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WHO IS JESUS? A PASTORAL HISTORIAN'S RESPONSE TO *THE DA VINCI CODE*

The Da Vinci Code is a mega best seller in the book market and on May 19 a movie, based on the book, will be released in theatres around the world. The book is a conspiratorial suspense novel written by Dan Brown. Though listed as fiction, the author states that his references to history are factual.

Brown tries to persuade the reader to believe that Jesus married Mary Magdalene and by her had a child that was to establish a royal blood line for an earthly family lineage. The popularity of Brown's work requires a response from the Scriptures and Christian history. I am honored to join with you, the reader, in a committed quest for the truthful origins of Christianity.

Who is Jesus in the New Testament?

During a pivotal period of Jesus' ministry, he asked the apostles two questions—"Who do people say the Son of Man is?" And, "**Who do you say I am?**" Then was the time and that was the place Jesus chose to call out the faith commitment of those who were ready to give it.

With mounting expectation, Jesus asked, "What about you? You have been with me. You have heard my teachings; seen my miracles; walked with me; asked me questions; calmed your fears by my presence; been shocked, humbled, and bewildered by me. We have prayed and worshiped together. **You need to know that you know who I am!** So give me your best answer."

The best of the rest in that moment was Peter. He spoke with a faith that he knew was true—"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." There, it was said. Peter boldly spoke what the others were thinking but were unable or unwilling to say. "You, Jesus," Peter was saying, "are the anointed Messiah and you are doing this as the sign of God's living presence—You are His Son."

Who is Jesus in the Da Vinci Code?

Dan Brown's Da Vinci Code is a fictional mystery which scratches our itch to know more about Jesus' life. His book connects with the inquisitive nature of our minds not the historical foundation of Christianity. His careless blend of fiction with fact infers "who can know for sure" and therefore perceptions based on fiction are as valid as perceptions based on external reality. As a pure fictional read his work is good enough to keep the pages turning. As a resource to better know the Christian faith, his writing is a grievous lie.

The following list illustrates the false basis on which Brown writes his book. Many more falsehoods could be cited. Each point responds to a claim made by Brown, and responds to the untruth of his claim.

- Mary Magdalene was not the wife of Jesus nor was she the mother of a child by Jesus. This distorted storyline maligns not only Jesus but Mary Magdalene. [She was a courageous follower of Christ who was among the women disciples (Luke 8:1-3); gave witness in Jerusalem during Jesus' final days (Mark 15:40-41; John 19:25); risked her life to anoint Jesus' body at the tomb (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:55-24:1); gave witness of His resurrection (Luke 24:1-11; John 20:11-18).]
- The New Testament is not a fictional writing to cover-up the real story about Jesus. No book has stood the test of time better than the Bible. The New Testament has been analyzed and criticized in a free & open market-place of intellectual & spiritual exchange. Good historical research confirms, not rejects, the New Testament's authenticity.
- Jesus' deity was not fabricated at the Council of Nicea, 325 A.D. [(An early council of Christian leaders who gathered to consider matters of faith & practice. Concerning Jesus, they affirmed the incarnation that Jesus was fully human and divine.)] From the beginning of His ministry, Jesus' divinity was declared. All the New Testament was written in the first century, with Paul's letters initiating in the mid 50's and Mark, the first Gospel, was written in the 60's.
- The Bible is not a fable written by the winners of history but is a faithful witness by a people, under God's inspiration, who were losing in their struggle against world powers. Jesus was crucified by an Empire. Many believers **were** martyred. **Before** 313 A.D. the Roman Empire unleashed ten periods of persecution against Christians. The critics of Christianity relished any criticisms of countering views to **the** Gospel accounts of Christ.
- The figure to Jesus' right in Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper" painting is not Mary Magdalene but John ("the beloved disciple") and to Jesus' left is John's brother James. The "effeminate" look of John, and other artists painted such a look on Jesus, was characteristic of showing the introspective nature of a spiritual person.
- Scant are the art historians who give credence to Leonardo da Vinci's paintings, e.g., "Mona Lisa" and "the Last Supper," as indicating that he has a secret to tell and that the secret is: 1.) there really is a Holy Grail; 2.) that the Holy Grail is the blood line of Jesus by way of Mary Magdalene.
- The Holy Grail (a mythological chalice used in the Last Supper and with which Joseph of Aramethia collected drops of Jesus' blood from the cross) probably doesn't exist, but even if it does, most etymologists see no legitimate word connection **of** Holy Grail to *Sangreal* to royal blood line. Brown states the Holy Grail was not a cup but a person, Mary Magdalene, and the blood she carried was the child of Jesus. Brown is trying to mainstream this lie as history.

- The Gnostic Writings are not accurate accounts of the first century Jesus of Nazareth. They are writings that express: all that is material is evil and that a demiurge (an evil god) created the material world and inspired the Old Testament; that Christ could not have been incarnational (human & divine) as the Messiah because that would have made Him evil. Brown refers to Gnostic writings in trying to support his conspiracy against the New Testament.
- The Priory of Sion is not a legitimate carrier of a sacred secret. The society is an esoteric group with French origins, most of which can be traced only to the 1700's. The historicity of the discovered parchments known as *Les Dossiers Secrets* has yet to be substantiated by historians outside of conspiratorial circles.
- The Opus Dei is not a murderous order. It is a controversial order within the Roman Catholic Church which emphasizes lay ministry and does have its headquarters in New York City. There is no evidence that it uses assassins to accomplish its purpose.
- *Yahweh* and *Shekeniah* are not the male-female version of God in the Old Testament or in the Hebrew faith. There is no basis for this claim and therefore no reason to think that there were images of them cohabitating beneath Solomon's Temple. The Star of David is not the union of two triangles to indicate the union of male-female.
- Walt Disney did not create his Mickey Mouse character to pass on the Holy Grail story. I lived in Kansas City, Disney's home town, for nine years; while there I researched some of his life story & work. His principle character came from his imagination. Mickey "popped" into his mind just as the train he was riding pulled into Kansas City's Union Station.

Brown is trying to re-write history in order to re-create people's perceptions of Christ. Since he does not like the Christ of the New Testament, he is trying to mainstream a different Christ in people's perception of reality. He wants people to believe in the perceptions of his reality and not to examine the reality of his perceptions. Christians are conscientious followers of Christ Jesus. The love and salvation of Christ is freely offered to every person in the world. This radical offer threatens those who oppose the message of Jesus.

Our sacred responsibility as individuals is to do the sweaty work of discerning whether or not our internal views connect with reality/ies outside of ourselves before we attempt to forge a future based upon that truth. Dan Brown needs to learn this lesson and we need to help others not to be confused by his confusion.