

Text: II Peter 1:16-18

Title: “Cracking the Da Vinci Code” Pt.3

INTRODUCTION

I’ve enjoyed hearing your comments and responses to this series of messages entitled “Cracking the Da Vinci Code.” If this is your first time to be with us, I’m preaching this series in response to the Dan’s Brown book, “The Da Vinci Code” which was published in 2003, and estimates are that around 30 million books have been sold, and 100 million people have read the book. The movie, directed by Ron Howard (Opie from “The Andy Griffith Show”) and starring Tom Hanks, will be released in a couple of weeks.

The problem with all this is that “The Da Vinci Code,” in spite of the fact that it is found in the fiction section of the book store, contains some forcefully-made assertions about the faith upon which most of us here have built our lives. It calls into question the authenticity of the Bible, and, as we are going to talk about today, it asserts that Jesus Christ was not really God.

Now if there were just an isolated book or movie, it wouldn’t be that big of a deal. But the fact is that this is one of many books being written today, asserting that the message that the Church has preached for 2000 years is wrong. That the real Christian message ... that Jesus was just a man, and that in fact, he was married to Mary Magdalene ... was hidden away. And now scholars, set on reconstructing history, have rediscovered these writings. And they think they’re doing the world a great service by bringing out the truth that has been hidden for 2000 years.

Now I know that many of you may respond to all this by saying, “Well, I know what I believe. I believe the Bible is God’s Word. I believe Jesus is God’s Son. I’m saved, and that’s all that matters to me.” Fine. But if you’re a disciple of Jesus Christ who is committed to obeying Jesus and being a witness for Him, you must know that the people to whom you are witnessing, your children and grandchildren going off to college, your neighbors and friends, will all be assaulted by these false teachings. And if you are to do what Peter says in I Peter 3:15 and to ...

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...”

Then you need to think carefully about these things.

Now, one of the great issues raised by “The Da Vinci Code” has to do with the claims of Jesus’ deity. Turn with me once again to II Peter 1:16. We’ve looked to this passage of Scripture to guide us in our response to assaults on the truth.

2 Peter 1:16-18 - We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” 18 We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

Now Peter is talking about the second coming of Jesus Christ, but this holds true of Peter's complete testimony about Jesus Christ. For three years Peter was one of Jesus' closest companions, and was designated by Jesus as the leader of the apostles. He was an eyewitness to the things that Jesus did and taught. And so when he went about giving his witness for Jesus ...

v.16 - We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

And over the past two weeks have established the reliability of the witness of the NT as an accurate record of all that Jesus did and taught, and what He wanted to be passed on to us.

Now one of those primary truths that is communicated by the NT is that Jesus Christ was not just a man; He was God. God's very own Son, Jesus Christ, possessed all the fullness of Godhead in a human body.

And Peter is one of those eyewitnesses to this. Jesus took Peter, along with James and John, up on a high mountain and allowed them to witness what has been called "the transfiguration."

On the mountain that day Jesus was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

Remember that Peter, who always had to be saying something, said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

But while he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. Then Jesus came over and touched them, and said "Get up. "Don't be afraid." They looked up and saw no one except Jesus.

And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

Now Peter is being faithful here in his letter to do that. And in doing so, establishes that Jesus Christ is God. He knows this because he heard the voice of the Father declaring that.

vv.17-18 - For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

And so this is just one of numerous places in the Bible where the deity of Jesus Christ is taught and asserted.

But Dan Brown in his book “The Da Vinci Code” has another version. Here again is part of the conversation between the three main characters, Leigh Teabing, Robert Langdon, and Sophie Neveu.

From “The Da Vinci Code” p.233:

Teabing said, “Stay with me. During this fusion of religions, Constantine needed to strengthen the new Christian tradition, and held a famous ecumenical gathering known as the Council of Nicaea.”

“At this gathering,” Teabing said, “many aspects of Christianity were debated and voted upon – the date of Easter, the role of the bishops, the administration of 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,” Teabing said, “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,” Teabing added. “Nonetheless, establishing Christ’s divinity was critical to the further unification of the Roman empire and to the new Vatican power base. 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. This not only precluded further pagan challenges to Christianity, but now the followers of Christ were able to redeem themselves *only* via the established sacred channel – the Roman Catholic Church.”

“It was all about power,” Teabing continued. “Christ as Messiah was critical to the functioning of Church and state. Many scholars claim that the early Church literally *stole* Jesus from His original followers, hijacking His human message, shrouding it in a impenetrable cloak of divinity, and using it to expand their own power.”

INTERVIEW WITH DR. CRAIG BLASING.

How much of this is truth, and how much is fiction?

What actually was the Council of Nicea?

So the Council of Nicea was not the first time that Jesus was declared a deity?

When did the church first affirm the deity of Jesus?

Dan Brown would argue with us that actually what happened is that the Gospels that told the real story of Jesus (that He was just a mortal man) were destroyed, so that the truth has been hidden. Is that really what happened?

We talked last week how that the uniqueness of the four Gospels we have in our NT is that they were written in the first century 20-50 years after Jesus' resurrection, while these other documents were written much later (from 100-300 years later). They were in the first generation after the death and resurrection of Jesus. So they are reliable accounts.

Does Jesus in these Gospels come right out and make the claim that He is God?

Didn't Jesus refer to Himself as "Son of Man"? Isn't that a reference to His humanity? What do we say to that?

Did Jesus ever deny the fact that He was God?

Now it's one thing for Jesus to claim to be God. Is there any evidence that His claim was in fact, true? (Discussion of resurrection)

Evidence:

- Everyone in the ancient world agreed that the tomb was empty? How could that be? Opponents said the body of stolen.
- Appeared alive to over 500 witnesses
- Ancient records about the resurrection that go back so early that they cannot be the product of legendary development

And after the resurrection of Jesus, what did the church do? Is there anything that lets us know whether the church really did believe that Jesus was God?

The early church was willing to die for the reality of the resurrection. Would someone want to die for a lie?

Craig, thanks. I'm going to have you come back next week, and we're going to deal with the last major issue that is raised by "The Da Vinci Code," and that is has the church really been in denial for 2000 years, and that Jesus really intended Mary Magdalene to be the leader, not Peter. On Mothers Day, I want us to take this opportunity to affirm the place that women play in the Christian faith.

If Jesus is, indeed, the Son of God, then what does that mean for us today?

1. IT ADDS GLORY TO OUR WORSHIP.

Philippians 2:9-11 - Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

One of great purposes is to exalt the matchless name of Jesus Christ.

2. IT ADDS URGENCY TO OUR CHOICES.

If Jesus is God, then His words are not just the words of a man; they are the very words of God. Our eternal destiny hinges on what we do with the commands of Jesus.

3. IT ADDS CERTAINTY TO OUR FUTURE.

Jesus died and rose again because He is God. Death could not hold Him. And He robbed death of its sting and the grave of its power. When our lives are lashed to His, when we die, we can be certain that He will raise us up to spend eternity with Him in heaven.

4. IT ADDS ENERGY TO OUR MISSION.

What is it that explains how the first disciples were so faithful to Jesus that through their witness, the Christian faith became a worldwide phenomenon? It was their understanding of who Jesus is ... that He is God ... that He is Lord ... that He is alive.