

INSIGHTS INTO THE LIFE OF CHRIST [Paul E. Engle 1/23]

Session #1 Can We Trust the Gnostic Gospels to Find the Real Jesus?

1. What are some pictures of Jesus in the media?
2. Famous businessman and politician: *"There is one fundamental question about which I often am asked. What do I believe about Jesus Christ? I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God and the savior of mankind."*
3. What do they believe?
4. Novelist Anne Rice set out on a search to discover the real Jesus. She began by researching what scholars were saying about Jesus and found it confusing. Why?

I. THE INFLUENCE AND ORIGIN OF THE Gnostic GOSPELS –

What happened at Starbucks?

A. The DaVinci code is just one of an influential collection of books, TV specials, and movies that have questioned and even attacked Christian beliefs about Jesus. Examples: Nikos Kazantzakis *The Last Temptation of Christ*; Hugh Schonfield *The Passover Plot*; John Allegro *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*; Morton Smith *The Secret Gospel*; Baigent, Lincoln, and Leigh *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*; Michael Baigent, *The Jesus Papers*.

B. Beginning of this alternative gospel trend:

1. What happened in Egypt in December 1945 near Nag Hammadi?

2. Department of antiquities reported: _____

3. The collection was called: _____

4. What is Gnosticism? The term comes from the Greek word _____

5. What do they believe" _____

6. What did the early church conclude about them? _____

II. CAN WE TRUST THE Gnostic GOSPELS?

A. In recent years the books of Elaine Pagals, Bart Ehrman, Dan Brown and others have renewed interest in Gnostic views. The Matrix, The DaVinci Code.

B. Dan Brown in The DaVinci Code claims that Roman Emperor Constantine created _____

1. It's true that many works about Jesus (now labeled gospels) circulated both in the first century and later. But Brown's claim is hardly serious history; the vast majority of Christians had been reading the four Gospels as Scripture since the _____ at least, as writings from _____ make clear. Church authorities did not wait until Constantine to sort out gospel pretenders.

2. We also have no evidence that 80 gospels ever existed.

3. Most of the so-called Gnostic gospels are nothing like the biblical gospels, with stories of the human Jesus. Rather, they are collections of his supposed revelations.

4. The NT canon in its current form was first formally attested in 367AD. What standards were used when *recognizing* (not determining) authentic Gospels:

- a. Authors of accepted writings needed _____
- b. Their teaching could not contradict _____
- c. Their documents must have been accepted by _____
- d. Church leaders considered _____ letters and reports were more credible than _____ documents.
- e. They prayed and trusted the Holy Spirit to guide their recognition.

5. The so-called Gnostic gospels (many discovered in just the 20th century), did not meet the above criteria:

- a. Many appeared _____ So they lacked _____ corroboration.
- b. Many were written by _____
- c. Their teaching contrasted with _____

CONCLUSION –

*Alert. Remember the girl in Starbucks. *Discerning: 1 John 4:1 “ *Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*”