

The Da Vinci Code Examined

by Charlie Campbell

Charlie Campbell examines the inaccuracies of the Da Vinci Code and its implications for the Christian faith.

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Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the issue of the book and movie 'The Da Vinci Code' and how it contradicts the word of God and historical facts. The speaker encourages the audience to pray for those who will watch the movie and to be prepared to answer their questions. They provide a helpful acronym, CODES, to remember the talking points against the book. The speaker also emphasizes the importance of the singleness of Jesus and refutes the idea of Jesus being married to Mary Magdalene.

Transcript

As I mentioned, Pastor Rob has asked me to fill in for him, and it's always a great joy to do so. And he specifically asked if I would address the Da Vinci Code. Many of you were here, I imagine, about nine months or a year ago or so when I taught on this topic on a Wednesday night, but were sure of the fact that many of the people who come on a Sunday morning are not able to make it out on a Wednesday evening, which was the time of the week that I taught this previously.

And so Rob wants to make sure that the entire church is inoculated against this modern-day deception, especially with the movie coming out in just a few weeks. And so this morning, that is the topic that we want to address. And doing so is actually biblical.

Taking time occasionally out of our normal verse-by-verse teaching through the Bible to do this is something that God actually commands the overseers of the church to do. In the book of Titus, in chapter 1, verse 9, God says that the overseers are not only to exhort in sound doctrine, which is what Pastor Rob does here on a weekly basis, but they're to take the time to, when necessary, refute those who contradict. And the Da Vinci Code is a modern-day opportunity of a person who is contradicting the word of God and the facts of history even.

And so this morning we want to take up this issue and deal with it. How many of you have a friend or family member who's actually read the book? Okay. How many of you have a friend or family member who you think will go see the movie? Probably most of us fall into that category.

The Da Vinci Code was written by a man by the name of Dan Brown in March of 2003, the former English teacher. So this book just came out only three years ago. Exactly.

And yet in the three years that it's been out, this book has been adversely influencing the way millions of people around the world think about Jesus, the Bible, the gospel message itself, and the church at large. Today, three years since his publication, the book has sold approximately 40 million copies. It's become one of the most widely read books of all time.

In fact, it's the most widely read book in the history of the world. Second now only to the Bible. And it's only been out three years.

That's how successful this book is just to put it into perspective. It's earned Dan Brown more than \$355 million in three years. Time Magazine named Dan Brown one of the world's 100 most influential people in 2005 because of the enormous influence that he has had through the writing of this book.

And the Da Vinci Code is not only influencing people here in the United States, it's making an impact around the world. To date, the book has been translated into 44 different languages. I saw it in an Israeli bookstore a few months ago, a Hungarian bookstore last year as well.

Different places that I've traveled around the world. It's there. You see it prominently displayed.

And the views of Dan Brown are, of course, going to have an even greater impact in just a few weeks. Columbia Pictures has made the book into a movie directed by Ron Howard that is going to star Tom Hanks in the lead role. I'm sure many of you have already heard this.

The worldwide movie release date just weeks away, May 19th, 2006. To say that a tidal wave of fresh, renewed skepticism regarding the Christian faith is about to be unleashed by the release of the movie would be the understatement of the year. I hate to be the bearer of bad news guys, but this movie is going to be probably the most powerful intellectual assault made against the Christian faith in 2000 years.

I don't think the Christian church has ever faced anything like what is about to happen here with the release of this movie. It's going to have an enormous long-term negative impact on the credibility of the Christian faith. I'm guaranteed that is going to be the result.

That's why we deal with the book this morning. We want to help at least blunt the impact as much as we can here locally. The book launches repeated attacks, and we believe the movie will as well against Christian beliefs, even going so far as to say, quotes, almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false.

Page 235. And although the views of Dan Brown are put forth in a fictional book, they are said to be based upon historical facts. And that's what makes the book so dangerous.

Some people might say, well, why are we going to talk about a fictional book? Why spend the time refuting a fictional book, Charlie? Well, the book, yes, it does claim to be fictional, but it claims to be based upon hundreds of historical facts. Dan Brown has said one of the many qualities that makes the Da Vinci code unique is the factual nature of the story. All the history, artwork, ancient documents, and secret rituals in the novel are accurate, as are the hidden codes revealed in some of Da Vinci's most famous paintings.

Over and over in the book, Dan Brown erroneously asserts that the historical information that he shares with his readers is supported by religious historians, well-documented history, art historians, all academics, well-documented evidence and so on, scores of historians. And so for the undiscerning reader, they think they read this kind of thing. I think, wow, I never knew that.

I didn't know this was well-documented evidence. I didn't know that all historians know that these things are true. So what can we do? A couple of things.

Number one, it goes without saying that we need to be praying for the people who will go and see this movie. We need to pray for our nation. My friends, 44 million people or 40 million people, I'm sorry, have read the book.

Millions more than that will actually go and see the movie. Think of all the people in our society today that don't like to read because they've grown up playing video games, right? But they'll love to go see the movie. We need to be praying for them.

And then secondly, we need to prepare ourselves to answer the questions that people are going to have. We've got about six weeks to get ready. And so again, that's why we deal with this topic this morning.

There's been a plethora of good books written on the topic that have refuted all of the errors in the book. In fact, if you go out to the book cart this morning after the service, we've stocked up on that particular book by Richard Abains called *The Truth Behind the Da Vinci Code*. If there's one book that I would suggest getting, if you're interested in doing more reading on the topic, it would be that one.

And we're making them available this morning too, if you're interested. Now to help you be prepared for the movie though, I want to examine some quotes right out of the book and respond to them. And first, let's start off by telling you a little bit about the plot of the book.

For those of you who have not read the book, I'm sure most of you have not. The *Da Vinci Code* is a modern day murder mystery. Throw in some romance and it's guaranteed to be a hit, right? Well, that's exactly what Dan Brown has done.

This book begins with the mysterious murder of a museum curator at the Louvre Museum in Paris. The Louvre is the famous museum that houses the Mona Lisa painting by Leonardo Da Vinci. This murder leads the two main characters, Robert Langdon and Sophie Nouveau, which will be played by Tom Hanks, the Robert Langdon character.

Anyways, it leads them on a pursuit all over France and England, trying to solve the murder. Well, as they try to unravel the mystery of this murder, they discover numerous so-called facts about Christianity that Dan Brown says have been suppressed by the Catholic church for the past 2000 years, but secretly handed down by a secret society known as the Priory of Scion. According to Brown, this secret society included such well-known persons as Isaac Newton and Leonardo Da Vinci.

The books that I mentioned a moment ago have refuted this whole story. Even the Priory of Scion did not exist back in Leonardo Da Vinci's day, but we don't have time to really get into that. Dan Brown, though, believes that Leonardo Da Vinci hid clues or codes about these matters that the Catholic church has suppressed in his paintings, including this one of *The Last Supper*, and thus we have the title of the book, *The Da Vinci Code*.

Speaking of the codes that Da Vinci hid in his paintings. So this morning, picking up on the title of the book, I want to address five errors in The Da Vinci Code. We don't have time to deal with them all.

I've narrowed it down to five, and if you can remember that acronym, the word codes, each letter in that acronym will remind you of something that is wrong with the book, and that will equip you, hopefully, with some talking points, should you have the chance to talk with an unbeliever or someone who's seen the movie, maybe even a Christian that has questions about what Dan Brown says is true. So the C, the first point, the first talking point reminds us about how the book airs when it speaks of the corruption of the scriptures, the corruption of the scriptures. If you're taking notes, the book says, quote, the Bible did not fall magically from the clouds.

Man created it as a historical record of tumultuous times, and it has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book. First off, we agree with Dan Brown that the Bible did not fall magically from the clouds.

Um, if you believe that, come and talk to me afterwards. Second, Peter chapter one, verse 21, that's what we believe happened. It says there that holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Holy men of God spoke or pinned the words that they pinned as they were moved, as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. We believe that God's superintendent, he came alongside the writings of more than 40 different authors whom he inspired to make sure that what he wanted written was actually written. Now we also agree that the Bible has been translated into numerous translations.

The Wycliffe Bible translation members have translated the new Testament alone into more than 578 languages based off the early manuscripts, the Greek and the Hebrew. They've translated the Bible, thankfully into the language of the common people around the world. And we rejoice in that.

But for Dan Brown to continue the popular myth that the Bible we have today is unreliable because it's evolved through numerous additions and revisions, betrays the fact that he is either ignorant of the facts surrounding the transmission of the biblical text or he has purposely thrown the facts aside to advance his own agenda. I believe the latter is probably the case. There are two pools of evidence that prove conclusively that the Bible we have today has not undergone corruption down through the centuries.

If you're taking notes, number one is the manuscript evidence, the manuscript evidence. What is a manuscript? A manuscript is a hand written copy of any ancient document that predates the invention of the printing press in 1455. Any surviving handwritten copy of an ancient document prior to 1455 would be called a manuscript, whether it's a biblical manuscript or a manuscript copy of Homer's Iliad or some other ancient work of literature before the printing press.

Bibles were meticulously, very carefully copied by hand by Jewish scribes who took that calling very seriously. Well, today there survive some twenty four thousand partial and complete ancient handwritten copies of the New Testament, not to mention hundreds of copies of the Old Testament. These manuscript copies of the Bible have allowed biblical scholars and textual critics to go back verify that the Bible we have today is the same Bible that the early church had two thousand years ago.

There was an amazing discovery made in 1947 related to this whole issue of the biblical manuscript evidence there in Israel, a shepherd boy tending his father's sheep in a little town known as Qumran, which is just north and to the west of the Dead Sea. He made an amazing discovery while looking for a

lost sheep. And you can visit the ruins of Qumran on a trip to Israel.

It's a fascinating place to visit while they're in Qumran in a hillside cave that had laid untouched for nearly two thousand years. This little shepherd boy, by the name of Mohammed, interestingly enough, discovered an ancient collection of handwritten copies of the Old Testament. These scrolls have been hidden in a cave by or in a variety of caves by a group of people known as the Essenes.

They were a Jewish sect living in Qumran two thousand years ago. They realized they were about to be annihilated by the Romans who were putting down the Jewish revolt at the middle of the first century or so. And so they hid their two most valuable treasures in the caves, their scriptures and their money, hoping if they would survive, they would at least be able to go back and recover those things.

None of them survived. And so their scriptures, their copies of the Old Testament survived for two thousand years till they were discovered in 1947. These scrolls and writings are now known as the Dead Sea Scrolls.

And this discovery, the different scrolls that they found represented every book of the Old Testament, except for the book of Esther. They found a handwritten ancient copy of every book of the Old Testament, except for the book of Esther. For one reason or another, the Essenes did not have access, it appears, to the book of Esther.

This is considered this discovery of these scrolls is considered one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of all time. What you're seeing there on the screen on the screen is a picture of the scroll of the book of Isaiah found in Qumran that has been dated to at least a hundred years before Christ. Guys, there's not a verse missing.

It's the entire book of Isaiah, all 66 chapters. You unroll that scroll. It's 24 feet long.

Here's some of the containers that house the scrolls and kept them in such good shape. Well, these Old Testament manuscripts predate the time of Christ's birth all the way back to the third century B.C., which is within a hundred years of the time of the completion of the Old Testament. So it's manuscript copies like these that verify that the text of the Bible has been accurately transmitted down through the centuries.

These manuscripts are on display today in places like the British Museum, the Cambridge University Library, the Smithsonian Institute, the Oxford University, the National Library at Paris, as well as the Israel Museum. Now, even if we did not have any manuscript copies of the Bible, there's another way of verifying that the Bible we have today has not undergone corruption, as Dan Brown suggested it has, and that is by examining the writings of the church fathers. So if you're taking notes, this would be evidence number two, that the Bible has not seen corruption or contamination.

Number two, the writings of the church fathers by church fathers. We are referring to those leaders in the church of the first three centuries A.D. following the original disciples, men like Tertullian, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Eusebius and others. These men and others in their commentaries that they wrote on the Bible in their correspondence with one another and in their letters to different churches, they quoted the New Testament scriptures alone more than 86,000 times, preserving for us a second record of what the Bible used to say 2,000 years ago.

Guys, their writings survived to this day. You can buy a 30 or 40 volume set of the writings of the early church fathers in the first four centuries, and it looks like the Encyclopedia Britannica. OK, it's a collection

of all their commentaries, their letters, their correspondence, fascinating reading.

I haven't read them all, but I've perused through them and over and over again, you see them quoting what the Bible used to say. So if you wonder what Matthew 18 says in your Bible is actually authentic and, you know, can we trust it? Well, you can go and look up in a commentary on Matthew chapter 18 in one of the writings of the early church fathers and see what did they say. Matthew chapter 18 used to say.

Their writings have preserved for us the Word of God as well. In fact, there are enough quotations from the early church fathers that even if we did not have a single manuscript copy of the Bible, biblical scholars and textual critics could reconstruct 99.86% of the New Testament we have today from their writings. There are only 11 verses in the New Testament that for one reason or another apparently were never cited by any of the church fathers.

That's how well they preserve the entirety of the Word of God for us. Isaiah chapter 40, verse eight says the grass withers, the flowers fade. Those things undergo change and contamination and corruption.

But the word of our God. Stands forever. God has given us that promise that he'll faithfully preserve his word for all generations to consider trustworthy forever.

Jesus said something very similar in the New Testament. Matthew chapter 24, verse 35, he said, heaven and earth will pass away. Those things are undergoing change.

They're subject to the second law of thermodynamics, right? But he says, my words will by no means pass away. Where have Jesus's words been recorded for us in the New Testament? God is putting his stamp of protection there in what Jesus says upon his word. He's going to preserve it as long as time goes on.

So for Dan Brown to assert that the Bible has evolved through countless additions and revisions. So as to suggest that the Bible is now unreliable, again, demonstrates either his ignorance of the facts or his willingness to go against the facts. That's a little bit about the C in our acronym.

Let's move on to the, Oh, the second point, the second talking point that we have regarding the Da Vinci code is how the Da Vinci code airs. When it speaks of the origin of the deity of Christ, the O reminds us about the origin of the deity of Christ and how the Da Vinci code airs. When it speaks this way, Lee T Bing, when you see a picture of the character from the forthcoming movie up there on the left-hand corner, he's one of the characters in the book.

This is a quote regarding this whole issue of the deity of Christ. He says at this gathering, speaking of the council of Nicaea, this gathering together of church leaders in the city of Nicaea, it happened in 325. He says at this gathering, 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 Sophie, the person he's talking to in the book responds and says, not the son of God.

They didn't think Jesus was the son of God until 325. They just thought he was a mortal man. Lee T Bing responded, says, right.

Jesus's establishment as the son of God was officially proposed and voted on by the council of Nicaea. So if he says, hold on, you're saying Jesus's divinity was the result of a vote. Lee T Bing says a relatively

close vote at that.

So Dan Brown suggests here, just to recap what we've just read that the deity of Christ was a late invention by the church, that it was first proposed at the council of Nicaea and that it barely passed. And that the reason you today believe that Jesus is God is based upon a vote and invention in the fourth century. Well, for the person who is unfamiliar with the Bible church history or what happened at the council of Nicaea, this might easily be believed.

And a lot of people do come away from the book, believing those kinds of things that we're studying here this morning. What was the council of Nicaea? Let's clarify this first off the council at Nicaea in modern day. Turkey was a gathering of 318 bishops or pastors, church leaders from all over the Roman Empire.

It happened in 325 and it was to discuss doctrines related to the person of Jesus. The reason why they gathered together was because of a man by the name of Arius. And I'll talk a little bit more about him in a moment.

But this meeting was hardly the place where it was first proposed that Jesus was actually God, as Dan Brown suggests in the book, that belief that Jesus was God or was God. The son was firmly in place as the popular teaching of the church in the fourth century. There was this man by the name of Arius that I mentioned a moment ago.

He was causing disputes throughout the Roman Empire as it related to the person of Jesus. Arius was denying the eternity of Jesus and teaching rather that Jesus was simply a created being. We might call him the first Jehovah's Witness.

The followers of his teaching known as Arians held that the divine nature of Christ was only similar to God, but not the same. He's not really exactly God. He's similar to God, but he's actually created being.

Well, that's what Arius was spreading. Well, the church recognized this as a heresy and they said, let's have a conference on this. Let's clarify for the church at large what the Bible actually teaches.

And they called together what is now called the Council of Nicaea. And this gathering together, the bishops condemned Arius as teachings and reaffirmed what the Bible had already taught for the past 300 plus years. And that is the fact that Jesus was and is God himself.

He has the very same nature, even as God accord. And just like the Bible says in Hebrews chapter one, verse three, was it a close vote? Well, you guys know how to do math. You tell me there were 318 bishops who were called to the meeting there in Nicaea.

As for the vote that was finally taken, only five of the 318 dissented and only two of those five refused to sign the resulting resolutions, which reaffirmed the prevailing view of the church that Jesus was and is God. Hardly a close vote, as Dan Brown suggests in his book. Allow me to read to you from the official resolution or creed that came out of that gathering together of the bishops.

It's called the Nicene Creed. This is the statement that these bishops signed on. They wrote it up and signed on to.

Here it is. They said, I believe in one God, the father almighty maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of God, begotten of the father

before all worlds, God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made being of one substance with the father by whom all things were made, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried in the third day.

He rose again, according to the scriptures and ascended into heaven and said, if on the right hand of the father and he shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end. Amen. Now you can see for yourself the very high view that the early church leaders had regarding Jesus.

They referred to him here as very God of very God, begotten, not made. He was begotten in his birth through the Virgin Mary, but he was not created in the sense of him being created sometime back in the eons of time ago, but that he had always existed with the father. 316 of the 318 early church leaders signed on to that resolution, the Nicene Creed.

Dan Brown calls a 316 to two vote regarding Jesus's deity, a relatively close vote in the book. He doesn't give you the actual facts. He doesn't tell you there's 318 bishops and what the final vote was.

He just says it was a relatively close vote. Jesus deity just barely snuck by all the discerning bishops. They really knew that Jesus wasn't God and they tried to stop the vote, you know, but they were just slightly outnumbered.

That's that's an impression you come away. Can you imagine a basketball team being beaten 316 to two and then the losing team telling people afterwards that it was a relatively close game? You would say, what are you talking about? You guys got totally shut out, man. You scored one basket.

You guys didn't have the ball like the whole game, man. You need to go back to high school and take a math class. 316 to two is not a relatively close game.

Man needs to take a math class. All right. It's a historical fact that the deity of Christ was the prevailing view of the church long before the days of Constantine and the Council of Nicaea.

In fact, nearly 300 years before the Council of Nicaea, even before the end of Jesus's earthly ministry, his deity was already being acknowledged by his disciples. The New Testament documents, all of which were completed before the end of the first century, are full of affirmations of Christ's deity. For example, Thomas, one of the 12, refers to Jesus as my Lord and my God.

In John chapter 20, verse 28, Paul, the apostle called Jesus, our great God and savior. In Titus chapter two, verse 13, John, the apostle called Jesus God in the opening verse of his gospel. When he said that the word was God, John chapter one, verse one, Jesus himself took the name of God in the old Testament, that title I am where God spoke that, that title to Moses in the burning bush there in Exodus three 14.

And Jesus applied that title to himself in John chapter eight, verse 58. He said himself that he was God. Jesus also said that God was his father, resulting in some of his listeners trying to stone him.

Why? John tells us in John chapter five, verse 18 in John chapter 10, verse 33, because Jesus was actually by calling God his father claiming to be, John says, equal with God. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah, six or 700 years before the Messiah was even born, foretold of the Messiah's deity. Isaiah chapter

nine, verse six is for unto us.

A child is born speaking of his humanity and unto us a son is given and the government will be upon his shoulder and his name will be called wonderful counselor, mighty. God, hardly a fourth century invention by the church. The Old Testament was already predicting or prophesying that very fact that the Messiah would be yes, a child speaking of his humanity, but he would also be God speaking of his deity.

In addition to the testimony of Isaiah in the Old Testament, the disciples in Christ and the New Testament, there's a testimony again of the church fathers in the second century, still long before the fourth century council of Nicaea, men like Ignatius polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria, just to name some over and over in their writings, affirm that Jesus was God incarnate. And that is a fact in the writings. They refer to Jesus in a variety of ways.

And you see some there on the screen calling him God incarnate God and man manifest deity, our Lord and God and so on. Not only do the biblical writers and the church fathers affirm that the deity of Christ predates Constantine, but now archaeologists have affirmed this to be the case as well. On November 5th, just about five or six months ago, Israeli archaeologists made an amazing announcement there in Megiddo in Northern Israel, the site of Armageddon here sometime in the future.

Just a few months ago, archaeologists discovered the remains of the oldest Christian church ever discovered. The evidence reveals that this church dates as far back as the second or third century AD, at least one to two centuries before the time of Constantine and the council of Nicaea in the fourth century. The remains included a Greek styled mosaic entryway to the church that bore an amazing inscription.

And you can see the photographers there all on the scene to take photos of it. What you are about to see here on the screens is the very first archaeological discovery ever mentioning Jesus Christ. Up until November 5th, November 2005, there's never been one archaeological discovery or piece of evidence that would demonstrate Jesus actually lived.

We know from literary evidence that Jesus lived. The New Testament authors wrote of him. The Jewish Talmud mentions him.

Flavius Josephus mentions him. But for skeptics and critics of the Christian faith, sometimes writings aren't enough because they think, well, maybe the Christians contaminated Josephus' writings. Maybe they just doctored them up to make it look like Jesus lives.

Skeptics like things written in stone, right? God gave it to him five months ago. There it is on the screen. If you could read Greek, you could see that the name Jesus Christ is right there beneath the arrow.

Foxnews.com reported this. They said this regarding this discovery. They said two mosaics inside the church, one covered with fish.

And you see the photo on the screen there, which was an ancient Christian symbol that predates the cross. Tell the story of a Roman officer and a woman named a ketose who donated money to build the church in the memory of the God. Jesus Christ.

Not only does this recent discovery help reinforce now the fact that Jesus actually did exist, but it helps establish the fact that the early church believed Jesus was God long before the time of Constantine in the fourth century. This amazing inscription guys predates the time of Constantine by at least a hundred

years. What did the inscription say? That the church was dedicated to the God, Jesus Christ, not the mortal prophet, Jesus Christ, the mere man, Jesus Christ.

No, the early church was already worshiping him as God before the time of Constantine. So take that Dan Brown for Dan Brown to suggest in his book that up until three 25 AD, Jesus's followers viewed him as a mortal man. Again, demonstrates either an ignorance of the facts or a willingness to suppress the facts.

We've got the sayings of the disciples, the writings of the church fathers, the discovery in Megiddo, all of which we believe thoroughly and soundly refute Dan Brown's assertion. So we've looked at the Da Vinci code and how it airs when it comes to the corruption of the scriptures. The C the O reminds us of how the Da Vinci code airs when it speaks of the origin of the deity of Christ.

Thirdly, let's consider the D and this reminds us of how the Da Vinci code airs when it speaks of developments of Sunday worship, the developments of Sunday worship. Christianity, the book says, honored the Jewish Sabbath of Saturday. Stop there for a sec.

Basically, he's going to say that Christians used to meet on Saturdays. It was only because of Constantine that we even meet on Sundays now. OK, he goes on to say, he says, but Constantine shifted it.

He shifted the day to coincide with the pagans veneration day of the sun. To this day, most churchgoers, including those at Calvary Chapel Vista attend services on Sunday morning with no idea that they are there on account of the pagan sun gods weekly tribute sun day. This is absolutely false.

All available evidence indicates that Christians were meeting together long before the time of Constantine and they were meeting together on Sundays. The Bible makes that very clear. Acts chapter 20, if you're taking notes, verse seven, as well as First Corinthians chapter 16, verse two, both of which were written at least 200 years before Constantine was born.

Both of these passages talk about believers coming together, breaking bread and studying the word of God on, quote, the first day of the week. Sunday, a day that the early church referred to as the Lord's day in Revelation chapter one, verse 10. Gathering together on the first day of the week had nothing at all to do with Constantine.

It had everything to do with the fact that Sunday was the day of Christ's resurrection and post resurrection appearances. The church became accustomed to Jesus suddenly appearing and meeting with them on the first day of the week. And so they began to meet on the first day of the week as a commemoration of the resurrection and also as an anticipation of seeing Christ again.

So not only does the Bible tell us that the early church Christians met on the first day of the week, we also have numerous other early extra biblical sources that affirm this as well, including the church fathers. Once again, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and Cyprian all mentioned the fact that the early church was gathering together on Sundays long before they even had heard of Constantine. These guys lived centuries before Constantine.

And then we even have plenty of the younger. He was a secular governor, not even a Christian. And he writes in his writings about the gathering together of the Christians underneath his jurisdiction on the first day of the week, early in the second century.

The Didache, which was an early church writing written in about AD 80 or so also mentions this fact. So all of these extra biblical sources, again, refute Dan Brown's fanciful imagination, primarily because all of these sources I've just cited predate Constantine. He was not born until approximately 274 AD.

The early church, though, we see from these different evidences was already meeting on the first day of the week. So once again, Dan Brown receives a failing grade in history. Now we've talked about three evidences.

Let's move on to our fourth one. The E in our acronym reminds us of how the book airs when it speaks of the establishment of the canon of Scripture, the establishment of the canon of Scripture. We're not talking about canons as in guns.

The word canon with one in is a term that means standard. And so when we speak of the canon of Scripture, we are referring to the standard collection of 66 divinely inspired books that God determines should make up the Bible. By the second century, the complete canon of Scripture, exactly as we have it, 66 books was already popularly being recognized.

But when it comes to the establishment of the canon of Scripture, Dan Brown again makes many inaccurate statements in the book. We'll just consider a couple here quickly. Lee Tebing in the book says more than 80 gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John among them, 80 gospels. This is absolutely false. There's no historical evidence to back up a statement such as this.

Nobody, not even the most liberal scholars that I can come across seem to know where Dan Brown got his figure about the existence of 80 gospels. I know where he got it. Two horns, a tail, right? Even if you count all the heretical, apocryphal writings of or about Jesus, there were less than 20 documents in the first four centuries that could even be called gospels or accounts of Jesus's life.

The Gnostics, the heretics tried to sneak in some gospels such as the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip, the Gospel of Mary Magdalene. These were fraudulent second and third century inventions by the Gnostics. They claim to be you know, they tried to make them appear to have been written by these, you know, earlier disciples.

The early church quickly recognized them, though, as being unauthentic, primarily because of the heresy contained in them and the historical errors and that kind of a thing. But Sophie responds to this whole 80 gospels claim in the book. And she says on the tail, you know, just right on the tails of this last quote, she says, well, who chose which gospels to include? There were 80 gospels.

Well, how did we get the four gospels that are in the Bible? Lee Teebing says, aha, the fundamental irony of Christianity, the Bible as we know it today was correlated by the pagan Roman emperor Constantine the Great. He's the one that put the Bible together. Dan Brown says again, though he airs by suggesting something so ludicrous.

Constantine had nothing to do with the coalition or canonization of the Bible. Someone tried to tell you that asked him for one shred of evidence that supports that to be the case. Don't let them cite Dan Brown's book either.

Make them go somewhere intelligent. The Old Testament was compiled by the Jews long before Jesus was even born and certainly long before the time of Constantine. As for the New Testament, its formation began by the end of the first century, still 200 years before Constantine was born.

Constantine Dan Brown goes on to say this. He says constantly commission and finance a new Bible which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ's human traits and embellished those gospels that make him godlike. Basically, he's saying here that Constantine, he doctored up the Bible.

He you know, he did away with the authentic gospel that told us the real truth about Jesus and the fact that he was just a human and just a mere man. And he had Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all doctored up and changed so as to make it appear that Jesus was actually God. Well, again, Brown is mistaken.

There's again no historical evidence that any of the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke or John were ever embellished in the fourth century. Neither is there any record that these texts were ever recalled in order to be embellished. Recalling thousands of handwritten manuscript copies of the gospels would have been impossible.

And if it had ever been pulled off, you can bet that the early church would have written about it in their histories of the church. And none of the church fathers or church historians ever mentioned any such thing as Constantine tampering with the Bible, embellishing the four gospels and so on. There's not a shred of historical evidence to support Dan Brown's claims in the book.

And he knows that most people will not investigate that fact, though, and they'll just believe it. And he's laughing all the way to the bank. Another quote from the book, he says, the earlier gospels, the ones that, according to Dan Brown, supposedly told us the real truth about Jesus.

He says these were outlawed. Constantine outlawed the real gospels that told us just about the humanity of Jesus. They were gathered up and burned.

But he says, 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. First off, there were never any earlier gospels.

The earliest gospel records regarding Jesus's life are the four gospels that are in the Bible. The so-called gospels that Dan Brown's thinks are the earlier authentic gospels weren't written until the second or third century, long after the four gospels were written. Secondly, there's no evidence that Constantine ever gave orders to even destroy any of the later heretical gospels.

Dan Brown seems content in just inventing things out of thin air. Then he said that, fortunately, some of them have survived. And he says the Dead Sea Scrolls, that's them.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, he goes on to suggest in the book, actually reveal to us the real truth about Jesus. This is absolutely laughable. The Dead Sea Scrolls included portions of every Old Testament book, except Esther, some commentaries on the Old Testament, some extra biblical works and some secular documents.

And that's it. Nothing to do with Jesus at all. Many books have been written about the Dead Sea Scrolls, and one after another, they've documented and clearly stated that the Dead Sea Scrolls did not contain anything mentioning Jesus.

You will not find the word Jesus mentioned a single time in any of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Qumran community, which wrote and preserved these scrolls, existed long before the time of Christianity. They had nothing to do with Jesus or Christianity.

Most of their documents were written centuries before. So again, we find Dan Brown to be unreliable as a source of church history. Now, fifthly, and finally, let's wrap this up.

The S reminds us of how the book airs when it speaks of the singleness of our Lord, the singleness of our Lord. The book says the early church needed to convince the world that the mortal prophet, the mere man, Jesus, they need to convince the world that the mortal prophet Jesus was a divine being. Therefore, any gospels that described early earthly rather aspects of Jesus's life had to be omitted from the Bible.

Unfortunately for the early editors, one particularly troubling earthly theme kept recurring in the gospels. Mary Magdalene, more specifically her marriage to Jesus Christ. It's a matter of historical record.

End quote. Now, Brown even goes on to assert that Jesus and Mary Magdalene had a child together named Sarah and that it was Jesus's intention that Mary Magdalene become the head of the church and that she would pass the torch on to women after her death and that today women should actually be the overseers in the church. The book says, though, that it was the greedy, power hungry disciples that kept this from happening.

According to Brown, they forced Mary Magdalene and poor little Sarah to flee for their lives, and they ended up in France, where their bloodline, Jesus's bloodline continues to this day. Since that time, Dan Brown says that the church has conducted the greatest coverup in human history. Of course, all of this is ridiculous, and scholars from every end of the spectrum have pointed out that there are no historical facts to support Dan Brown's far-fetched ideas.

It's long been believed by scholars from every persuasion, liberal and conservative, that Jesus was unmerit. You can't find any reliable scholarship that says otherwise. There's no mention of a wife when he was in ministry.

There's no mention of a wife at his trial or crucifixion, and there's no mention of a wife after his resurrection, even though repeatedly the authors of the New Testament tell of Jesus's other family members. They mentioned numerous times his mother, his father, his stepfather, Joseph. His brothers and sisters are mentioned even by name, but no mention of a wife, and that's because he had no wife.

Dr. Paul Mayer, he's a Harvard graduate, best-selling author, and now a professor of ancient history at Western Michigan University, said this regarding this issue of Jesus and his marriage, supposed marriage. He said, if there were even one spark of evidence from antiquity that Jesus even may have gotten married, then as a historian, I would have to weigh this evidence against the total absence of such information in either scripture or the early church traditions. But there is no such spark, not a scintilla of evidence anywhere in historical sources, even where one might expect to find such claims in the bizarre second century apocryphal Gospels.

There is no reference that Jesus ever got married. End quote. None of the Gnostic writings that Dan Brown seems to be so fond of, whether it be the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip, the so-called Gospels, anyways, the Gospel of Truth is another one.

None of these contain any references to a marriage between Mary and Jesus. Even the ultra liberal scholar by the name of John Dominic Crossan agrees he's part of the Jesus seminar. I don't know if you've heard of them.

They're the most liberal theological think tank on the face of the planet. They deny the physical resurrection of Jesus. They deny that he's even crucified on a cross.

That's how liberal they are. And listen to what he says regarding Jesus's marriage, supposed marriage. He says there is no evidence that Jesus was married.

Multiple indications that he was not and no early text suggesting wife or children. End quote. John Dominic Crossan.

One of the few things that the vast majority of liberal and conservative scholars can agree upon is that Jesus was single. Dan Brown is out in left field when he says that the marriage of Jesus to Mary Magdalene is a matter of historical record. As if anyone who would do the research and look into the history would easily discover that this is a fact.

So again, this demonstrates his willingness to go against the facts to advance his radical ideas. If you have read the book here in conclusion and have had nagging doubts or questions that have troubled your mind or robbed you in any way of the confidence you've had in the Bible, you can rest assured this morning that this book is built upon the sand of Dan Brown's fanciful imagination. I want to encourage you and all of us, whether you've read the book or not.

Number one to trust the Bible. The Bible, of course, has been substantiated by hundreds of fulfilled prophecies, thousands of archaeological discoveries, manuscript evidence, and so on. We can take our stand upon this book.

It's been scrutinized and criticized and challenged for 2000 years, and yet it stands today more reliable than ever, just like God promised. Secondly, I would encourage you to be a noble minded Breon. The church needs more people who are slow to believe and quick to think.

A lot of people, even in the church, just believe what they hear, believe what they read, believe what they hear in the movies, believe what their pastor tells them. First Thessalonians 5:21 tells us to test all things and to hold fast to that which is true. We're to be like the Brians there in Acts chapter 17, who even examined the teachings of the apostle Paul to make sure that what he was saying was true.

We need to be that that kind of a believer. And then thirdly, we need to use the popularity of the novel and the forthcoming movie to look for opportunities to discuss with unbelievers and our neighbors and our coworkers about the reliability of the Bible and the real Jesus guys. What the devil means for evil.

God can turn around and use for good if we're on the lookout for God to use it in that way. And I believe that he will. Amen.

Amen. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank you today, God, that we can have a faith that is grounded in fact, Lord, a faith that can be verified by the facts of history, archaeological discoveries, fulfilled prophecies and, and so on.

Lord, we're thankful that our faith stands up to scrutiny and attack and challenges even today by this author, Dan Brown, who's had great success in an undiscerning world and attacking Christianity. But Lord, we know better. We've taken the time to investigate the facts and the history of the early church, Lord, and we see Dan Brown's theories found wanting.

And God, we want to pray right now, Lord, for those in our country and around the world who would be exposed to these ideas and Dan Brown's book or in the movie, Lord, maybe they've already been exposed. We want to pray Lord, that you would give them discernment, Lord, that you would turn on the lights, that you would help them not to be so gullible. God, we pray that you would use us even in the months ahead, Lord, in the lives of many people whom we work with, whom we go to school with, who live in our neighborhoods.

Lord, we pray that you would direct our steps, that you would give us divine opportunities, Lord, to stand before people who have questions about Christianity, Lord, that we might point them in the right direction or that we might offer them the truth and Lord steer them toward a relationship with you. And Lord, we do pray knowing that today on a Sunday morning, there's probably at least a handful of people right now in our midst who don't even have a relationship with you. Maybe today's the first time they've even come to church in years, Lord.

God, we pray today would be the day of salvation for them. Lord, we pray that today they would realize that the Bible is absolutely trustworthy and Lord, the message that it contains in it about your son's death on the cross for our salvation is true and it requires a decision. Lord, you've placed the good news in our laps, the good news that we can have our sins forgiven, that we can have eternal life with you, God.

Lord, but it's up to us to turn from our sins and to put our trust in you and to put our belief in that message. And God, we pray today would be the day that many people would do that or whether they hear this study on a CD or watch it on a DVD. We pray that right now, Lord, you would give them just a conviction of sin, but a reminder of your grace and your love.

If that's you, if you want to today begin a relationship with God, have your sins forgiven, escape God's righteous wrath and judgment in eternity and hell, you can turn from your sins today and acknowledge Jesus Christ is Lord and you can invite him into your life with a prayer like this. Dear God, I admit that I've sinned against you, but yet I believe that you still love me and you're offering mercy today. So Lord, I ask that you'd forgive me of my sins.

I pray that you would come into my life and that you would be my God. I believe that Jesus died on the cross for me and rose again from the grave. God, help me to follow you from this day forward in Jesus name.

Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/13/SID13704.mp3>

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