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Books "Missing" From the Bible?

In recent times we have seen an explosion of material alleging that the Bible that we have is not complete. Many theories have been advanced that speak of all kinds of other books that were "banned" from the Bible, "taken out" of the Bible, and other such ideas, and that such was done by the Catholics in the fourth century. These ideas, which have been circulating for some time, have received renewed interest on account of the popularity of a book by Dan Brown (The Da Vinci Code), and the movie based on that book. There was also the unveiling of the discovery of the "lost" Gospel of Judas. Many reports, taking advantage of the popularity of this subject, have aired stories involving professors and some "authorities" from various denominations talking about these various books and calling into question the validity of the Bibles we possess. Perhaps you have heard something about these stories or read some of the information, or perhaps have seen the movie or the television shows. Maybe you are wondering: were there books taken out of the Bible? Can we trust the Bible?

Unfortunately, the subject matter at hand is rather obscure and most often left to the academic community, and involves a lot of names and people from days gone by. We will try to make some sense of this matter now.

We should first say that yes, there are books claiming to be gospels or letters of Apostles or other such works that were written in the second through fourth centuries. These books are not present in the Bible

It is important to note, however, exactly why these books are not present in the Bible. They are not present in the Bible, not because they were banned from it or taken out of it by some conspiring Catholics, but because they were not written by the Apostles, and more often than not, were written by a group of heretics called the Gnostics. The Gnostics were people who mixed Greek philosophy and Christianity and developed a religion unsuitable to either. On the Christian end, they were roundly condemned even in the New Testament on account of their denial that Jesus was really a man, that He really died, and that the God of the Old Testament is the one true God. We can read about such matters in II Timothy 2:16-18, John 1:1-18; I John 1:1; I John 4:2-3; and II John 1:7, where both Paul and John teach against the ideas that the resurrection was past and that Jesus was not born in the flesh, both concepts present in Gnosticism and featured in the various gospels and other works attributed to them. We can see why, then, the Gnostic writings were rejected.

These "missing" books were never really missing; we knew of their existence because the early Christians who opposed them would write about their beliefs and the books they were writing.

In the end, we must recognize that these books are not in the Bible because they have no right to be in the Bible. They were not written by inspired men, the majority of them were written by people who were trying to advance views contrary to those found in the New Testament, and they were rejected on the basis of sound deliberation, and rejected as soon as they were written. Let us not be disturbed in our faith because of these books, and we can be confident in the truth of the Bible.

- by Ethan L. Longhenry

Because It Is Right

Reward incentive motivation permeates our society. People respond to rewards just like little puppies do. Some parents think only in terms of rewarding their children, and, they even reward them for being bad. When a parent says to a little child, "If you will quit throwing a temper tantrum, we will go get an ice cream as soon we get away from the doctor's office," he is rewarding bad behavior and the child quickly understands how to get what he wants. The "in thing" now in many churches is to offer physical rewards for being religious. That ranges from the

"gospel of health and wealth" that says, "If you give \$100, God will give you \$1,000," to appealing to the fleshly appetites of entertainment to get people to come to "church."

Whatever happened to doing right because it is right? Surely, Jesus offers men rewards but those incentives have nothing to do with the sensual desires. In fact, he condemned those who followed him because they were fed -- "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life," (John 6:29). The reward for righteousness is eternal life with God. God expects right behavior, because he is holy and we must be like him to share in spiritual life (1 Peter 1:15-16).

Christians are committed to a way of life that is righteous, because it is the right way to live. Sometimes the righteous life may offer a material advantage but that isn't why the Christian lives that way. At other times, being righteous may be a difficult road and the righteous may be mocked and persecuted. The disciple of the Lord does right when people speak well of him and when they do not -- his motivation is doing right, because it is the right thing. to do.

- by Jim R. Everett

The 'Big Hammer' Mentality

We know a man whose mechanical abilities (by his own admission) lie somewhere between non-existent and totally inept. His wife says that he should have been born "before the industrial revolution". Ouch! On father's day, his family gave him a new hammer. His happy reaction was: "With a big enough hammer, you can fix anything!" Lots could be said about that, but let me simply say "Please don't let him work on my car!!"

I think that too often we may exhibit this 'big hammer mentality' when it comes to certain problems in the church. We sometimes think that hitting hard and quick will solve any problem. That's simply not true.

To justify our actions we turn to passages like Galatians 2 where Paul, in dealing with the Judaizing teachers "gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour" (vs. 5). Or when he withstood Peter "to the face, because he was to be blamed" (vs. 11). Please understand that certain situations demand this kind of quick and decisive action. Paul was clearly in the right when he responded immediately and forcefully in these instances. There are times when we will need to imitate his conduct.

But, do not forget that Paul was also "gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children" (1 Thess. 2:7). And he taught us to be "kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32).

Sometimes we need to use the 'big hammer' approach. But other situations require patience and a longsuffering nature. May God give us wisdom to know the difference.

- by Greg Gwin