***The Da Vinci Code - CA-022***

If you take seriously the scriptural mandate to be ready at all times to give an answer to anyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, then one of your jobs is to keep an eye on society, and to be able to answer questions that come up in the natural course of things. So we're going to dedicate this session to discussing one book which has taken the nation more or less by storm. It's called The Da Vinci Code. It was on The New York Times bestseller list for 15 straight weeks. ABC made a one-hour long special concerning it. I understand that a movie is being made of The Da Vinci Code directed by Ron Howard. So you can't look the other way anymore. You can't pretend that it doesn't exist. We've seen the book, and now we're going to have to live with the movie.

A lot of Christians haven't read the book because there are so many things that are not appealing to Christians, but it does attract a wide reading in contemporary culture. I haven't read the book. I've read some good reviews of the book, but I understand it's really good reading. It's well-written; it's exciting; and, it just pulls you into it. It's good fiction, but a lot of people take it as fact. The author, Dan Brown, wants you to do that. He indicates that it is a historical novel, and that it is based on truth. If anything, the fact that so many people are taking it seriously, it illustrates the fact that people will believe anything as long as it isn't in the Bible.

When I tell you what the book is about, you probably will think this is so weird; this is so off-the-wall; this is so strange; and, this is so irrational, why are we even taking time to discuss it? How can we even relate to it? And I have to tell you, you're right. It is. But there are people who are taking it seriously. So we as believers need to have an answer for it.

**A Secret**

Here's what the book is based on. There are several reasons that it is so appealing to people. One reason is that it comes on as saying you have been cheated. You have been deceived. The Christian church has deceived people from the beginning. Notably the Catholic Church is the great enemy because the author of the book believes that the Roman Catholic Church represents mainline Christianity. But Christianity has deceived people for 2,000 years because they've told you what they want you to believe, not what Christianity really is, and not what the founder of Christianity really meant for it to be. That's appealing to people. Everybody likes a secret, don't they? Don't you like it? Isn't your ego flattered when someone comes up to you and says, "Now, I don't want everybody to know this. This is just between you and me and a few other very intelligent people that can be trusted with a secret." Don't your eyes light up then? Everyone loves a secret.

So you're told, when you start to read this book, that you're going to obtain some knowledge that has been kept secret for hundreds of years, but at last, the truth is going to be told. This is nothing but Gnosticism. Gnosticism, you remember, teaches that only a few people are in the know. Only a few people have this secret knowledge. So Gnosticism profits from the fact that everybody likes a secret, and they like to be included in the list of the inner circle of people who are in the know – people who can be trusted with the secret.

OK, here's the main thrust of the novel, The Da Vinci Code. First, let me tell you that it's nothing new. Every few years, legends are resurrected that deny the Bible and deny the gospel. These are the same ones that have been around for centuries. Every few years, they just find themselves resurrecting again. They're refuted by competent biblical scholars. Then a few years later, they appear again. They just don't go away and stay. This one The Da Vinci Code last appeared as a book called Holy Grail, Holy Blood. It was written by three men, and it was published back in 1982. It did not come with a lot of fanfare, and it didn't make anywhere near as big a mark as The Da Vinci Code is. But here basically is the secret knowledge that is revealed in these two books.

**The Holy Grail**

It involves the Holy Grail. You remember the legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. They were all searching for the Holy Grail. The Holy Grail was supposedly the cup that Jesus used at the Last Supper at the last Passover meal with the disciples that was passed around. Somehow it fell into the hands of Joseph of Arimathea. Joseph stood by the dying Christ and caught His blood that He shed on the cross in the Holy Grail. So this was a very special cup. Whoever owned the cup, good things would happen to them because this was a relic.

So King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, according to the legend, spend their time searching for the Holy Grail, and they have all kinds of adventures as they search for the Grail. Finally, if I understand it, if I remember correctly, Sir Galahad actually recovers the grail. When he does, both he and the Grail are taken up into heaven. But of course, we know that this is only legend, and we don't take it seriously.

**It Claims that Jesus was Married and that He had Children**

But now here is what the author of The Da Vinci Code says, and the authors of The Holy Grail, Holy Blood. The stories about the Holy Grail are actually stories about something else. The Grail was just the symbol of something much deeper, a symbol of who the true Jesus was, and what He really wanted to do – what His mission on earth was. The Grail is not actually the cup that Jesus used at the Last Supper, but the Grail means Jesus' *descendants*, because Jesus had a wife, and guess who she was? Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene. They were married at the wedding in Cana when Jesus changed the water to wine at His first public miracle. It was at His own wedding that He changed the water to wine, and He was being married to Mary Magdalene, who is the same person, according to this legend, as Mary of Bethany, the brother of Lazarus.

Now, Lazarus was actually the beloved disciple. We assume that when John is speaking about himself, and just doesn't use his own name because of modesty in referring to himself as that beloved disciple, or the disciple whom Jesus loved, he was actually referring to Lazarus, the brother of Bethany, the brother of Mary, the wife of Jesus. Also when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He didn't really raise him from the dead. Lazarus really wasn't dead. This was a mystery religion ceremony.

Maybe you've been in some of the mystery religions, such as the Masons. I was a mason. When you're made a Master Mason, you go through the ceremony, you go through a ritual, and you're blindfolded. (And I could be killed for telling you this.) But they pretend to knock you on the head. They do knock you in the head with a rubber or a leather mallet. Someone knocks you over and you pretend to be dead. Then you're raised again. This was the common theme in all the mystery religions, and it still lives in masonry. According to Dan Brown, the author of The Da Vinci Code, this was what was happening when Jesus pretended to raise Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus wasn't dead. They were just going through a mystery religion Masonic-type ritual.

**It Claims that Jesus did not Die on the Cross**

Jesus was also not a peasant who earned his living as a carpenter, but he was a wealthy man. After all, he was heir to the Jewish throne. It's true that he was heir to the Jewish throne. If you read the genealogy in Matthew and the genealogy in Luke, you'll see that if the Jews had been allowed to have a king in the Davidic line, it would've been Jesus of Nazareth. But that doesn't mean that He was wealthy. But according to Dan Brown, Jesus, being a member of the Jewish royal family, was wealthy. And He read the Old Testament, and He saw what the Messiah had to do. So He manipulated events to make Himself look like the Messiah. He even planned and manipulated His own crucifixion. Then, of course, He didn't actually die the cross. People just thought that He was dead. Then I don't know whether Brown believes in the swoon theory or what. The swoon theory says that He was just so exhausted, and He fainted there on the cross. When they took Him down, they thought He was dead. When they laid Him in the cool tomb, the cold marble had a reviving effect. So He got up and walked all the way over to India, and spent the rest of His life there, and died as an old man in India.

But according to Dan Brown, when He was taken off the cross, He wasn't dead. He pretended to be dead long enough for them to think that He was buried in the tomb. Then He got up and got His wife and His children, because they had children by now. And they went to southern France. Jesus died as an old man. The children grew up, and their descendants became the kings of France. So it's a very interesting type of story that Dan Brown just popularized and passed it off as the truth in this novel.

**Two Types of Disciples**

Furthermore, there were two types of disciples. There were the orthodox disciples who were mostly men, and they believed in the Jesus of faith. They actually created this Jesus. According to this belief, Jesus never claimed to be God. But later on, these men started some legends about Him that made Him look like God. Later on, Constantine made it official church doctrine that Jesus was God. But then there were the orthodox followers of Jesus, and then there were the esoteric followers of Jesus. These were the ones who had been through the mystery religions, and they knew the true teachings that Jesus taught to just a few select disciples – not the published popular teachings that everyone believed in. And this represented the real Jesus, the esoteric Jesus, or the mystery religion type of Jesus. He never claimed to be God. He was just a good teacher. He said people should do right and treat others like they should be treated. He never claimed to be the Savior of the world or the Son of God or anything like that. This was all added later, according to Dan Brown.

**Constantine**

Now, all through this time, for about 300 years, the orthodox followers of Jesus and the esoteric followers had a battle. They would just battle back and forth. Sometimes one side would be appearing to win, and sometimes the other, until Constantine. You remember the story of Constantine – the true story. Constantine was the emperor of Rome. One day before a battle, he prayed and prayed to all the gods that he knew that he would be victorious in battle the next day. Finally he remembered that he hadn't prayed to the Christian God. So he thought something like, "Well, I've been wondering about this Christianity, if there could be anything to it." He said, "I'll tell you what, Christian God, if you will give me victory tomorrow, I will become a Christian, and I will force all of my army to be baptized, and I'll make Christianity the official religion of Rome."

Lo and behold, he looked up in the sky and saw a cross. He also saw the Latin words, "In this sign, you will conquer." So I believe it was before the battle, he had all of his soldiers baptized, and he had crosses painted on their shields. He won the battle the next day. So he stood good to His Word that he would make Christianity the official religion of Rome. Whether Constantine was actually born again is highly debatable. He did, afterward, associate with some true Christians who hopefully gave him the gospel. If we're going to judge by his behavior, he did many things that were not becoming of a Christian. But we'll just leave that as an open question for now, whether Constantine actually became a Christian, or whether he just pretended to.

**The Canon of Scripture**

But the fact of the matter is that he did make Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, and he started taking government money and financing Christian projects such as missionary endeavors. So one of the things that he commissioned was the copying of Bibles. So a council had to be called to make it official. What was the Bible? What books did the Bible include?

Now, they didn't get together and decide what books were holy, and what books were not. They made public what the church was already practicing. They explicitly said what the church implicitly believed. Let's just suppose that there had never been a council of church leaders who said, "These are the books that belong in the Bible," and we decided we wanted to do that. There would probably be people who would say, "Well, I think the works of Lewis Sperry Chafer (his systematic theology) should be in the Bible." And someone else would say, "Well, I've really gotten a lot out of Chuck Swindoll's writing. Let's have those books put in the Bible, or at least some of them." I know I heard someone seriously propose, back in the 1960s, that a book written by Martin Luther King should be added to the canon.

So we would have all kinds of people saying which books should be in the Bible. I know a very dear Christian lady who loves this weird occult book called A Course in Miracles. And she would probably say that it should be in the Bible. She probably reads that more than she does the Bible.

I was at a Christian bookstore recently looking at the devotional books. There is a book you might have seen (and I hope you don't have one), but it's called God Calling. Years ago this person wrote as though he were God, sending messages to people. It is still in use today as a popular devotional book. So I feel sure there would be true born again believers who would say, "This should be a part of Holy Scripture."

So it wouldn't take spirit-filled men very long to throw these books out and say, "No, some of them are OK. If you want to read them, it's OK, but they're not on the same level as Scripture." That's what the Council of Nicea did. There were about 80 books that were going around, and some of them claimed to be written by Thomas (The Gospel of Thomas), or Phillip (The Gospel of Philip). Some of them were so weird, all you had to do was read a paragraph, and you would say, "Man, I know there is no way. This an ancient book. We might be able to learn a lot from it about how people lived and how they thought back in New Testament times, but it's not on the same level as Scripture. No way."

In fact, I heard a professor at Dallas Seminary who was writing a book on this subject. His college-age daughter said, "Well, Dad, how do we know some of those books don't belong in the Bible?" And he said, "OK, why don't you read some? Here, I have some of them." So she started reading them, and she said, "Boy, Dad, these are really weird." She was right. It doesn't take you long. You don't really have to have a whole lot of discernment to read some of this stuff and say, "No way does it belong in Holy Scripture."

Now, there are a few of them that there's really nothing wrong with. They're good reading, and they're right on doctrinally. For example, there's one called The Epistle of Clement. Clement was a church father who had studied doctrine under the apostle Peter, and he's right on in his doctrine, and he says some good things, but it doesn't claim to be Scripture, and it isn't Scripture. You can read it, and you can say, "This is really a nice book, but it doesn't belong in the Bible."

**The Council of Nicea**

So it didn't take the Council of Nicaea long to say, "OK, if you're a scribe, and you've been hired to copy the Bible, this is what you should include. Nothing else. This is the inspired Word of God. There had been lists going around for years that spiritual leaders had written up, saying, "These are the books of the Bible." So they didn't get together and vote on what should be in the Bible and what shouldn't. You might want to listen to the tapes that we have that Dr. Danish made some time ago on canonicity, on the history of the Bible. He goes into more detail about all of this history.

But Dan Brown says that Constantine threw out all the good books. He threw out all the esoteric books that had the stuff about the mystery religion – what we'd call New Age stuff today: reincarnation, and all that stuff. Constantine didn't want people to believe that. So he wouldn't let the council put them in the Bible – just the four gospels.

Constantine also told the leaders of the Council of Nicaea to make sure the vote goes that Jesus is God, not just a human being. Nobody had ever thought of that before, but the Council of Nicaea obeyed the emperor, and they said, "OK, from now on, Jesus was not just a good man; not just a prophet; and, not just a teacher. He is God, so you've got to think of Him as God."

Now, of course, we spent several sessions looking at Scripture that plainly and explicitly teaches the deity of Christ. We know that it was interpreted to mean that Jesus is God because we have writings of some of the early church fathers, just a few years after the New Testament was complete. Here they're writing sermons and writing commentaries, and they say that Jesus is the third person of the Trinity – equal with God. They teach very explicitly the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, just like we believe here at Berean Memorial church.

So this wasn't a new idea that the Council of Nicea came up with. This is what church councils have done through the ages. They have made a public declaration of what Christians already believe. And, you know, sometimes we're not quick to make these public announcements until we're pressured into it. The apostle Paul said, "It's good that you have schisms, because this brings out who's right and who's wrong doctrinally." And most of the New Testament (at least the New Testament epistles) were written to put down and refute heresy.

So it's like the abortion issue. You know, nobody ever thought anything about it. Christians didn't put anti-abortion stickers on their cars; wear anti-abortion T-shirts; and, try to get people not to get abortions until the 1970s. We just never thought about it. I mean, anybody knew that to kill an unborn baby was wrong. Then we had these people going around saying, "Well, a woman should have control over her own body," and so on. So some Christian leaders got together and started studying this. They came up with Scriptures, and we made some public announcements that we're against abortion.

You ladies will relate to this issue: You men come home and your wife says, "Well, how was your day?" And you say, "Fine." And in your mind, you've had a great conversation. You told her everything she needs to know. You've answered her in great detail. But a lady who knows how to draw people out, and most ladies do, will begin to ask some very probing, intelligent questions, and before long, you've spilled your guts to her. So that's what the church councils were.

I mean, what do you think about sin? We're against it. Period. Over and out. But then you call a church council, and the theologians set around and say, "OK, maybe we should tell people exactly what sin is, and give them some Scriptures, and tell them just what kind of sins we're against, and how deeply we're against them." So that's what the Council of Nicea did. Most people knew what belonged in the Bible. The Christians with discernment and spiritual maturity knew the 66 books that belonged in the Bible, and they just made it public. They knew that Jesus was God; that He claimed to be God; and, that He's equal to God. They just made it public. They made a public statement.

So you may wonder, "Well, this is really news to me. I didn't know anybody believed this," but Dan Brown is teaching it in his novel as the truth that is being discovered. So how does he know all this? Well, that's a good question. I'm going to tell you why some people believe it. You're going to be surprised that people would believe things that are based on such superficial and shoddy investigation.

**It Claims that the Holy Grail Refers to the Descendants of Jesus Christ**

First of all, the reason that he knows that the legends about the Holy Grail have nothing to do with a cup, is that it's all about the holy seed, the holy descendants of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ came to create a dynasty of kings. So how does he know that "Grail" doesn't refer to a cup, and that it refers to the seed? Well, it's something like this, and I'm greatly simplifying it for the purpose of time, but this is the gist of it.

Sometimes we abbreviate things, and the romance languages like French, Latin, Spanish, and so on, abbreviate even more than we do. For example, consider the word "san." San Antonio means St. Anthony, and the Spanish word for saint is actually "Santo." But before a vowel, sometimes they abbreviate it, and they say, "San Antonio." So "san" means "holy." So people would sometimes, instead of saying "the Holy Grail" in Spanish, they would say "San Grail." If you just leave the "G" off of that, instead of saying the "Holy Grail" ("San Grail"), you're saying the "Holy Royal Seed." "Rail" means "royal." So it couldn't mean anything but the Holy Seed, the descendants of Jesus. Therefore, Jesus had to be married if he had descendants.

This is the kind of "scholarship" (and I say that in quotes) that you have to swallow to believe this theory. It's like Herbert W. Armstrong used to say that the people of Denmark were descendants of Dan, the son of Jacob. How did he know this? Well, apparently, Dan's descendants went around building monuments and leaving their trademark all over the place. So people started talking about Dan's mark. That got to refer to the people who went around making these marks, the Danes. So you have to watch this kind of scholarship that makes conclusions on such superficial evidence that no serious scholar would take seriously.

But the guys who wrote the book Holy Grail, Holy Blood admit that they believe their theories because of reading between the lines; investigating rumors; and, the arguments from silence. So think about that. Reading between the lines just means that you're going to read into something what you want it to say, not what it actually says. And believing rumors just means believing urban legends. Somebody has a good story, and you can use it to prove what you want to prove, so you incorporate it in your theory, and you teach it as fact. Then the argument from silence means that if there are no records about something, you can make up anything.

For example, they say that one of the early kings of France, who was supposedly a descendant of Jesus, was King Dagobert. There isn't much information on him. So they say the reason there isn't much information means that they didn't want people to know about it. So since they didn't want people to know about it, he must have been going around revealing secrets that he was a descendant of Jesus of Nazareth. That's the argument from silence, and you can use that to prove anything.

Another fallacy that they use is that they take the gospels totally out of their context. They totally ignore the context of the four gospels. Remember that the four gospels are Jewish. They take place in a Jewish milieu – an atmosphere (a sociology) of Jewish people. John wrote for gentiles, but he makes all these notes. So when he mentions Passover, he says this was a Jewish feast. So if you go to read the gospels, you have to read the gospels in a Jewish context. One of the things they ignore is that in a Jewish context, a woman was not considered a reliable witness. You couldn't bring a woman into a court of law as a witness unless you had several man who would support her story. Women were considered so emotional and ignorant that they just weren't reliable as witnesses.

**It Claims that Mary Magdalene was an Apostle**

One of the things that Brown does is that he says that Mary Magdalene was not only Jesus' wife, but she was also an apostle – the leading apostle. This is really interesting. He bases this on the writings of an early church father, Hippolytus. Dan Brown also uses Hippolytus as one of the guys who hid the truth. But then he uses him as a witness because in one of his writings, he says that Mary Magdalene was the apostles' apostle. She was the apostle of the apostles.

Now, as you know, the word apostle has a technical meaning and a non-technical meaning. The word apostle actually means "a special messenger." There are places in the New Testament where it refers to all believers. It even indicates that women in the early church were apostles, because we're all special messengers of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. But when it is used in a technical sense, it means one thing – one of the 12 original, or of the apostle Paul. What Hippolytus does when he says that Mary Magdalene was the apostles' apostle, he was saying that Mary Magdalene was one of the first witnesses to the resurrection. So she went to the apostles and said, "He is risen." So he was making a play on words. He was saying that Mary Magdalene was a messenger to the messengers. He wasn't saying that of all the messengers, she was the greatest messenger. But this is what Brown says that Hippolytus meant by that.

Then he later uses Hippolytus as someone who tried to squelch the truth, and not someone who told the truth. So they argue around in circles, and they take it all out of context, until they have destroyed their own statements. So this is how he knows all this – that the word "grail" is "grail" in Spanish, and if you drop the "G," it's "rail," which means "royal." So "San Rail" means "the Holy Royal Seed," and so it's got to refer to the fact that Jesus was married, and not to the cup that was supposedly used at the Lord's Supper. So this is the kind of scholarship we're up against. This kind of scholarship I like to refute because it really makes it easy.

So we know that the gospels were written by either eyewitnesses, as in the case of Matthew, Mark, and John, or people who were associated with eyewitnesses such as Luke who was associated with the apostle Paul; who interviewed people; and, who probably interviewed Mary, the mother of Jesus, and people who were actually eyewitnesses. We know that 1 Corinthians 15 says that there were eyewitnesses to the resurrection: "Jesus appeared to all of the 12, then to the apostle Paul, and he appeared to 500 people at one time." The apostle Paul says that some of them were alive at the very time when he wrote that. He said, "Go ask them. Talk to the eyewitnesses." It's impossible to refute eyewitnesses.

What about, as Jesus was hanging on the cross and the Roman soldier came, and stuck the spear into His side, and John says, "Blood and water came forth" – blood and serum, which indicates that he had truly died. No one disputed the fact that He was really dead. Crucifixion was a very efficient means of executing people. If you hung there on that cross all day, you would be dead. And if you weren't, they would break your legs so that you could no longer push up against the pressure on your lungs and heart, and your lungs would collapse. And then the spear in the side absolutely cinched it. No one, even the Jewish leaders who wanted Jesus dead, stepped forward and said, "Hey, He's not dead yet. Make sure He's dead." Everyone was satisfied that Jesus died. It was 1800 years later that people looked back and said, "Well, He must not have been dead." So there is no question that He died.

So how did he deal with that? How do Ron Brown and the people who wrote the book Holy Grail, Holy Blood deal with it? They just totally avoid it. They say, "Well, obviously, He wasn't dead because He was seen later on." They just don't deal with the resurrection at all. They totally ignore it.

Then they say that you can't believe the four gospels. All of these other gospels had to be the truth. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were not the true gospels because they're so full of contradictions. Let me give you a sample of some of the contradictions that they claim.

Luke says that shepherds came to worship the baby Jesus. Matthew says that kings came to worship Him and bring him gifts. That's a contradiction, right? Could there be shepherds and kings? If Luke says that shepherds came, does that mean there were no kings? Luke doesn't say, "No kings came – only shepherds." Matthew doesn't say there were no shepherds there.

Now, were there really kings? Does the Bible say there were kings who came to worship baby Jesus? It nowhere says that the Magi, the wise man from the east, were kings. That's just a tradition. I don't know how it got started. There's nothing that says there were three of them. Since they brought three gifts, some people say, "Well, there were probably three men, and each one brought a different gift." But maybe they were 12, and some of them brought one gift; some brought another; and, some brought another. So they say that there can't be kings if there were shepherds. Well, the gospel doesn't even say there were kings. And it certainly doesn't say that shepherds were the only ones that came, or that the Magi were the only ones that came.

These books are a result of pop culture – the popular, superficial culture where people want to be entertained, and use entertainment as their source of truth. They want to believe, because it is ego-flattering to believe that you know the truth about something that a lot of poor, ignorant, dumb people actually believe and take seriously, but they've been deceived, and you know the truth about it.

Well, why are we even spending our time talking about such a weird off-the-wall thing? Well, sooner or later, you're going to have somebody confront you with this. Boy, this is going to be a great opportunity. At least they're thinking, and they're thinking about the Lord Jesus Christ. They're thinking that all of this stuff proves that He was really a good man; He was a good teacher; and, He had some good ideas. But just look at what Christianity has done through the ages with all of these good ideas. This is your opportunity. They're thinking about Jesus Christ. It's your opportunity to deflate these legends that they believe, and that's easy to do with the information that we just discussed. Introduce them to the real Jesus Christ – the unique Son of God, and the eternally preexistent, virgin-born Savior who came to the world to die on the cross for the sins of all humanity, who rose from the dead, and who is alive today. They're thinking about Him. This is a great opportunity to introduce them to the true gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Leon Adkins, 2003

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