



Decoding The Da Vinci Deception May 2006

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Typically I write an annual book review article that appears here every year in the month of May. That article will appear in this space next month. This year, I want to devote the May column to a book that will be released in movie form this month, *The Da Vinci Code*.

The *Da Vinci Deception*, uh, . . . I mean, *Code* has proven to be somewhat of a publishing phenomena. It has been among the 150 top selling books for 161 straight weeks. As of May 2006, it had sold over 40 million copies and been translated into 44 different languages.¹

Tom Hanks has teamed up with Sony Pictures to produce a movie which will be released on May 19, 2006.

I can only hope that the movie will do poorly in theaters, but my instincts tell me it will be one of the highest grossing films of the year. That, not because it is an accurate portrayal of Christ, the Church, or Church history, but because of fallen man's appetite for error.

I am not going to offer you a review of *The Da Vinci Code*. I haven't read the book. I haven't bought the book. I do not have any plans to do either. I am not a reader of novels. I can't get into reading even good Christian fiction novels, and I certainly can't stomach poor anti-Christian fiction novels. I know what the book is about and that is enough.

I am comfortable with letting other men, far more capable than myself, review the book and answer the silly and outlandish claims of *The Da Vinci Code*. I have included a list of recommended resources at the end of this article.

True History

Let's get the facts out on the table.

Jesus did not marry Mary Magdalene and father a child with her. She is not the "Holy Grail" that bore the blood-line of Jesus. Mary did not move to France and give birth to

Jesus' child. Jesus did not intend to make Mary Magdalene a "co-founder" of His Church. He did not intend for the future of His church to be in the hands of Mary Magdalene. The Apostles did not rewrite the life of Jesus to establish some patriarchal church structure and then cover up the truth. The church that Jesus established was not corrupt from the beginning. The New Testament is not missing books and what is recorded in the Bible is historically accurate and absolute truth. There are no secret societies devoted to killing anyone who might uncover the "truth" about Jesus, Mary and the early church.

There is your review of *The Da Vinci Code*.

Jesus Bashing

Dan Brown is just the latest in a long line of authors, "scholars," or "historians" who set out to rewrite history to their own liking and remake Jesus after their own image. It is very vogue to trash Christ.

Jesus is the one religious figure that can be attacked with impunity in our world. We have all seen what can happen when someone draws a picture of Mohammad with a bomb on his head, but you can say anything you want about Christ or the Church without any fear of reprisals.

None of this should take us by surprise. Jesus told His disciples that the world hated Him and would hate them as well (**John 15:18-27**).

Going Behind the Attack

I am convinced that there is something more going on than just a fast-paced novel that sells well. The reality is that people have a hunger for the type of historical revisionism that men like Dan Brown dish out.

It is more than just a hunger for a well written novel (although many would argue that the book is not well

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Da_Vinci_Code

written). It goes farther than a fascination with conspiracy theories. It is not that people have a desire to understand Who Jesus is and what He did.

If people want to know about Jesus, they know what to read - the Bible. In fact, people do not want to know the truth about Jesus or the Bible. That is why books like *The Da Vinci Code* are so popular.

It is not the truth people are after. Sinful man doesn't like truth or light. He loves darkness and he hungers for falsehood. *The Da Vinci Code* offers both falsehood and darkness. *The Da Vinci Code* offers men a "Christianity" they can be comfortable with and a Jesus after their own image.

The "Christianity" of *The Da Vinci Code* is exactly what fallen men want for the following three reasons:

1) *The Da Vinci Code* offers a Jesus that men do not have to face.

The Jesus of the Bible was the pure, sinless, Son of God, born of a virgin. He lived a sinless life of perfect righteousness and pleased the Father in all that He did (**1 Pet. 2:22; Matt. 1:23**). The Jesus of the Bible is not only perfect man, but He is also perfect God. He is the eternal God who existed before the world was (**John 1:1**) and became flesh (**John 1:14**). In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form (**Col. 2:9**). Jesus was aware of His own divinity and made such claims regarding Himself (**John 5:18**).

The Jesus that the Bible describes to us does not make us feel good about ourselves. When we see Him and realize Who He is, we can only respond by saying, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man" (**Luke 5:8**). He intimidates us. We feel unworthy when compared to Him. His perfection highlights our imperfection. His worthiness magnifies our unworthiness. His holiness amplifies our sinfulness.

The Jesus of the Bible demands radical selfless obedience. He demands that we lose our life to gain it, that we count all things as loss for the excellency of knowing Him, and that we place our faith in Him and Him alone for salvation. Although His burden is light, He offers a narrow way to heaven that few find.

Not the Jesus of *The Da Vinci Code*. The Jesus of *The Da Vinci Code* was a mere mortal who was later deified by Constantine for political purposes. His sinlessness, his holiness, his miracles, his resurrection, and his unique relationship to God were all myths manufactured after the fact by Apostles who were intent on covering up the truth about the "real" Jesus.

The Da Vinci Code offers up a Jesus who was a sinner like you and me. He married a woman and had a child with

her. He tried to start a good church that worshipped women, but he failed to keep his disciples from hijacking his movement and subverting his true cause. He was a noble man with good intentions. He just wasn't as successful as he had hoped.

That is a Jesus with whom sinful man can feel comfortable. He doesn't reveal God. He doesn't condemn our sin. He doesn't make us feel inferior or uncomfortable. He doesn't demand radical obedience.

2) *The Da Vinci Code* offers a Bible that men don't have to obey.

Rather than being the inspired, inerrant, holy, true, pure, incorruptible, living Word of God, the Bible of *The Da Vinci Code* is simply the writings of men who wished to cover up the truth rather than promote it. According to *The Da Vinci Code*, the Bible is not truth at all. These are the basic assumptions of *The Da Vinci Code*:

Assumption 1: We cannot trust a word that was written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John since they wrote their gospels many years (almost 30!) after the events they record.

Assumption 2: They were lying. So anything they wrote cannot possibly stand on its own merits. Therefore whatever they say about Jesus, the opposite must be true.

Assumption 3: Any information we can gain regarding Jesus' words and work from any source outside the New Testament must trump our understanding of the New Testament gospels.

Just a few weeks ago, the Gospel of Judas hit the news. USA Today carried the headline, "*Long Lost Gospel of Judas casts Traitor in New Light*." A more recent story on USA Today.com carried the headline, "*Long Lost Gospel of Judas Recasts 'Traitor'*." National Geographic (no friend to Christianity) has devoted a lot of web articles and television documentaries to the Gospel of Judas.

So what is the story with the Gospel of Judas? It was written by Gnostics around 180 AD. According to this document, Jesus asked Judas to betray Him. Why would Jesus do such a thing? According to the Gnostic heresy, flesh is evil and spirit is good. Jesus had a body of flesh and the only way He could become truly "spiritual" was if He were to shed His body of evil flesh. So Jesus instructed Judas to make arrangements for His arrest and crucifixion. Judas is therefore turned from a "traitor" into a hero and perhaps the greatest of the disciples since Judas was the one that helped Jesus achieve His truly spiritual state.

Not wanting to miss a chance to discredit Jesus and the Apostles, critics jump on board the "discovery" and assert

that “the Gospels of the New Testament have to be understood in light of this recent find.”

So here is how the game is played: First, they tell us that we can't trust Matthew, Mark, Luke and John because they wrote so long after the events of Jesus' life. After all, **thirty years** had passed and you can't possibly expect that they would accurately record what happened after as many as **30 years**.

Then they find a parchment written by heretics **150 years** after the time of Christ and we are told that this represents a new and reliable picture of Jesus, and Matthew, Mark, Luke and John have to bow the knee to the Gospel of Judas. Sorry, but I'm not biting on that!

The gospel records of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were all written by eyewitnesses and they were circulated among the very people who were eyewitnesses of the events they recorded. Those documents would never have been accepted and circulated if they were not accurate records of the events they record. Even the Gospel of John cannot be dated any later than 70 AD. Matthew and Mark were written early, probably around 45 or 50 AD, and Luke was written just prior to Acts in probably 59 or 60 AD.

So what can the Gospel of Judas tell us? Nothing. But that is not how the game is played. We have to assume the NT is unreliable and anything that contradicts the NT must be reliable.

Of course, this gets us all “off the hook” for obedience. If the gospels cannot be trusted, then what can I trust? Why should I take seriously anything I read in the Bible if it will only be shown by the next “discovery” to be in need of revision? So if you can't trust it to be historically accurate, then you certainly can't trust it to be doctrinally accurate. If it is not worth our trust and confidence, then it is certainly not worthy of my obedience.

The not-so-subtle deception of *The Da Vinci Code* is its assertion that everything we can know about Jesus from the Bible is false. The Bible therefore is merely a human book and not a divine book. As such, I don't have to worry about its demands upon me.

3) The Da Vinci Code offers an afterlife we don't have to fear.

The Jesus of the Bible claimed to have the power to give life to Himself and He claimed to be the One Who would resurrect all mankind to face judgment (**John 5:21, 25-30**). Paul asserted that the Resurrection of Christ was the proof that all men will face judgment on an appointed day. Furthermore, Christ Himself will be that Divine Judge (**Acts 17:30-31**).

If Dan Brown and *The Da Vinci Code* are correct, then

fallen men have nothing to fear. You see Jesus was a sinner, just like us. He was merely a man, just like us. If He is not risen, then there is no Resurrection of all mankind. If He is not risen, then there is no judgment. If Christ is not God in human flesh, then He has no authority to sit as Judge of all men.

Sin, judgment, righteousness, holiness, depravity, and eternal heaven and hell become illusions. If Dan Brown and *The Da Vinci Code* are correct, then these things have no meaning at all. They are merely the inventions of the human mind. They are the theological products of oppressive, sexist, anti-Semitic disciples run amuck after the death of their leader.

My Prediction and the Bottom Line

My prediction is that the book will continue to sell well, especially after the release of the movie. Pop culture will continue to swallow the lie. I would be pleased to be proved wrong on this, but I expect that the movie will open to sell-out crowds and become a summer blockbuster.

Let's assume the book has sold 6 million copies. Every copy was probably read by an average of 2-3 people. That is 12 -18 million people. If everyone who read the book watches the movie, then ticket sales will probably be somewhere around \$100 million.

That wouldn't surprise me. Like I said, bashing Christ is in vogue. The *Da Vinci Code* is popular because it offers people a Jesus they can be comfortable with, a Bible they don't have to believe and an afterlife they don't have to fear.

The *Da Vinci Code* is loved because it makes people comfortable with their sin. It removes their fear of divine judgment. It takes away the condemnation of Scripture. It gives them an excuse to not repent and turn to Christ.

Forewarned is Forearmed

The Da Vinci Code is not the first attack on Jesus and the Bible. It certainly won't be the last. So let me end with some words of warning from the apostles.

1 Timothy 4:7, “But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness. . .”

2 Peter 1:16, “For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”

2 Timothy 4:3-4, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves

teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to *myths*.”

* *The Da Vinci Deception* by Erwin W. Lutzer

Colossians 2:4, 8, “I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and *empty deception*, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.”

If there has ever been a “cleverly devised tale,” a “worldly fable fit only for old women,” and a “myth” that fits the desires of the people, it is *The Da Vinci Code*.

Next time you run into someone who has become enamored by the book, respond with something like this, “Can I ask you a question? Which of these three reasons best describes why you like *The Da Vinci Code* so much? Is it A) because it presents a Jesus you can be comfortable with, or B) because it presents a Bible you don't have to obey, or C) because it offers an afterlife you don't have to fear?” You have to admit, it might be fun just to see where that line of questioning will take the conversation!

Without Wax-



Recommended Reading on The Da Vinci Code

- * *The Truth Behind the Da Vinci Code: A Challenging Response to the Bestselling Novel* by Richard Abanes
- * *The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction* by Hank Hanegraaff and Paul L. Maier
- * *Breaking the Da Vinci Code : Answers to the Questions Everyone's Asking* by Darrell L. Bock