



Is *The Da Vinci Code* On To Something?

The book “The Da Vinci Code” raises several interesting questions:

Q: Can we trust the Scriptures? Were other authentic gospels left out?

Da Vinci Code: *“The Bible is a product of man, my dear, not of God. History has never had a definitive version of the Book. The Bible as we know it today was collated by the pagan Roman Emperor Constantine the Great in 325 A.D.”*

Fact: In the first century, people were living in an oral culture. The literacy rate was about _____%. Over time, stories of eyewitnesses were written down. Other documents about Jesus were also written much later. Some are *Gnostic* gospels. Gnosticism emphasized secrets and concealed information.

The question arose: Which documents are reliable? Which should go into the “canon” (Canon: “_____”)

Three criteria to evaluate documents about Jesus:

1. Does this document have roots to one of the Apostles?
2. Is this document consistent with the teaching of Jesus?
3. Has this document had widespread influence and continuous acceptance by Christians?

“The four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, are the only undisputed gospels in the whole church of God throughout the world.” -Origen, ca. 200

Q: Is it true nobody believed Jesus was divine until 300 years after his death?

Da Vinci Code: *“At Council of Nicaea, the Emperor led the bishops to declare Jesus as the Son of God by a vote. □A relatively close vote at that.”*

Fact: The real Council of Nicaea adopted a creed to reject the heretical teachings of Arius. □It did not “invent” the divinity of Jesus. □ This was already the declaration of the Church. □A close vote? □Only two □out of over 300 bishops failed to sign the creed. □Not exactly a cliff-hanger.

The Da Vinci Code: *“Until 325 AD, Jesus was viewed by his followers as a mortal prophet, a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless—a mortal.”*

Fact: The Gnostic gospels present Jesus as far less human than the canonical gospels.

Fact: The deity of Jesus was taught in his lifetime and believed by his earliest followers.

“For in Christ all the fullness of God lives in bodily form.” Col. 2:9

Jesus: *“Who do you say that I am?”* Peter replied, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* Jesus said, *“Blessed are you, Simon Peter...”* Matthew 16: 15-17

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . and the Word became flesh and lived among us.” John 1:1-14

Q: Was Christianity an attempt by men to gain control over women? Are the gnostic gospels the feminist answer to male chauvinist Christianity?

The Da Vinci Code: *“The Church... had subjugated women, banished the Goddess... and forbidden the pagan reverence for the sacred feminine.”*

Fact: Gnostic texts were not what we would call feminist. The Bible, though, was revolutionary:

“Jesus traveled about... proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod’s household, Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.” Luke 8: 1-3

*“There is now neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you **are all one in Christ Jesus.**”* Galatians 3:28

“It is highly likely that women were a clear majority in the early church.” -Robin Fox

“The resurrection rests on tales of hysterical females.” -Ancient Roman writer Celsus

Q: Is *The Da Vinci Code* good history?

The Da Vinci Code: *“Fortunately for historians, some of the gospels Constantine attempted to eradicate (like the Gnostic gospels) managed to survive. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the 1950’s hidden in a cave near Qumran in the Judean desert.”*

“Patently inaccurate: In his own lifetime Jesus ‘inspired millions to better lives’ (p.231); there were ‘more than 80 gospels’ (p.231); ‘the earliest Christian records’ were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (pp.234, 245); the Nag Hammadi texts ‘speak of Christ... in very human terms’ (p.234); the marriage of Mary Magdalene and Jesus is ‘a matter of historical record’ (p.244); Constantine invented the divinity of Jesus and excluded all gospels but four; Constantine made Christianity ‘the official religion’ of the Empire (p.232); Constantine coined the term ‘heretic’ (p.234); ‘Rome’s official religion was sun worship’ (p.232). There are more.” -Margaret Mitchell, Chair, Dept. of Early Christian Lit., University of Chicago .

“From the very first day, we were there taking it all in. We heard it with our own ears, saw it with our own eyes and verified it with our own hands... We saw it, we heard it, now we’re telling you so that you can experience it along with us—this experience of communion with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.” (1 John 1: 1-3 MSG)

Research Notes

I’m indebted to John Ortberg of Menlo Park Presbyterian Church for many of the message ideas.

Reliable web links:

<http://www.crisismagazine.com/september2003/feature1.htm>

<http://www.explorefaith.org/daVinci/1.html>

http://marty-center.uchicago.edu/sightings/archive_2003/0924.shtml

http://www.beliefnet.com/story/135/story_13520_1.html

<http://www.crosswalk.com/news/weblogs/mohler/?adate=7/29/2003>

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/newsletter/2003/nov7.html>

Books

Cracking Da Vinci’s Code, James L. Garlow & Peter Jones

Breaking the Da Vinci Code: Answers to the Questions Everybody’s Asking, Darrell L. Bock

The Truth Behind the Da Vinci Code, Richard Abanes

Daily Meditations

Here's a chance to spend some time each day this week meditating on today's topic!

This week's memory verse:

"The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.'" Matt. 28:5,6a

Monday

Read Matthew 12:39-40; Matt. 16:21, and Mark 9:10. Why do you think Jesus spoke more clearly to the disciples about His death and resurrection than He did to the crowds?

Why do you think the disciples responded the way they did?

Today ask God for child-like faith that takes Him at His word. Think of a promise of God you can claim today!

Tuesday

Read Matt. 27:57-66. Some say Jesus merely "swooned" on the cross only to be revived by the cool tomb. In these verses, what are some of the listed obstacles that Jesus would have had to overcome in his weakened state?

Wednesday

Read Isaiah 53. List the prophecies in this chapter about Jesus:

These predictions are so eery that years ago some suggested this chapter was a Christian addition to the Old Testament after the death of Jesus. But archaeologists have discovered manuscripts of this very chapter in Dead Sea Scrolls dating from long before the birth of Christ!

Today, thank God for His power demonstrated conclusively in passages like this.

Thursday

Read Psalm 22. I believe that when Jesus called out "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" on the cross, He was deliberately referring to this Psalm. In those days the Psalms were not numbered; they were known by their first line, which served as a title. Look this Psalm over... how many prophecies can you spot?

Does this Psalm help you understand some of what Jesus must have been feeling?

Again, thank God that He knows the details of our lives centuries before they ever occur! Ask Him to help you rest in His control. If you haven't done it yet, make it personal-- ask Jesus to be your Savior from sin and the Lord of your life.

Friday

Read 1 Peter 1:16-19. His life was changed by an encounter with the risen Jesus-- as our lives can be changed today. Do you know someone who seems to have met Jesus supernaturally and is now living a changed life?

What do changed lives prove?

Today, ask the Lord to renew your own enthusiasm for Jesus and the way He has changed your own life!

Saturday

Today please finish any meditations you might have missed, and please pray for the services this weekend. Ask the Lord to bring back to the church this weekend people who need to hear the message that God is true-- and truly loves them! Thanks!!