the time of Jesus. All sorts of stories and ideas have sprung up about Jesus in the centuries after he came. That doesn't make them as trustworthy as the biblical writings produced by those who actually saw and heard the real Jesus.

The Gospel of Judas

The Gospel of Judas differs from the New Testament gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The Gospel of Judas claims to reveal the real Jesus and the real Judas. The real Judas, according to this ancient document, was not evil. Instead, Judas was the only one of the twelve apostles who really understood Jesus. Jesus secretly told Judas his real message. Jesus taught Judas that the physical world is evil, that bodies are bad, and that people have an inner divine being. This divine self needs to escape the prison of the body in order to fulfill its divine destiny.

When Judas handed Jesus over to his enemies to be killed, it was not a wicked betrayal; the Gospel of Judas says that Jesus ordered Judas to do it. Jesus told Judas that he would surpass all the other disciples, because Judas would help Jesus to escape his body and become pure spirit. Jesus told Judas, "You will sacrifice the man that clothes me." According to the gospel of Judas, Jesus did not die to get rid of the world's sin; he died to get rid of his own body. Jesus did not rise from the dead in a glorified resurrection body, and he did not promise that his followers would be physically raised from the dead. Bodily resurrection would be tragedy, not triumph. Bodies are bad!

That contradicts what the Bible says. According to the New Testament gospels, Judas was not the best of all the apostles but the worst. He was a thief and a traitor. Judas was a member of Jesus' ministry team, and one of his duties was to serve as treasurer. But Judas stole money that people had given for God's work. Eventually Judas became so greedy that he decided to go for one big payday. He went to Jesus' enemies and offered to betray Jesus to them for a payment of thirty silver coins. Satan, the chief of demons, entered Judas's heart, and Judas did Satan's work. He led a band of men armed with swords and clubs through the darkness of night to the place he knew Jesus would be. Judas gave Jesus a kiss, not out of love, but to help Jesus' enemies pick Jesus out of the crowd and seize him. Afterward Satan had no further use for Judas. Judas was filled with horror and killed himself. That's what the Bible says about Judas.

As for Jesus and his message, the Bible never says Jesus told people that they have a divine inner self that needs to be free of the body. It is not bad to have a body; the Bible says God created bodies. When Jesus died, it was not to get rid of his body but to get rid of our sin. Jesus did not just dwell in a spirit realm. He arose from the dead in a body that could be seen and touched. When Jesus returns, he will raise our bodies.

The gospels in the Bible say one thing; the gospel of Judas says another. What should we believe? When the Judas manuscript came to light, the news media gave it lots of publicity. You may have heard people say that the gospel of Judas is a legitimate alternative to the Bible. You may have heard that experts authenticate the gospel of Judas as very old.

Granted, it is old—but not old enough. It goes back many centuries—but not as far back as the biblical gospels. The Bible's accounts were written within a few decades of Jesus death and resurrection by people who knew Jesus personally. The Judas manuscript, on the other hand, is dated about 150 years after Judas betrayed Jesus. 150 years is a long time. The author did not know Jesus or Judas. The book was written by Gnostics who thought bodies were bad. Some Gnostics called themselves Cainites. They admired not only Judas but Cain, the biblical character who murdered his brother Abel. This cult twisted almost everything the Bible said into its opposite and turned many villains into heroes.

Let's imagine a different example of writing a book more than 150 years after events, a book that contradicts the historical accounts of eyewitnesses. It's been more than 150 years since President Abraham Lincoln was shot. Suppose somebody sat down today and wrote a book titled *History of Booth*. Suppose this book claimed to give the real, hidden story behind Abraham Lincoln's death. *History of Booth* claimed that Lincoln secretly told John Wilkes Booth to shoot him, and the assassin Booth was actually an American hero.

Now imagine that the person who wrote this book was part of a group called the Arnoldites, named after Benedict Arnold, the traitorous general who worked for America's enemy. Would you take seriously a book that said the secret of being a true American is to follow in the footsteps of Benedict Arnold, the traitor who double-crossed George Washington, and John Wilkes Booth, the assassin who murdered Abraham Lincoln? Who would believe such ridiculous lies dreamed up long after the actual events?

If such a *History of Booth* would be ridiculous, the Gospel of Judas is even more ridiculous. But some journalists and professors act as though it reveals things that place the biblical gospels in question.

Non-biblical stories about Jesus

There are some early non-biblical stories about Jesus, not as early as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, but fairly early, within 100 years or so. Many more came along after that.

Some of these books were written with pious intentions by people who were probably genuine Christians, although they certainly were not writing God's Word. There's an *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, for instance. It's different from another, heretical writing called the *Gospel of Thomas*.

The *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* gives us some childhood tales, and it doesn't directly deny key doctrines about Jesus.

Have you ever wondered what it was like when Jesus was young? The Bible doesn't give us much detail. It tells us a few stories about his birth. Then it gives us a quick snapshot when he was 12 years old and in the temple. His parents couldn't find him, and then they found him in the temple, where they had a conversation about Jesus being about his Father's business. But between Jesus' birth and age 30, we don't read nearly as much as we'd like about him. Some of the other writings try to make up for that gap. And I mean they *make it up*.

One story has the Lord Jesus as a boy making clay birds. Then some mean boys come along to pick on him, and they're going to smash the birds Jesus made out of clay. Jesus claps his hands together, and the birds fly away, so the boys can't smash them. Take that! It's a great story. Everybody would love to have divine power to show up the bullies and make their birds fly. This story was actually picked up in the Quran six centuries later and is recorded there. Other documents also mention this story.

In another story, there's a bully who picks on Jesus. What happens? Jesus strikes him dead. Maybe some of us, when we're little boys getting picked on, feel like we'd like to strike somebody dead. But I have a hard time believing that Jesus struck down a boy who was being mean to him, given all that we know about Jesus from the real Gospels.

So there were some books that may have had pious intentions or were trying to fill in a few gaps about Jesus' life where God hasn't told us what happened. We shouldn't take those details as true because they were written centuries later, but they weren't necessarily denying that Jesus is divine, or that he died and rose again, or denying the doctrine of the Trinity.

There were some other non-biblical books, though, that were just flat-out heretical. They denied central truths of the faith. The *Gospel of Judas*, obviously, is one of those. It teaches the Gnostic heresy.

The *Gospel of Thomas*, which gets quite a bit of publicity in some academic circles, was also a Gnostic text, not a Christian one. It was not written by Jesus' disciple Thomas. There are some genuine sayings of Jesus in the *Gospel of Thomas*, sayings copied from the biblical gospels, but they often receive a different spin in the *Gospel of Thomas*. This phony gospel also contains many other statements attributed to Jesus that he really didn't say.

Adding new Scriptures

Unfortunately, some people aren't satisfied with what the God-given Bible books say about our Lord Jesus, and they want to add Scriptures.

Muslims pay lip service to the Bible and say that David, Moses, and Jesus had writings revealed by God and that those should be accepted. But Muslims also add the Quran, written 600 years later. The Quran adds to the biblical writings, and it also corrects, they say, alleged corruptions that crept into the Bible over the years. So, in lip service, Muslims will say that most of the

writings of the Bible were God-given, but wherever they differ from the Quran, the Quran is right and the Bible is wrong because those things in the Bible supposedly got changed or corrupted over the years. Now you tell me what's more likely to be accurate when it tells about Jesus: documents that were written by eyewitnesses, or writings produced 600 years later by the followers of Muhammad?

Roman Catholics accept the Bible but add other things to which Catholics give equal authority. The Apocrypha, also called the Deuterocanonical Books, were written between the time of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Jewish people in the time leading up to Jesus did not recognize those books as Scripture. The early Christians, though they saw much benefit in those books, did not recognize them as on a par with the Old Testament books or the New Testament writings. But in the controversy between Roman Catholics and Protestants, especially during the Reformation, the Protestants insisted on the Bible alone, while the Roman Catholics said that the Apocrypha had to be included.

Roman Catholics also said that holy tradition has authority on a par with the Bible. The pope's pronouncements, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, "from the chair," are considered infallible and from God himself. They are placed on the same level as Scripture, effectively adding new binding pronouncements from the Lord.

Christian Scientists added their own book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, by Mary Baker Eddy. It has some things in common with the ancient Gnostics, teaching that everything is spirit and that your body is mostly imaginary.

Mormons added the *Book of Mormon*. They accept the Old and New Testaments with their own interpretation, and then they added the *Book of Mormon*, calling it *Another Testament of Jesus Christ*.

Seventh-day Adventists hold to the deity of Christ and affirm the Trinity, as do the Roman Catholics, so they maintain some important orthodox doctrines. But Adventists, too, add to the Bible. Here's an official statement: "We consider the biblical canon closed. However, we also believe, as did Ellen G. White's contemporaries, that her writings carry divine authority, both for godly living and for doctrine. Therefore, we recommend that, as a church, we seek the power of the Holy Spirit to apply to our lives more fully the inspired counsel contained in the writings of Ellen G. White, and that we make increased efforts to publish and circulate these writings throughout the world." Seventh-day Adventists believe that their worship of God on Saturday and their adherence to the teachings of Ellen G. White mark them as the true remnant church of the last days. They have added Ellen White's "inspired" writings to the biblical canon, even though they say they consider the canon closed.

Books from angels?

Some of the books that have been added to the Bible's message and that offer tall tales about Jesus claim to have been delivered directly by angels.

The *Book of Mormon* says that God has a body. It says that God the Father had sex with Mary, and that's where Jesus came from. It teaches salvation more by good behavior than as the totally free gift of God. The book was written 1,800 years after the New Testament, but Mormons believe it because Joseph Smith claimed he received it from the angel Moroni. If an angel brings you a message, you've got to believe it, right?

A similar claim is made about the Quran, written 600 years after the New Testament. It denies that Jesus is God. It denies that he died on the cross. But Muhammad claimed that he received it from the angel Gabriel himself. If an angel speaks to you, what more proof do you need?

As we think about these claims, one option is simply to say that Joseph Smith lied when he said an angel spoke to him, that he just made it up. Or we might say that Muhammad just dreamed it up. That's one possibility to consider. But another possibility is that Joseph Smith and Muhammad really did receive a visit from an angel: the wrong kind of angel, a fallen angel.

What does the Bible say? "Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). "Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). So even if you have angelic testimony, do not believe it if it conflicts with what the Word of God says about Jesus Christ, because there's more than one kind of angel. There are the holy angels of God, and there are the fallen angels led by Satan.

The New Testament Gospels emphasize many things, but two stand above the rest. First, who Jesus is: he is fully God and, at the same time, fully human. Second, Jesus' atoning death and his victorious resurrection are the key to our forgiveness and to eternal life.

Since these truths are so central to who Jesus is and to what we need for our salvation, that's exactly what Satan attacks. Jesus' divine person and his saving work are what we need the most and, therefore, what Satan denies most frequently and ferociously.

Again and again, you'll see a denial either that Jesus is fully God or, in some of these cults, that Jesus is human at all or that he had a real body. Islam denies that he even died. Other cults claim that his death had no purpose in paying for the sins of people. Still others deny that Jesus rose again. Satan invents all kinds of stories, not just for entertainment, but mainly to distract from these two central truths: who Jesus is and what he has done for the salvation of people.

Inspired eyewitnesses

Who should we believe? The people who were there, who saw Jesus, who heard him, who touched him, who knew him, and who wrote it down. The apostle 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, this we proclaim concerning the Word of life" (1 John 1:1).

The apostle Peter said something similar: "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his

majesty" (2 Peter 1:16). In other words, "We didn't make this stuff up. We were there." The New Testament, eyewitnesses were trustworthy people. And they were speaking from firsthand experience, not from gossip, not from rumors from centuries past, not things they made up, but their own encounter with the living God in flesh, Jesus Christ.

On top of that, they had the Holy Spirit's inspiration and guidance to make them totally trustworthy in everything they wrote about Jesus. Jesus himself said to his disciples, "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning" (John 15:26-27).

In the New Testament gospels, we have a double witness: the witness of those who were with Jesus from the beginning and were eyewitnesses of all that Jesus said and did, including his resurrection; and the witness of the Holy Spirit, the Counselor. The eyewitness factor and the Holy Spirit factor: those two things are what set the New Testament documents apart from all the other documents.

If the choice comes down to the *Gospel of Judas* or the Bible, believe the Bible. If the choice comes down to *The Da Vinci Code* or the Bible, believe the Bible. If the choice comes down to another religion's view of Jesus or the Bible's firsthand account, believe the Bible. Don't believe tall tales about Jesus. Believe the witness of the people who were there. Believe those who saw Jesus with their own eyes, heard him with their own ears, and wrote as the Holy Spirit directed them.

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Jesus died in Japan?

- It is said that after Jesus grew up in Galilee, he came to Japan. He returned to Galilee at age 33 and began preaching a heavenly kingdom: namely, Japan.
- When opposition arose, Jesus left Galilee and returned to the town of Shingo, near beautiful Lake Towada. Jesus' brother, Isukiri, was crucified instead of Jesus.
- Jesus became a rice farmer, married, and raised a family. He died at age 106 and was buried there. Souvenirs are for sale.

Ahmadiyya sect of Islam

- The Ahmadiyya sect of Islam says Jesus was crucified but did not die. He only swooned.
- Jesus revived in the cool tomb and was cured of his wounds by a special ointment.
- Jesus fled Palestine and journeyed toward India, to what is today Kashmir. He later died naturally of old age and was buried there.
- Jesus was also named Youza Asouph, and you can leave donations at his burial place.
- About 20 million people follow this view.

Islam: Jesus wasn't God, didn't die

- The Quran (600 years after the fact), says Jesus was born of a virgin, did amazing miracles, and was a great prophet.
- Jesus did not claim to be God's Son and was not crucified. God would not let his prophet suffer such pain and disgrace.
- Someone else—Judas—was made to look like Jesus and was crucified.
- Jesus went directly to heaven, and will return to judge the world and establish Islam.

Mormons: Risen Jesus came to Western Hemisphere

Hindu or Buddhist Jesus

- Many Hindu shrines and homes include an image of Jesus. Some Hindus fit Jesus to Hindu thinking and make him an avatar or one among the millions of Hindu gods.
- Some Buddhists, such as the Dalai Lama, see Jesus as a fully enlightened being or as a high-level bodhisattva whose aim was to share Buddhist enlightenment with others.

The Da Vinci Code

- Jesus married Mary Magdalene.
- Their descendants ruled France.
- Jesus was a prophet, not divine.
- Dan Brown claims this is based on ancient documents.
- Church leaders invented Jesus' deity and Trinity at the Council of Nicea in 325.
- Before that, "Jesus was viewed by his followers as a mortal prophet... a great and powerful man, but a *man* nonetheless."

Gospel of Mark

- The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (1:1).
- Evil spirits: "You are the Son of God." (3:11)
- The high priest asked, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" "I am," said Jesus. (14:61)
- "Surely this man was the Son of God." (15:39)
- These things were written a few decades after Jesus' resurrection; eyewitnesses were still alive. Jesus' deity was not invented in 325 at Nicea.

Gospel of John

- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. (1:1,14)
- "I and the Father are one." (10:30)
- "... you, a mere man, claim to be God." (10:33)
- "My Lord and my God." (20:28)
- These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (20:31).

Gospel of Judas

- Judas was a hero, not a traitor. Judas alone among the twelve disciples understood Jesus.
- Jesus secretly told Judas his real message: the physical world is evil, bodies are bad, and people have an inner divine self, which needs to escape the prison of the body to fulfill its divine destiny.
- Jesus told Judas to hand him over to die, to help him sacrifice his physical man and liberate the true spiritual self, the divine being within.
- Jesus did not die for our sins. He died to get rid of his body and humanity. His body did not rise. Bodies are bad! Resurrection would be tragedy.

Gnostic nonsense about Judas

- The Gospel of Judas was written by Gnostics about 150 years after Judas betrayed Jesus.
- It's like someone publishing *History of Booth* in 2015, claiming to have secret knowledge that 150 years earlier, in 1865 Lincoln privately asked John Wilkes Booth to shoot him.
- A Gnostic sect called Cainites made a hero of Cain, the murderer of Abel.
- What if publishers of *History of Booth* came from a group called the Arnoldites, devoted to Benedict Arnold as an American hero. Would anybody take such nonsense seriously?

Non-biblical stories about Jesus

- Some books were piously meant but were not God's Word. Infancy Gospel of Thomas offers childhood tales, without directly denying key doctrines.
 - The boy Jesus makes clay birds and causes them to fly (later mentioned in Quran).
 - A child hurts Jesus and is struck dead.
- Some books were heretical and denied central truths. Gospel of Judas teaches Gnostic heresy. So does Gospel of Thomas.

Adding new Scriptures

- **Muslims** added the Quran. Muslims say the writings of Moses, David, and Jesus were revealed by God. The Quran adds to biblical writings and "corrects" alleged corruptions that crept into the Bible over the years.
- **Roman Catholics** added the Apocrypha, holy tradition, and the pope's pronouncements.
- **Christian Scientists** added *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy.
- **Mormons** added the Book of Mormon.

Seventh Day Adventist declaration

We consider the biblical canon closed. However, we also believe, as did Ellen G White's contemporaries, that **her writings carry divine authority, both for godly living and for doctrine**. Therefore, we recommend:

- That as a church we seek the power of the Holy Spirit to apply to our lives more fully the inspired counsel contained in the writings of Ellen G White, and
- That we make increased efforts to publish and circulate these writings throughout the world.

Books from angels?

- **Book of Mormon** says God has a body and had sex with Mary. It teaches salvation by good behavior. It was written 1800 years after NT. Smith claimed he got it from the angel Moroni.
- **Quran**, written 600 years after NT, says Jesus was not God and did not die on the cross. Muhammad claimed he heard from the angel Gabriel.
- Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:8)
- Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. (2 Cor 11:14)

Satan the counterfeiter

- Jesus is such a gripping figure, and Satan is such a busy counterfeiter, that all sorts of stories exist about Jesus.
- The New Testament gospels emphasize:
 - Jesus as fully God while fully human.
 - Jesus' atoning death and victorious resurrection.
- Jesus' divine person and saving work are what we most need—and thus what Satan denies.

Hearing, seeing, touching

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—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. (1 John 1:1)

We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. (2 Peter 1:16)

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