

## Cleverly Invented Stories?

**Text:** 2 Peter 1:16 – 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.

### I. Is the Bible True or is it a Collection of Cleverly Invented Stories?

*Quote from The Da Vinci Code:*

“What I mean,” Teabing countered, “is that almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false...” (Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), p. 235.)

This is an attack, first against Scripture, and second against Church History

A. Do we have accurate information about Jesus in the Bible?

1. What does Scripture say about itself?

1 Corinthians 2:13 – “words taught by the Spirit”

1 Thessalonians 2:13 – “the word of God”

2 Peter 1:16 – “not cleverly invented stories,” but rather, eyewitness accounts

1 John 1:1- “we heard... we saw... we touched... this we proclaim”

The Bible is not the product of human invention or ingenuity, nor does it contain a mixture of truth and error. It is not a hidden book requiring “higher” or “enlightened” consciousness in order to interpret it properly. Nor is the Bible, despite the claims of the cults, an incomplete revelation requiring additional scripture to interpret it or to fulfill God’s purpose. Biblical claims leave us few options. Either the Bible is what it claims—the literal inerrant Word of God—or it is not possible to know if God has revealed Himself to us truthfully. (John Ankerberg & John Weldon, “Ready with an Answer”)

Bible scholar Greg Bahnsen writes: “Because Christ raised no doubts about the adequacy of the Scripture as His contemporaries knew them, we can safely assume that the first-century text of the Old Testament was a wholly adequate representation of the divine word originally given. Jesus regarded the extant copies of His day as so approximate to the originals in their message that He appealed to those copies as authoritative.” (Greg L. Bahnsen, “The Inerrancy of the Autographa,” in *INERRANCY*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids, MI:

Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), p. 161.) The respect Jesus and His apostles held for the extant Old Testament text is an expression of their confidence that God providentially preserved these copies and translations so that they were substantially identical with the inspired originals. We can deduce that the same is true regarding the New Testament and God's preservation of the entire Bible through history. (From "Crash Goes The Da Vinci Code", by Dr. Ron Rhodes, Reasoning from the Scriptures Ministries, P.O. Box 2526, Frisco, TX, 75034. 214-618-0912. www.ronrhodes.org)

## **B. Were important Gospels left out of our Bibles?**

*Quote from The Da Vinci Code*

More than eighty gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John among them. —Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, p. 231

Dr. Darrell Bock said on recent television show:

First of all, there weren't 80 gospels out there. We don't even have 80 gospels today. We have maybe 15 or 16. Now, when you add in other books that don't have the name gospel that discuss Jesus, to one degree or another in terms of these post-resurrection alleged dialogues, we might get up to 25. But in the first century, there wasn't much to choose from. You had your four Gospels. You might have had "Thomas" toward the end of that period or the beginning of the second century. And then the rest of these books trail on much, much later. So there was no choice to be made.

## **C. How and Why Was the Canon (the Bible as we know it today) Formed?**

Dr. Norman Geisler makes the important point that the early church fathers RECOGNIZED or DISCOVERED which books were inspired [the Canon]. He says,

Five foundational questions lie at the very heart of the discovery process:

- [1] Was the book written by a prophet of God?...
- [2] Was the writer confirmed by acts of God?...
- [3] Does the message tell the truth about God?...
- [4] Did it come with the power of God?... and
- [5] Was it accepted by the people of God?

[Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics, Baker Book House, 1999]

## II. Was Jesus' Deity a Story Cleverly Invented by Constantine?

*Quotes from The Da Vinci Code:*

“Constantine upgraded Jesus’ status almost four centuries after Jesus’ death.” (Page 234)

“Jesus’ establishment as the ‘Son of God’ was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicea.... [and it was] a relatively close vote at that.” (Page 233)

### A. Did Jesus claim to be Deity?

Who but God would say these things?

- I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (John 8:12)
- I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies. (John 11:25)
- No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. (John 3:13)
- “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” (John 8:58)
- I and the Father are one. (John 10:30)
- Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. (John 14:9)

### B. Did the apostles believe Jesus was God?

- The Apostle John - John 21:24
- The Apostle Peter – 2 Peter 1:16
- The Apostle Paul – Colossians 1:16; Philippians 2:5-11

### C. Did other Church leaders before Nicea believe Jesus was God?

**Ignatius of Antioch (30-107 A.D.).** “Jesus Christ our God”; “who is God and man”; “received knowledge of God, that is, Jesus Christ”; “for our God, Jesus the Christ”; “for God was manifest as man”; “Christ, who was from eternity with the Father”; “from God, from Jesus Christ”; “from Jesus Christ, our God”; “Our God, Jesus Christ”; “suffer me to follow the example of the passion of my God”; “Jesus Christ the God” and “Our God Jesus Christ.”

[The fact that Ignatius was not rebuked, nor branded as teaching heresy by any

of the churches or Christian leaders he sent such letters to prove that the early church, long before 107 A.D., accepted the deity of Christ.]

**Polycarp (69-155 A.D.).** He possibly spoke of “Our Lord and God Jesus Christ.”

**Justin Martyr (100-165 A.D.).** He wrote of Jesus, “who... being the first-begotten Word of God, is even God.” In his Dialogue with Trypho, he stated that “God was born from a virgin” and that Jesus was “worthy of worship” and of being “called Lord and God.”

**Tatian (110-172 A.D.).** This early apologist wrote, “We do not act as fools, O Greeks, nor utter idle tales when we announce that God was born in the form of man.”

**Irenaeus of Lyons and Rome (120-202 A.D.).** He wrote that Jesus was “perfect God and perfect man”; “not a mere man...but was very God”; and that “He is in Himself in His own right...God, and Lord, and King Eternal” and spoke of “Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God, and Saviour and King.”

**Tertullian of Carthage (145-220 A.D.).** He said of Jesus “Christ is also God” because “that which has come forth from God [in the virgin birth] is at once God and the Son of God, and the two are one...in His birth, God and man united.” Jesus is “both Man and God, the Son of Man and the Son of God.”

**Hippolytus (170-235 A.D.).** He said, “[it is] the Father who is above all, the Son who is through all, and the Holy Spirit who is in all. And we cannot otherwise think of one God, but by believing in truth in Father and Son and Holy Spirit.... For it is through this Trinity that the Father is glorified.... The whole Scriptures, then, proclaim this truth.” And, “the Logos is God, being the substance of God.”

**Gregory Thaumaturgus of Neo-Caesarea (205-270 A.D.)** referred to Jesus as “God of God” and “God the Son.”

**Origen of Alexandria (wrote ca 230 A.D.).** He stated that Christ was “God and man.” And, “Jesus Christ...while he was God, and though made man, remained God as he was before.”

**Athanasius (293-373 A.D.).** This keen defender of New Testament teaching against the early Arian heresy, which taught that Jesus Christ was not God, declared of Jesus, “He always was and is God and Son,” and “He who is eternally God,... also became man for our sake.”

#### **D. Was Jesus Married, and if so, what effect would that have on His Deity?**

1. There is no evidence, either in the Bible or in the Gnostic Gospels that indicates Jesus was married. Brown’s “best” evidence, the Gospel of Philip, actually damages this theory more than helps it! [e.g., in the Gospel of Philip the disciples are

upset that Jesus is kissing Mary more than them! --Why would they object if Jesus were kissing his wife!]

2. Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 9:5 – “Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas?” Surely if Jesus had been married, Paul would have mentioned it as a strong argument
3. Even if we were to conclude that despite all the evidence to the contrary Jesus actually was married and had a child, would that destroy his claim of deity? Dr. Darrell Bock says no:

My view would be that, had Jesus given birth to a child, all this would have done was to show that he was human: he got tired, he had to drink, he had to sleep, etc.; he died. You know, and so it's just another aspect of his humanity, and it wouldn't touch the perception of his divinity at all.

### III. Is the Christian Faith merely Blind Acceptance of Cleverly Invented Stories?

*Quote from The Da Vinci Code*

“Every faith in the world is based on fabrication. That is the definition of faith—acceptance of that which we imagine to be true, that which we cannot prove.” (Dan Brown, “The Da Vinci Code,” p. 341)

Brown is wrong. The Christian faith is based upon--

- a. A Person—Jesus Christ, who claimed to be God, and **proved** it by raising from the dead—just as He promised. (Rom. 1:4)
- b. He has told us about Himself in the Bible—which has **proven** time and time again to be truthful, honest, accurate and trustworthy despite thousands of years of careful scrutiny. (Mark 13:31)
- c. And all this flows from a God who “cannot lie”; who has **proven** over and over again that He is a promise-keeping God who does not change. (Heb. 6:18; Heb. 13:8; Jas. 5:16-18)

### IV. Conclusion: Dan Brown's The Da Vinci Code is Really the Cleverly Invented Story. Take Peter's advice—Don't follow it or swallow it!