

The DaVinci Code: Faith, Fact, or Fiction?

“Was The Bible Edited to Make Jesus Appear Divine?”

John 10:30-33 – April 23, 2006

Overview of Our Study

Date	Message Title
April 16	Did a Council Vote on Which Books to Include in the Bible? (Merrell Ctr 10:00 am)
April 23	Was the Bible Edited to Make Jesus Appear Divine? (Grace Fellowship 9:00 or 10:45am)
April 30	Did Jesus and Mary Magdalene Marry and Have Children? (Grace Fellowship 9 or 10:45)
May 7	Is The Church in a Conspiracy to Hide the Sacred Feminine? (Grace Fellowship 9 or 10:45)

Why We Are Doing This Study (1 Peter 3:15)

Some of the Claims of Dan Brown’s *The DaVinci Code*

- “Fact: All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate.” (p.1)
- “At the (Council of Nicaea), many aspects of Christianity were debated and voted upon – the date of Easter, the role of the bishops, the administration of the sacraments, and, of course, the divinity of Jesus.... Until that moment in history, Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet... a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless. A mortal. Not the Son of God? Right... Jesus’ establishment as ‘the Son of God’ was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea. Hold on. You’re saying Jesus’ divinity was the result of a vote? A relatively close vote at that.... By officially endorsing Jesus as the Son of God, Constantine turned Jesus into a deity who existed beyond the scope of the human world, an entity whose power was unchallengeable.... It was all about power... Christ as Messiah was critical to the functioning of the Church and state. Many scholars claim that the early Church literally stole Jesus from His original followers, hijacking His human message, shrouding it in an impenetrable cloak of divinity, and using it to expand their own power.” (p.233)
- “Because Constantine upgraded Jesus’ status almost four centuries after Jesus’ death, thousands of documents already existed chronicling His life as a mortal man. To rewrite the history books, Constantine knew he would need a bold stroke. From this sprang the most profound moment in Christian history.... Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ’s human traits and embellished those gospels that made Him godlike. The earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned.... Anyone who chose the forbidden gospels over Constantine’s version was deemed a heretic.... Fortunately for historians, some of the gospels that Constantine attempted to eradicate managed to survive. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the 1950s hidden in a cave near Qumran in the Judean desert. And, of course, the Coptic Scrolls in 1945 at Nag Hammadi.” (p.234)
- “Historians still marvel at the brilliance with which Constantine converted the sun-worshipping pagans to Christianity. By fusing pagan symbols, dates, and rituals into the growing Christian tradition, he created a kind of hybrid religion that was acceptable to both parties.... Nothing in Christianity is original. The pre-Christian God Mithras – called the Son of God and the Light of the World – was born on December 25, died, was buried in a rock tomb, and then resurrected in three days. By the way, December 25 is also the birthday of Osiris, Adonis, Dionysus. The newborn Krishna was presented with gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” (p.232)

Issue #1: The Council of Nicaea

- Fiction: The Council of Nicaea introduced the idea of the divinity of Christ and voted on it – “a relatively close vote at that” (Brown, p.233).
- Fact: The divinity of Christ was claimed by Christ Himself and was taught by the original apostles long before Nicaea. The Council of Nicaea (AD325) merely affirmed and defended what the apostles/Bible had claimed for 300 years. Specifically, the council was refuting what a man by the name of Arius was claiming about the wording of the divinity of Christ.
 - Arius was claiming that Jesus was divine, but not God, and that Jesus was a created

being – that Jesus was not of one substance with the Father.

- Constantine called a council of bishops to resolve this issue and to make a summary statement of what the Scriptures said.
- Result was The Nicene Creed – 316 bishops signed the creed; 2 bishops did not.
- Nicaea did not discuss which books to include in the Bible (see the 20 Canons issued by the Council at Nicaea at <http://www.csun.edu/~hcfl1004/nicaea.html>)

- Sources for this section: Curtis, Lang, Petersen, The 100 Most Important Events in Christian History, Revell, 1991, pp.34-36; Erwin Lutzer, The DaVinci Deception, Tyndale, 2004, pp. 13-16; Ben Witherington, The Gospel Code, IVP, 2004, pp. 53-66.

Issue #2: What Jesus and His Apostles Said About His Divinity

- Jesus possesses attributes which only God has
 1. Eternal
 - **John 1:1** - *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*
 - **John 8:58** - *"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"*
 - **John 17:5** - *And now, Father, glorify Me in your presence with the glory I had with You before the world began.*
 2. Omnipresence
 - **Matthew 18:20** – *Jesus said, "For where two or three come together in My name, there am I with them."*
 - **Matthew 28:20** – *Jesus said, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*
 - Christ’s claims to indwell every believer requires omnipresence (John 14:23; Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 1:27; Revelation 3:20)
 3. Omniscience
 - Matthew 16:21 – He knew ahead of time how He would die
 - Luke 6:8; 11:17 – He knew what everyone in the room was thinking
 - John 4:29 – He knew everything about the Samaritan woman’s life
 4. Omnipotence
 - **Matthew 28:18** - *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me."*
 - Mark 5:11-15 – Demons obeyed Him
 - John 11:38-44 – He raised Lazarus from the dead
 5. Immutability
 - **Hebrews 13:8** - *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*
- Jesus performs works which only God can do
 1. He forgets sin
 - **Mark 2:5-7** - *When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." 6 Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 7 "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"*
 2. He gives life
 - **John 5:21** – *Jesus said, "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom He is pleased to give it."*
 3. He raises people from the dead (John 11:43)
 4. He will judge all people
 - **John 5:22** – *Jesus said, "Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son...."*
 5. He created the universe
 - **Colossians 1:16** - *For by (Christ) all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or*

authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him.

6. He sustains _____ the universe
 - o **Colossians 1:17** - He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.
 - o **Hebrews 1:3** - The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word.
- Jesus was given and claimed the names and titles of Deity
 1. “_Son of God_____” (John 5:25; 5:19; 10:36; Matthew 26:63-64)
 2. “_Lord” and “_God” (Luke 1:76; Romans 10:9,13; John 1:1; 20:28; Hebrews 1:8,10; Matthew 22:43-45; Titus 2:13; Revelation 19:16)
 3. “_____” (Exodus 3:13-14)
 - o **John 6:35** - I am the bread of life.
 - o **John 8:12** - I am the light of the world.
 - o **John 10:7,9** - I am the gate for the sheep.
 - o **John 10:14** - I am the good shepherd.
 - o **John 11:25** - I am the resurrection and the life.
 - o **John 14:6** - I am the way and the truth and the life.
 - o **John 15:1,5** - I am the true vine.
- Jesus allowed people to worship_____ Him (John 9:38; Matt 21:9-16; 28:17; John 5:23; 2 Corinth 13:14; 2 Timothy 4:18; Phil 2:10) and Scripture is clear that only God is to be worshipped (Deut. 6:13; 10:20; Matt. 4:10; Acts 10:25-26)
- Jesus claimed to be God (all of the above Scriptures plus John 10:30-33)
- The Trilemma

- Application: If He is God, then He is Lord and deserves to be Lord of our lives. Will I allow Him to be Lord of...
 - My life
 - My marriage
 - My family
 - My work
 - My sexuality
 - My finances
 - My decisions
 - My church

What does it mean for Someone to be Lord/King over me? It means He owns everything (I am merely a steward). It means I will give Him my allegiance, respect, and homage. It means I will do whatever He says. It means I am protected, safe, and provided for. I am secure in Him/under Him.

Issue #3: Did Constantine Confiscate, Ban, and Burn “Other Gospels” That Showed Jesus Was Not Divine?

- No_____! [Curtis’ *The 100 Most Important Events in Christian History*, pp.32-34; Strobel/Poole *Exploring the DaVinci Code*, pp.24-25; Witherington’s *The Gospel Code*, pp.62-65.]
- Why were these “other gospels” not included in the Bible? (last week)
 1. They were not written by the apostles – eye witnesses of the resurrected Christ
 2. They were not accepted by the early Church – those closest in time to Jesus and apostles – as authoritative
 3. Their content was not consistent with the apostolic faith/teaching.
- Some specific examples

<i>Book</i>	<i>Date Written</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Authority Accepted</i>	<i>Strange Teaching</i>
Gospel of Mary Magdalene	180AD	Gnostics	No	Peter jealous of Mary; all is one (pantheism)
Gospel of Phillip	250AD	Gnostics	No	Denies Mary conceived Jesus by the Holy Spirit; world by mistake; It is proper to destroy the flesh
Gospel of Thomas	150AD	Gnostics	No	Called “secret sayings” Quote about Mary M
Gospel of Judas	170AD	Gnostics	No	“secret account”; Jesus tells Judas to betray Him; goddess Sophia

- The canon is closed_____: “Even if a letter of Paul were discovered, it would not be canonical. After all, Paul must have written many letters during his lifetime in addition to the ones that are in the NT; yet the church did not include them in the canon. Not everything an apostle wrote was inspired, for it was not the writer who was inspired but his writings, and not necessarily all of them.” (Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p.106.) (See also Revelation 22:18-19)

Application: Because Christ is Lord, I Will...

- Invite Jesus Christ into my life* (and tell someone I have done this)
- Get baptized* – next immersion baptism is Sunday, April 30, 4pm. Contact Joe Peeler at 281-646-1903 x.117 to get scheduled for this baptism.
- Make Christ Lord of my life* (see earlier application)
- Share my faith* – Use this season of the DaVinci Code as an opportunity to dialogue with my unchurched friends/neighbors/relatives about God, Jesus Christ, Bible
- Get more equipped on DaVinci:* Jim Garlow’s *Cracking DaVinci’s Code*; Darrell Bock’s *Breaking the DaVinci Code*; Erwin Lutzer’s *The DaVinci Deception*; Strobel/Poole’s *Discussing the DaVinci Code* (DVD)

Discussion Questions with Family, Friends, and Small Group

1. What is your understanding on why the Council of Nicaea was called and what happened there? How do you know who to believe about all of that?
2. Of all the Scriptures presented, which ones most convince you that Jesus Christ and His apostles claimed that He was God? (Look up some of these Scriptures and discuss them.)
3. If He is Lord, then what does it look like for Him to be Lord of your life? What is a tangible action step for you to make Him Lord of your life? To follow Him as Lord?
4. Why weren’t these “other gospels” included in the Bible? Do you think that was the right decision? Why? Do you believe that the canon is closed? What are the implications of that?
5. What is the next action step for you? What is your application?