



Warners Chapel Church of Christ

8999 Lasater Road
Clemmons, North Carolina 27012
Telephone 336-766-6078

Preacher: **Kevin V. Rutherford**

“The churches of Christ salute you” Rom. 16:16

A CORDIAL WELCOME AWAITS YOU

March 26, 2017

“THE SECRET GOSPELS”

Kevin V. Rutherford

One of the characters in *The Da Vinci Code* tells us “...almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false.” This statement summarizes a discussion in the book in which a Gnostic and pagan view of Christianity is presented. Pagans are those who worship idols and false gods. Gnostics are those who claimed a higher knowledge which led them to some anti-biblical conclusions about Jesus Christ and the flesh. It is the Gnostics that the apostle John is refuting in his Gospel account and epistles.

Dan Brown is the author of *The Da Vinci Code*. In his mystery novel he presents the view that Emperor Constantine came up with the Bible as we know it by including only those books which emphasize the deity of Christ. Mr. Brown has one of his major fictional characters tell us the true picture of Christ is not found in the four Gospels of the New Testament, but rather it is found in books that were written by the Gnostic heretics. Some of these heretical books are referred to as “The Lost Gospels,” or sometimes as “The Secret Gospels.”

THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS

A few of these “secret gospels” were found in Egypt in 1945. An ancient jar was uncovered near the village of Nag Hammadi. When the jar was broken open thirteen books containing over fifty manuscripts were found inside. These books are generally dated back to the fourth century, although at least one has been given a date as early as A.D. 150. Among these books was The Gospel of Thomas. This false gospel claims to have been written by the apostle Thomas, and is supposed to be a collection of the sayings of Jesus. Unlike the Gospels we find in the New Testament, The Gospel of Thomas portrays Jesus as little more than a wise teacher. It does not show Him to be the divine Son of God. This idea plays right into the hands of *The Da Vinci Code*, because Dan Brown’s book seeks to tell us that Jesus was nothing more than a man.

Also found in the jar at Nag Hammadi were the Gospel of Philip, The Gospel to the Egyptians, The Apocalypse of Paul, the Letter of Peter to Philip, The Thunder, Perfect Mind, and Testimony of Truth. These and other Gnostic writings make God out to be the enemy of truth. The book, *Cracking The Da Vinci Code*, by James Garlow and Peter Jones says these Gnostic writings belittle “...sexual distinctions, marriage, and motherhood (Garlow, 166).

THE GOSPEL OF MARY MAGDALA

Another of “The Lost Gospels” is entitled, The Gospel of Mary Magdala. This is an incomplete manuscript that was found in the 19th century. The manuscript has been dated back to the 5th century. This “gospel” indicates a special relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. Mary is pictured as a woman whom Jesus loved more than any of His other disciples. Also, we are told that Mary was given information the apostles were not given, and that she was to play a particularly important leadership role in the early church. This

(Continued on Page 2)

heretical gospel goes on to show that some of the apostles became angry with Mary because of her claims. Both the beginning and the end of the manuscript are missing so we don't have the full story. But a story it is, and a fictional one at that!

The Gospel of Mary Magdala also works well with the fiction found in *The Da Vinci Code*. Brown's book tells us that the true "holy grail" is Mary Magdalene. The story says that if one can find her tomb, he can find documents giving evidence that Christianity as we know it is a complete farce. In *The Da Vinci Code* Mary is said to be the container for the blood of Christ (the holy grail) in that she was pregnant with Jesus' child when forced to flee from the angry apostles.

THE TRUE PICTURE OF CHRIST

The question we must address is whether or not "The Secret Gospels" portray the true Christ and true Christianity. *The Da Vinci Code* claims that they do. However, the evidence proves otherwise.

Dan Brown wants us to believe that the gospels which picture Jesus as a mere man represent the original view of the church concerning Christ. He says Jesus was not considered to be divine until the Council of Nicea declared Him so in 325. He appeals to the Gnostic gospels as proof. However, the "gospels" written by the Gnostic heretics are dated to the second century and beyond while the four Gospels of the New Testament are all first century works. This shows us that the New Testament picture of Christ is the original Christian view.

The group who calls themselves "The Jesus Seminar" seeks to destroy faith in the New Testament account of the Gospel of Christ. They have put together a book entitled, *The Complete Gospels*, in which they translate and interpret the Gospels of the New Testament as well as the Gnostic "secret" gospels. Although the Jesus Seminar is an enemy of truth, they make some very candid admissions that are helpful in our study. For example, they admit that the secret gospels are "modified" and "embellished ...traditions about the teachings and deeds of Jesus (Miller, Introduction 3)." Further, they make it clear that most early churches were content to have a copy of "...one or more of the four major gospels (Miller, Introduction 3). And they admit that, "Unlike the canonical gospels, each of which is attested by hundreds of manuscripts, no complete copy of the Gospel of Mary exists (Miller 359)." We must ask ourselves why it is that the early churches were content with the Gospels of the New Testament, and why so many manuscripts of the same survived? The obvious answer is that the early church accepted Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, but rejected the Gnostic Gospels.

The Gospels of the New testament give us the accurate account of Christ and represent the true beliefs of the earliest Christians. This fact is made clear when we consider the writings of John. All of John's writings were circulating among the churches prior to the end of the century. Elaine Pagels is a well known modern day Gnostic, who is considered by many to be a significant scholar in the study of the secret gospels. In her book, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas*, Pagels writes, "What John opposed, as we shall see, includes what the Gospel of Thomas teaches... (Pagels, 34)" She could not have been more succinct and accurate in her comparison of the two. While some of the Gnostic gospels portray Christ as nothing more than a man, John makes it very clear in his writings that Christ is the very Son of God, and is therefore divine (Jno. 1:1-14; Jno. 3:16; Jno. 8:58). The apostle Paul does the same in his writings (Colossians 1:16, 17). Paul's writings were all written earlier than the Gnostic gospels.

CONCLUSION

The four Gospels of the New Testament represent the truth of the matter, while the secret gospels represent a perversion of the truth. They were written by those that John refers to as "antichrists" who "...went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us (1 Jno. 2:18, 19 -NKJV)." Concerning the heretical Gnostic writings, Eusebius says, "The type and phraseology differs from Apostolic style, and the opinion and tendency of their contents is widely dissonant from true orthodoxy and clearly shows that they are forgeries of heretics (Mattox, 106)."

F.W. Mattox wrote about the Gnostics of the past in his work, *The Eternal Kingdom*. Mattox says, "Many people were led astray by the Gnostics. Their ideas exerted great influence in the church. In meeting the threat of Gnosticism the Christians of that day had to distinguish very carefully between the genuinely inspired books and the forged works (Mattox, 75)." Now here we are in the 21st century finding that people are once again allowing themselves to be deceived by the wrings of the Gnostics. Once again we find Christians in the position of distinguishing between those books which are truly inspired of God and those which are "forgeries of heretics."

WORKS CITED

James L. Garlow and Peter Jones, *cracking Da Vinci's Code* (Victor: Colorado, 2004).

F.W. Mattox, *The Eternal Kingdom: A History of the Church of Christ* (Gospel Light Publishing Company: Delight, 1961).

Robert J. Miller, *The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version* (Polebridge Press Books: San Francisco, 1994).

Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* (Random House: New York, 2003).



OUR SICK Please Remember in Your Prayers

Please continue to keep Frank & Jane Shepard, Elwood Flinchum, Mary Tesh, Bob Plunk, Charlie Parker, Wayne & Cathy Hutchins, and Cannon & Shannon Harper in your prayers.

Jane Shepard's surgery has been postponed until April 5th to allow for further tests to be made due to a diagnosis of ALS. Please continue to pray for Jane and Frank. Jane had a cast put on her left lower leg this past Monday.

Charlie Parker is scheduled for heart ablation surgery on March 31st at the Baptist Hospital.

From the Huffs: keep the Nicklas Family in your prayers. Their 34 year old daughter, Kira, had an aneurism and was taken off life support this past Wed. The Nicklas family have been financially supporting us during our stay here.

Anthony Cruise's father had two stints put in this past Tuesday and came through the procedure well. He went home this past Wednesday. We thank God for the success.

Katerina Allen's co-worker has been diagnosed with cancer. It is treatable but she has a long road ahead. She is a wife and mother of two teenage sons.

**THE PRAYER LIST IS AVAILABLE ON
THE CREDENZA IN THE FOYER.**



SHUT-INS

Mildred Barker
Lutrelle Chipman
Di-Ann Moser

Dot Pegram
Eva Nelle Sidden

Please keep the shut-ins in your prayers and check the sign-up sheet to take communion to Dot Pegram if you are able. (sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board)



READ THE NEW TESTAMENT IN 2017

Mar. 27 - Luke 3	Mar. 31 - Luke 5:17-39
Mar. 28 - Luke 4:1-30	Apr. 1 - Luke 6:1-26
Mar. 29 - Luke 4:31-44	Apr. 2 - Luke 6:27-49
Mar. 30 - Luke 5:1-16	



WE ARE HAPPY TO HAVE YOU VISITING WITH US THIS MORNING. WE INVITE YOU TO RETURN THIS EVENING AT 6:00 P.M. FOR THE SUNDAY EVENING SERVICE AND AT 7:00 P.M. EACH WEDNESDAY EVENING FOR THE MID-WEEK BIBLE STUDY.

WARNERS CHAPEL EVENTS:

March 26 - Youth Group Sun. Evening Devo - 4:30 pm
Finger food.

March 26 - There will be a Deacons Mtg. this afternoon at 5 p.m. in the Annex.

March 28 - Sewing for Nicaragua from 9-12 a.m. in Annex.

March 30 - The 50 and Over Class will meet at 10:30 a.m. in the Annex.

May 20-21 - Senior Rally - Speaker: Melvin Sapp

June 18-21 - VBS - Theme: God's Team - Stories of God's Power. Sunday through Wednesday.

LOCAL EVENTS:

April 1 - Ladies Day at Lexington church of Christ
Sign-up sheet on bulletin board.

April 1 - Evangelism Workshop at Northwest church of Christ. 8:30-12 Noon. Sign-up sheet on bulletin board.

April 2-6 - 73rd Annual Carolina Lectureship hosted by the Plaza church of Christ in Sumter, SC.

See bulletin board for details

PLEASE ASSIST:

There is a sign-up sheet in the foyer for those who would like to help Frank & Jane with food. Please prepare enough food for one meal and deliver at lunch time. Meals are needed Mon., Wed., & Fri.'s. **No spicy foods or peppers.**

SOUTHWEST FOOD PANTRY

Delivered 110 items to the Southwest Food Pantry this past Thursday for a total of 654 items this year. You have been great this month, as always.

The suggested items for April are laundry detergent, hand dish washing liquid and bath soap.

The families that receive help, appreciate whatever you are able to do.

FOR THE RECORD

Sunday Bible Study - March 19, 2017	144
Sunday Worship Service	171
Contribution for March 19, 2017	\$10,232
Daily Adult Bible Readers:	44
Chapters Read:	596
Sunday Evening Worship Service	121
Wednesday Evening Bible Study 3-22-17	127

Lord's Day Appointments For April, 2017

Serving the Lord's Table For April:

Carl Cooper

Nathan Roy	Harry Picciuto
Rodney Brown	Mike Cooper
	Carolyn Plunk
	Roger Allen
	John Allen

Preparing Communion for April:

Making Announcements on Sunday:

Making Announcements on Wednesday:

Lord's Day Appointments - April 2, 2017

DEVOTIONS:	OPENING PRAYER:	SONG LEADER	SCRIPTURE READERS
Scripture - Rodney Brown	Morning - Shawn Thomason	A.M. - Gene Southern	A.M. - Daryl Cook
Song Leader - Wayne Allen	Evening - Alfred Huff	P.M. - Jason Allen	P.M. - Gene Southern
Prayer - Steve Martin		Wed. - Mark Roy	

Greeters for April:

Rodney and Teresa Brown

Opening and Closing Building

Sunday: - April 2 ~

Wednesday: - April 5 ~

Lord's Day Appointments - March 26, 2017

DEVOTIONS:	OPENING PRAYER:	SONG LEADER	SCRIPTURE READERS
Scripture - Justin Minor	Morning - Roger Allen	A.M. - Jason Allen	A.M. - Jacob Woodbury
Song Leader - Jason Allen	Evening - Jody Everett	P.M. - Nathan Roy	P.M. - Mark Clemmons
Prayer - Shawn Thomason		Wed. - Song Req. Service Gene and Jason	

Opening and Closing Building

Sunday: - March 26 ~ Mark Minor

Wednesday: - March 29 ~ Mark Minor

Greeters for March:

Richard & Karen Clemmons

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES - Nursery open for small children during all services.

SUNDAY:

Bible Classes 10:00 AM

Morning Worship 10:50 AM

Evening Worship 6:00 PM

WEDNESDAY: Mid-Week Service 7:00 PM

“GETTING TO KNOW YOUR BIBLE” at 10:30 p.m. each week night on Cable 8
SEARCH PROGRAM - Sunday Mornings at 7:30 a.m. on Cable 68

WARNERS CHAPEL CHURCH OF CHRIST
8999 LASATER ROAD
CLEMMONS, NC 27012

ELDERS

DEACONS

David Moore
Tim Allen
Joe Everett
Todd Hinson
Steve Tesh

Randy Warner
Keith Warner
Andy Santiago
Mark Minor
Jason Allen
Mike Cooper

Jody Everett
Gene Southern
Shawn Thomason
Mark Roy
Adam Warner
Jacob Woodbury