



How many of us have *heard* of the Book or Movie – The DaVinci code?

How many of us have read the book?

How many of us have seen the movie?

This morning is a *brief response* to both the book and the movie, and is titled:

## **Cracking the DaVinci Code**

### ***Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up?***

One day a teacher asked her fourth grade class this question: “Who is the greatest human being alive in the world today?” The responses came quickly. One boy said, “I think its Tiger Woods. He’s the best golfer ever.” A girl said, “I think it’s the Pope because he cares for people and doesn’t get paid for it all.” Another little boy who obviously watches Prime spoke up; ‘I think it is Paul Holmes!’

The kids shouted out one celebrity after another until a little boy by the name of Donnie spoke up: “I think it’s Jesus Christ because He loves everybody and is always ready to help them.”

The teacher told him that his answer was OK but that she was looking for the greatest living person, and of course Jesus lived and died almost two thousand years ago.

To which Donnie replied, “*Oh no, Mrs. Thompson, that’s not true at all. Jesus Christ is alive today and He lives in me right now!*”

He got the answer right, didn’t he!

This morning we're going to go on *a quest* for some answers by focusing on what are perhaps the two most important questions that we will ever be asked:

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“Who do *people* say Jesus is?”  
*and*  
 “Who do *you* say that He is?”

Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew 16:13-16.

As we're turning there, I want to ask for your help today.

Since there will be a lot of data in this study, - after all, we are referring to the DaVinci Code, - and I don't want you to get lost in it,

...every once in awhile I'm going to ask if 'you're still with me this morning', and I want you to answer “yes!”

Even if you're not with me I want you to still say “yes” because I'll at least know you're awake.

*Are you with me this morning?*

Slide # 3

Matthew 16:13-16

13 ¶ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15 "But what about *you*?" he asked. "Who do *you* say I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus has spent about two years teaching and training His students.

After an interaction with some false teachers, He warned his students in verse 6 to "be careful" and to "be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

At first they didn't get what Jesus was talking about then they realized that yeast stood for the false teaching that the leaders were propagating (see verse 12).

The thing about yeast is that it doesn't take much of it to affect big change.

That's because while it is small and subtle in how it works, it is also alive.

By itself, not much happens, but when combined with other ingredients, it is activated and unleashes its power.

Much of what is found in the DaVinci Code is insidious, - because it attacks some of the core beliefs of Christianity, - like the deity of Christ, and the authenticity of Scripture.

Sprinkled among some fact is a bunch of fiction.

Worked into the dough is some yeast that when activated threatens to fracture the faith of many.

It's like the Gospel of Judas; – contains an element of truth, but destroyed by the yeast of deception!

You see, don't be surprised that many other gospels existed after the time of Jesus, and that many of them were discarded.

In fact, I remember one pastor telling how amazing it was that each of the four gospels agree with each other and mesh together.

‘Surely’, he said, ‘this can only be a miracle of God and proves the Bible to be true!’

I said to that pastor, ‘It was no miracle, the reason they were chosen, and many other gospels discarded, is because they DO agree with each other. That was the purpose of them being chosen in the first place!’

Verse 13 tells us that Jesus takes his students to the “region of Caesarea Philippi.”

The tide has shifted against Jesus as many of the religious leaders are now plotting His death.

John 6:66 tells us, that at this time, ‘many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.’

Jesus takes them to Philippi in order to regroup, refocus and recalibrate.

It was no accident that Jesus brought them here.

Let me explain:

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Located about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, Caesarea Philippi was considered pagan territory, the capital of that Roman Province.



It was a beautiful and picturesque spot, 1100 feet above sea level near the foot of the towering snow-capped Mount Hermon.

But along with this God given beauty, they also came face-to-face with multiple images of false gods.

On one side of the mountain there was a cave where Philip had built a temple to Caesar and to the pagan god Pan.

In the niches of the rock there were statues of various idols, with 14 temples to the god Baal.

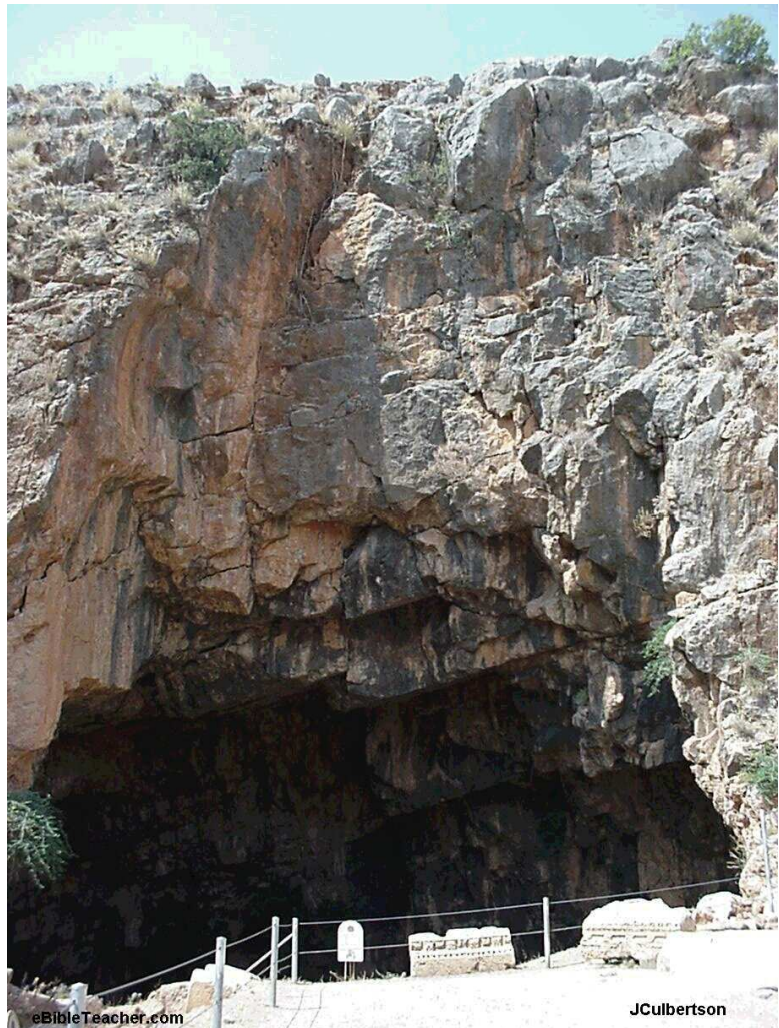
### Slide # 5

It's significant that Jesus took His students to this area because it was believed that it was through a cave in this mountain that Baal entered Hades.

The entrance then would be known as the 'gates of Hades' (or Hell).

Are you with me?

The disciples were surrounded by the multitudes of religions and pagan worship.



I picture them settling in to their retreat together, when Jesus asks the first of two questions in order to probe them and prepare them for what was coming.

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## **“Who do *people* say the Son of Man is?”**

This was a pretty easy question because the misguided multitudes were talking about Jesus and it seemed like everyone had a different idea of who He was.

Just as they do today!

We don't really know who answered this question but four answers bubbled to the surface:

### **• John the Baptist.**

Since John had been held in high honor by the people, some thought that he had come back to life. This is what Herod believed in Matthew 14:1-2: “At that time Herod heard the reports about Jesus, and he said to his attendants, ‘This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead!’”

### **• Elijah.**

Hundreds of years earlier, the prophet Elijah exposed what was in human hearts, performed miracles and inspired people; since Jesus was able to do these same things, maybe he was really Elijah.

In Malachi 4:5-6, the last book of the Old Testament, we read this prophecy: “See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.”

During the Passover meal in the time of Jesus, a cup would be poured for Elijah and the door to the house opened because they believed he would return to earth.

## • Jeremiah.

This prophet was known to speak boldly and yet mourn over the hardness of people's hearts.

People saw Jesus pronounce woes and also weep and so they wondered if he was Jeremiah.

A tradition also held that Jeremiah had hidden the Ark of the Covenant in a cave and that maybe he had come back now to restore this form of worship.

## • One of the prophets.

Others could not decide and so they thought he must be another prophet who had come back to life.

Are you with me this morning?

These are not bad answers in themselves but they all fall short of who Jesus really is because no one was openly confessing that Jesus Christ was the Messiah.

Here's the point.

Whenever you ask a group of people about Jesus, they'll come up with many different answers.

They can't all be right!

The disciples knew what people were saying about Jesus and they were able to *summarize* these beliefs.

Likewise, it's important for us to listen to the different views about Jesus today,

...so that we know what people are thinking and how we can help them see the truth.

Our culture is just as confused about Christ as was the first century.

That leads to the question: How does the DaVinci Code characterize Christ?

One of the major implications of this book is that Jesus was *just a man*, not the Messiah and definitely not God.

Here are some actual quotes from pages 232-235 in the book:

- Referring to the Council of Nicea, the character Teabing states: "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" (page 233).
- "By officially endorsing Jesus as the Son of God, Constantine turned Jesus into a deity...(page 233).
- "It was all about power," Teabing continued. "Christ as Messiah was critical to the functioning of Church and state. Many scholars claim that the early Church literally stole Jesus from His original followers, hijacking His human message, shrouding it in an impenetrable cloak of divinity, and using it to expand their own power" (page 233).
- "What I mean," Teabing countered, "is that almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false" (page 235).

These views of Jesus contribute to a wide spectrum of beliefs about Him, and can be summed up under three headings today:

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1. Widespread scepticism.
2. Enormous spiritual confusion.
3. Deep spiritual hunger.

## Slide # 8

## Who Do You Say Jesus Is?

Jesus expects us to know *what others are thinking* and He expects us to *know what we believe*.

To paraphrase A.W. Tozer: “What comes into our minds when we think about Christ is the most important thing about us.”

You see, Jesus is easy to like - but not so easy to love, for to love Him means to obey Him.

Many admire Him, but few adore Him, for to adore Him means that we must submit to Him.

Jesus wanted them to put into words whether or not they were ready to worship Him.

The passage doesn't really tell us, but I think this question is met with some initial silence because the disciples weren't used to thinking about Jesus like this.

He was their companion and friend and teacher but they may not have formed a firm opinion yet.

One reason that only Peter spoke up may be because they were afraid to give a wrong answer.

I used to do this in school.

When the teacher would ask for an answer I would avoid eye contact so I wouldn't have to answer and risk being wrong.

Peter took a brave risk in the response that he gave.

In the days of Jesus, to call an ordinary man God would be blasphemy, and had not the disciples shared that conviction, they would have had to kill Peter.

The fact that this did not occur demonstrates that they were in agreement with Peter's emphatic affirmation in verse 16: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The name Christ is the official title of Jesus, occurring over 520 times in the New Testament.

It means that He was anointed as the Messiah and Saviour.

Peter had the courage to confess Christ in a pagan setting and was willing to give a view that was contrary to the prevailing climate of this culture.

His answer became the bedrock for the launch of an unstoppable community called the church, against which the "gates of Hades will not overcome" (Matthew 16:18).

(Remember when we referred to this a little earlier, – a cave in the hills of Philippi – in the middle of pagan worship and corruption – where the false gods of this world were believed to enter to and from hell!)

As a matter of interest, Peter is not the rock on which the church is built, Jesus is!

When Jesus said; ‘And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.’

He wasn’t magnifying Peter as some rock of the church, He was showing him his insignificance.

In the original Greek, we can understand this better, and see the ‘play on words’ that Jesus was using.

In the Greek, Peter is spoken ‘Petros’ and rock is spoken ‘petra’.

Peter, or Petros means ‘ a small pebble.

Petra means Large Rock.

He was referring to, and comparing the smallness of Peter and mankind as a pebble, against the greatness of Himself as a Rock.

Jesus didn’t built the church upon a pebble, upon a man.

He built it upon Himself, upon the Rock!

**You are Peter, a pebble, and upon Myself, the  
Rock, I will build my Church!**

We participate in Peter’s profession when we stand up and say in response to the deceptive errors in the DaVinci Code: “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”

Is it true that almost everything our Christian fore-fathers have taught us about Christ is false?

Let's take a look at this claim by first looking at what Scripture teaches.

As I studied this it became clear very quickly that all 27 books in the New Testament can be dated to the 1st Century, and each one references the deity of Christ in some manner.

Now, just as a side-track, don't be alarmed to learn that most of the Gospels were written decades after the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

You see, in the days of Jesus, we didn't have written books as we have now.

Sure, there were scrolls, but the teachings about Jesus were sacred, and alive.

In ancient days, it was the spoken word that was alive. As soon as you wrote something down, it was believed to become dead and dormant.

That's why, for 50, 60 or more years, the gospels were not written down on paper.

In fact, in order to preserve the authenticity of the gospels, it was Christians who were revolutionary in the introduction of codex – the writing down of information in books, and not upon scrolls.

And in order to ensure the accuracy of the written gospels, the writers used an 'accountancy' practice to authenticate them.

What they did, when copying a manuscript, was to know the exact word in the precise middle of the book.

In knowing the middle word, they would know exactly how many words were before and after it.

Once the book was copied, the words were counted, and if the equations didn't match up exactly, the book was destroyed!

It's absurd to think that the deity of Christ wasn't established until Constantine "upgraded Jesus' status almost four centuries after Jesus' death."

What Does the Bible Say?

Are you still with me this morning?

I'm going to list a number of passages without comment so that the Scripture can speak for itself.

This is but a sampling and I encourage you to do your own study.

John 1:1-3: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."

John 1:29: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world."

John 1:45: "We have found the One Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth..."

John 1:49: "Rabbi, you are the Son of God..."

John 5:27: "And He has given Him authority to judge because He is the Son of Man."

John 6:69: "We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

John 8:58: "...Before Abraham was born, I am!"

John 10:30: "I and the Father are one."

Here are some other key passages from the New Testament, which unfortunately Brown does not even refer to; even though they were written much earlier than the Gnostic nonsense he does quote:

1 Corinthians 8:6: “Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.”

Colossians 1:19: “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him.”

Hebrews 1:8: “But about the Son he [the Father] says, ‘Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever...’”

2 Peter 1:1: “...our God and Saviour Jesus Christ...”

### What Did the Church Fathers Say?

The claim that Jesus was just a mortal man until the Council of Nicea is ridiculous and Brown’s statement that the early church hijacked Jesus’ message, shrouding it in “an impenetrable cloak of divinity” is absurd.

Not only are the Scriptures strong in their assertion of the deity of Christ, the early church fathers were absolutely clear that Jesus Christ is God.

- Ignatius (A.D. 105): “God Himself was manifest in human form.”
- Clement (A.D. 150): “It is fitting that you should think of Jesus Christ as of God.”
- Justin Martyr (A.D. 160): “The Father of the universe has a Son. And He...is even God.”
- Irenaeus (A.D. 180): “He is God, for the name Emmanuel indicates this.”
- Origen (A.D. 225): “No one should be offended that the Saviour is also God.”

Are you with me?

Peter was the first person to make his confession of Christ out loud.

It's important for each one of us to also do that, not only individually, but also corporately.

Since the Council of Nicea gets a bad rap from Dan Brown, let's pull out these ancient words that do such a great job of capturing what it is that Christians confess.

Let me read part of the Nicene Creed to you now.

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.  
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven:  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,  
and was made man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end...

Let me suggest that Dan Brown is no different than most people today who just pick and choose what they believe.

Grabbing some stuff from Dr. Phil, coupled with some conspiracy theories, a dash of a Sunday School lesson from their youth, a sprinkle of something they heard someone say once, mixed together with a commitment to not be too exclusive, and you end up with an amalgamation of contradictory comments and confusion about Christ and Christianity.

Interestingly, I heard both Tom Hanks and Ron Howard say that they hope the book and the movie will generate discussion that will help people figure out what it is they really believe.

That's my desire as well.

Slide # 9

# Do You Know Him?

Not all the answers about Jesus can be right.

Ultimately it must become personal; not what the public professes but what you personally profess.

Who is Jesus to you?

Jesus asked, "Who do you say that I am?"

In the midst of false views and cultural confusion, Peter confessed who Christ really was.

## Slide # 10

C.S. Lewis summed it up in these three options open to humanity today:

1. Jesus was either a liar.
2. Jesus was either a lunatic.
3. Or - Jesus is Lord!

There are many who want to accept Jesus as a good teacher without giving Him control of their lives.

If Jesus is Lord, and He is, we must submit and surrender to Him.

This is no easy task for those of us who are sinful and selfish.

Many want the benefits of belief in Christ without having Him be in charge.

C.S. Lewis put it this way: “Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit on Him and kill Him...or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to” (“Mere Christianity,” pp. 52-53).

Lewis is exactly right: Jesus did not leave the option open for us to take what we like of His teachings and leave the rest on the table.

Do you believe this morning that Jesus was telling the truth when He claimed to be God?

He is either a liar or a lunatic; or He is Lord.

## Who do *you* think He is?

### Who is Christ to *you*?

It's important to know what others say about Jesus; but it is imperative to know what *you* personally believe!

You won't be held accountable for what others think of Jesus, but you will be eternally accountable for what *you* think and what *you* do about it.

How you answer the question will affect both your life, and your afterlife.

It has to become deeply personal because we all need a personal relationship with Christ.

Slide # 11

Romans 10:9-10 says, "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

Are you ready to commit to Christ and then confess that He is your Saviour and Lord?

I wonder, do *you* know Him?

I recently read this article that spoke to me, about a father's love for his new born son - Chad.

“This is what I hold out to my young son as the hope of his life: that Jesus, God’s perfect, righteous Son, died in his place for his sins. Jesus took all the punishment; Jesus received all the wrath as he hung on the cross, so people like Chad and his sinful daddy could be completely forgiven”

(Quoted by Mark Dever, “Christianity Today,” May 2006, page 33).

Are you ready to admit your guilt and accept His grace?

I wonder, do *you* know Him?

Are you with me this morning?

Let’s pray!