

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."



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George L. Faull, Editor

The Gospel of Jesus' Wife

--By Terry Carter

In the May/June issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review*, there was a very interesting article by Hershel Shanks called "The Saga of 'The Gospel of Jesus' Wife'". It recounts the recent drama surrounding a papyrus fragment about the size of a business card dubbed "The Gospel of Jesus' Wife". This story was both interesting and informative. It illustrates a number of important lessons for us to keep in mind about scholarly claims. I will summarize the important part of the story below and follow this with a few lessons we can draw from it. The fragment itself is written in the Coptic language. It has eight partial lines on one side and six unreadable lines on the other. Why such a small fragment is considered so important? The answer has to do with the changing culture in which we live. Due to the claims of feminists and popular works like *The Da Vinci Code*, there is a lot of interest in whether Jesus was married. This fragment has Jesus saying the words, "my wife". If genuine, this would be the only ancient manuscript that has Jesus saying such a thing.

In September, 2012, Karen King presented a paper on this newly discovered manuscript fragment that had been given to her by an anonymous collector, along with some other papyrus fragments. The location where these fragments were supposedly found is not known. King is a professor at Harvard Divinity School and the chair of her department. *Newsweek* called her "an authority on women's roles in the early church". It is likely you have seen her if you have ever watched a documentary on *The Da Vinci Code*, women Bible times, etc. She has written books like *The Gospel of Mary Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle*, and *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism (Studies in Antiquity & Christianity)*. She is also a member of the notoriously liberal Jesus Seminar. King was convinced that this fragment was genuine and she believed it was from the fourth century. She believed it to be a copy of an original from the second century. To her credit, she did say that this "provides no reliable historical information" concerning whether Jesus was actually married. She said this only shows that some early Christians depicted Him as married and that this gives us insight into how they viewed human sexuality. This is exactly the discovery for which many had been waiting. To the feminists, this was an indication that women had an important place in the leadership of the

early church. To conspiracy theorists, it was evidence that the marriage of Jesus had been covered up by the Catholic Church. To liberals it was an indication that Jesus was merely a man and not God. However, to some scholars it was all a bit too convenient. They reasoned that if it was too good to be true, perhaps it was not true. It was just too much of a coincidence that a fragment appears at just the right time to shed light on one of the hottest topics of our times. Furthermore it just happened to come into the hands of someone who is on the front lines of this issue. As they say in the detective stories, "It was all just a bit too neat to believe".

One of the critics was a Coptic scholar from Brown University named Leo Depuydt. The *Harvard Theological Review* was all set to publish King's analysis in the January 2013 issue. But after Depuydt's declared it to be an obvious fraud they delayed its publication. He was very adamant that it was a terrible forgery and that there was not even any need for further analysis or testing to prove it. At this point the fragment was subjected to more testing and study. Two carbon-14 tests determined that the papyrus was from the eighth century, four centuries later than King has dated it. Of course, the age of the papyrus does not tell us when the writing on it was done. After all the additional tests and analysis were complete, King was convinced that it was ancient. However, Depuydt was unimpressed with the results and was still adamant that it was a fake.

Karen King updated her original article and *Harvard Theological Review* published it in April 2014 despite the questions surrounding the fragment's authenticity. However, they also published both Depuydt's objections and King's response to him. Meanwhile the Smithsonian Institution had made an hour long TV documentary about the fragment. They delayed airing it until King's article was published. However, just a short time after this, new evidence emerged that has convinced most scholars that the fragment is in fact a fraud. The anonymous collector who gave this fragment to King had also given her another fragment of the Gnostic Gospel of John, also written in Coptic. A Coptic scholar named Christian Askeland from Indiana Wesleyan University was studying this fragment when he discovered something interesting. He was familiar with an internet copy of the Codex Qau. This copy on the internet had a typo that was only found there. This fragment he was studying was simply a copy

of every other line of that internet copy of Codex Qau including the typo found only there. The fragment was clearly a modern fraud. But the Gospel of Jesus' Wife was written with the same hand and with the same instrument as this fraud. This leaves no room for any doubt that the Gospel of Jesus' Wife is also a modern fraud. It is not from the fourth century or even the eighth century. It is not a copy of an original from the second century. In short, everything King believed about this fragment was simply not true. Unfortunately I still see the Gospel of Jesus' Wife referred to as though it is valid evidence that Jesus was married.

What lessons can we learn from this whole story?

1. Just because somebody is considered a scholar does not mean they are always right.
2. This is especially true when they have a personal agenda involved in their findings.
3. Even the top academic people can be fooled into accepting what seems to be evidence of what they want to believe is true.
4. The faculties of Ivy League schools, with big reputations, do not necessarily know more than the faculty from smaller less prestigious schools about any particular question.
5. Even the most sophisticated tests of technology can give flawed results when not applied properly.
6. We should never let our faith be shaken by what the scholars so confidently affirm.
7. Many conclusions of scholars are based on assumptions, many of which are not stated when they present their opinions.
8. Even known frauds tend to die hard when they feed into what many want to believe.
9. If the experts can be so wrong about such relatively recent history, why do we blindly accept their conclusions about the origins of man, the earth, and the universe?
10. If we did this poorly about one or two thousand years ago, why are we so confident about tens of thousands, millions, or billions of years ago?

Dear Brother Faull,

I heard a TV evangelist quote **Isaiah 53:4-5** claiming that Jesus' redemption is two-fold and therefore Christians should never be sick or diseased as His work on the cross heals us of all our sicknesses. Do you agree?

ANSWER:

Of course not!! Though the passage is Messianic and does refer to Jesus, it must be looked at carefully. Let's look at **Isaiah 53:4**, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." (KJV)

When was this fulfilled? **Matthew 8:16-17**, "16 When evening came, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a

word, and healed all who were ill. 17 *This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: "He Himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases."* (NASB)

Matthew shows that this refers to Christ's earthly healing ministry **before the cross**. He Himself bore the sicknesses that He was healing. After all, we are told that He felt power, or virtue, go out of Him when the woman touched His garment. This, too, was before the cross. **Luke 8:46** But what did the Jews think of Him? "Yet we ourselves esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." (NASB) Wycliffe's version has it, "We reckoned him like a leper and struck by God and abased or made low."

So in His healing ministry He was bearing their sicknesses, pain, and diseases. They thought Him being plagued of God. However, in verse 5 He is not predicting what He did on the cross for our physical sicknesses, but rather with our sin sickness.

Peter interprets **Isaiah 53:6-7**, "6 All we like sheep have **gone astray**; we have **turned every one to his own way**; and the LORD hath laid on him **the iniquity of us all**. 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."

Peter makes plain of which healing He speaks. **1 Peter 2:24-25**, "24 Who his own self bare our **sins** in his own body **on the tree**, that we, being dead **to sins**, should live **unto righteousness**: by whose stripes ye were healed. 25 For ye were as sheep **going astray**; but are **now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls**."

So **Isaiah 53:4** is interpreted by **Matthew 8:15-17** to refer to His ministry **before** His death. But **Isaiah 53:5-12** is interpreted by **1 Peter 2:24-25** which speaks of **His work on the cross** in healing our souls. Note Isaiah speaks of our iniquities (vs 5-6), transgressions (vs 8), sin (vs 10), iniquities (vs 11), sin (vs 12) and making intercession for the **transgressors**. To infer that all sick people lack faith in Christ, or are at odds with God, or should lack the security of salvation because they're sick, is ludicrous.

The Book of Acts and the epistles show many New Testament saints sick, afflicted, or having physical ailments. Those who tell people they need to repent to be healed error greatly. They totally ignore God's rebuke of Job's friends for assuming his sickness was for personal sin. We must not judge men's souls by the physical affliction of their bodies. Many glorify God by their very afflictions. **2 Corinthians 12:9-10**, "9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, **that the power of Christ may rest upon me**."

10 Therefore **I take pleasure in infirmities**, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

Ironically the very propagators of the doctrine like A. A. Allen, Hobart Freeman, Kenneth Hagin, Katherine Khulman, Ameer Simple McPherson, John Wimber, R. W. Schambach, and Frederick Price have themselves or close family members who suffered some of the worst of sickness and even some died from their sickness.

The world mocks Christ when faith healers preach the wealth and health gospel and then end up like all other mortal men. This verse should never be quoted to prove the saved are healed physically by Christ's death for our sins. It is a shame some suffering old saint fears damnation of their soul because of their sickness!!!

The Irrationality of Calvinism

--By Terry Carter

The following quotes are from the book *The Five Points of Calvinism* by Edwin H. Palmer. Edwin Palmer was the Executive Secretary of the NIV and General Editor of the NIV Study Bible. He was a very strong Calvinist. The following quotes from his book demonstrate that as a strong defender of Calvinism, he was honest enough to admit that it is an irrational and contradictory belief system. His statements speak for themselves.

"By way of anticipation, it should be pointed out that the Calvinist keeps both God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, even though he cannot rationally reconcile the two." (Page 35)

"Contrary to what most people think, the Calvinist teaches that man is free – one hundred percent free – free to do exactly what he wants...And just because man is free, man is a slave...In other words, the Christian does not have free will." (Pages 35-36)

"Here we stand before a fundamental mystery. On the one hand, the Bible teaches that God intends that salvation will be for only certain people. On the other hand, the Bible unequivocally declares that God freely and sincerely offers salvation to everyone...Peter writes with unmistakable clarity that the Lord is 'Longsuffering toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance' (II Peter 3:9)...Here we come again to that fundamental problem of God...To man it seems impossible to reconcile both truths. They seem to contradict each other." (Page 51)

"Although it is true that none would be saved were it not for the irresistible grace of God, no one may ever fall into the rationalistic trap of saying that he has nothing to do...The Bible never allows that. It comes with only one command: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ...So believe. God commands you to. But if you do, thank God for causing you to do so." (Page 66)

"It is even Biblical to say that God has foreordained sin. If sin was outside the plan of God, then not a single important affair of life would be ruled by God." (Page 82)

"In other words, God made it absolutely certain that Joseph's brothers would sin; yet He did it in such a way that the brothers and not God are to blame...In other words, sin is ordained by God." (Page 83)

"But if anyone has really been thinking, he has probably raised a serious objection many times...For, where is God's holiness? If He ordained the sin of Joseph's brothers and the sin of Judas, how can any rational person say that God is holy? Isn't God to blame?" (Pages 83-84)

"He correctly sees the problem: reconciling the two opposing forces of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility...He reasons that he cannot logically reconcile these two apparently contradictory facts. So he holds to one set of facts and denies the other. He holds to man's freedom and restricts God's sovereignty. In this way, he has no rational problem. The contradiction dissolves." (Page 84)

"...the Calvinists accept both sides of the antimony. He realizes that what he advocates is ridiculous. It is simply impossible for man to harmonize these two sets of data. To say on one hand that God has made certain all that ever happens, and yet to say that man is responsible for what he does? Nonsense! It must be one or the other, but not both. To say that God foreordains the sin of Judas, and yet Judas is to blame? Foolishness! Logically the author of *The Predestined Thief* was right. God cannot foreordain the theft and then blame the thief. And the Calvinist freely admits that his position is illogical, ridiculous, nonsensical, and foolish...The Calvinist holds to two apparently contradictory positions. He says on one hand, God has ordained all things. Then he turns around and says to every man, 'Your salvation is up to you. You must believe. It is your duty and responsibility. And if you don't, you cannot blame God. You must only blame yourself'." (Page 85)

"In the face of all logic, the Calvinist says that if a man does anything good, God gets all the glory; and if man does anything bad, man gets all the blame. Man can't win. To many people such a position seems foolish. It seems unreasonable...he [the Calvinist] accepts this paradox of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. He cannot reconcile the two; but...he accepts both." (Pages 85-86)

"...although sanctification is a gift of God, and it is God who works in us to do good things, nevertheless, it is our responsibility to use the means of grace, and not wait for God to move us." (Page 87)

"It's up to you. But if you do believe, than (sic) thank God for making you want to believe." (Page 93)

“Many Christians...cannot bear to think that God has ordained sin. It sounds nonsensical, especially... [since] ...God is holy and the antithesis of sin...This does not make sense...” (Page 97)

“To say it another way, God willingly permits sin...In the final analysis, we cannot really understand...We may not be able to reconcile these two theses.” (Page 99)

“Although all things – unbelief and sin included – proceed from God’s eternal decree, man is still to blame for his sins. He is guilty; it is his fault, not God’s.” (Page 106)

“As Calvin said, ‘Although God and the devil will the same thing, they do so in an entirely different manner.’” (Page 106)

“How [says the non-Calvinist] can you read it other than as a total contradiction, a yes and no on the same point? The question that is being asked is not: What does the Bible say? But rather: What can my finite reason understand? What is contradictory and what is not?” (Page 107)

“John Murray takes the same humble [I, Terry, say irrational] attitude...even though to his mind there is a contradiction...it cannot be gainsaid that God decretively [ultimately] forbids what he perceptively [directly] commands...If I am not mistaken, it is at this point that the sovereignty of God makes the human mind reel as it does nowhere else in connection with this topic.” (Pages 108-109)

Now consider some statements by Robert A. Peterson and Michael D. Williams from their book, “Why I am not an Arminian”.

“Notice that sovereignty and freedom don’t cancel each other out...Rather, in a way that we cannot fully comprehend, God is absolutely in control, and we are genuinely responsible.” (Page 64)

“God does not save all sinners, for ultimately he does not intend to save all of them. The gift of faith is necessary for salvation, yet for reasons beyond our ken, the gift of faith has not been given to all.” (Page 128)

“Yet people cannot be saved without God’s powerful work in them. God wants all to hear the gospel, but he intends to save only some. Why that is the case, we do not know.” (Page 129)

“Scripture constrains us to say that God is not the cause of sin, yet somehow, in ways we cannot fathom, His sovereign plan includes the sinful acts of human beings. ‘To put it bluntly,’ writes Carson, ‘God stands behind evil in such a way that not even evil takes place outside the bounds of his sovereignty, yet evil is not morally chargeable to him.’ Exactly how God relates to the sinful behaviors of human beings we do not know...We do not

know how it is that God sovereignly directs and ordains our freely chosen paths and, yes, our sinful acts as well as the good that we do.” (Pages 160-161)

“For reasons known only to God, He has not chosen to save all human beings.” (Page 190)

*“But **John 3:16-17** teaches that God loves all sinners, a truth unfortunately not endorsed by all Calvinists...When asked how we reconcile these passages with those that teach God’s special love for the elect, we admit that our theology contains rough edges. But we would rather have an imperfect theology and be faithful to the whole witness of Scripture than to mute the voice of some texts as Calvinists have sometimes done...Furthermore, we do not regard this problem as insoluble for the mind of God...But we admit that our present state of knowledge prohibits us from explaining how God can love all persons savingly in the one sense and only love some savingly in another sense.” (Pages 211-213)*

“We also affirmed that the Bible teaches two seemingly contradictory, but ultimately complementary truths (1) God loves a sinful world, and (2) he has a special effective love only for the elect. Only by affirming these two truths simultaneously do we do justice to scriptural teaching.” (Page 214)

Interestingly, Palmer has the following, somewhat inconsistent, things to say about logic and the Bible.

“And sometimes logic – to the dismay of some Biblicists - has to be used. But there is nothing wrong with using logic if we do it properly.” (Page 109)

“The temptation is to accept only what our logic approves rather than what the Bible teaches.” (Page 111)

Palmer repeatedly presents a false dichotomy as though we must choose between what is logical and rational or what the Bible teaches. This, in reality, is a claim that the Bible is irrational, illogical, and contradictory. At the same time it is an admission that Calvinism is illogical, irrational, and contradictory. Yet, Peterson and Williams admit that a doctrine needs to pass the logic test as well as the Biblical test.

“To be true, a doctrine must pass not only a test of logical coherence but also a test of empirical fit with the Bible’s data.” (Page 202)

The real choice is not between logic and Scripture, but between an irrational theology and the truth of what the Bible teaches. God is not irrational, illogical, or contradictory, nor is He the author of confusion. “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.”

--I Corinthians 14:33

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