

About 10 years ago I heard a preacher get on the radio and state that he believed that in the next few decades, the attacks against Christianity will increase tremendously to the point where the basic tenets of the Christian faith will come into question. He stated that we would see it increase to the point where it is not just the church being attacked, but Christ Himself as well. Now I don't want to call this man a prophet, but when you begin to look around it seems that it is becoming more apparent.

We have seen attempts to have holidays such as Christmas and Easter be removed of their Christian meanings, we have seen a constant attempt to remove any reference of Christianity from the public square. Now attacks on the Christian faith are nothing new and we shouldn't be surprised that everybody is not respectful of our Christian beliefs, nor should we be surprised that there are folks who don't like Christianity. Jesus told His disciples in **Luke 21:17**, "**All men will hate you because of me.**" And sometimes the message of Christianity is not a popular message, so we shouldn't be surprised.

But recently there has been a book written that has raised some issues that I feel we need to address. I'm sure you've heard of the book. It has been a best seller now for a while now, it is about to be made into a big budget movie starring Tom Hanks and is directed by Ron Howard. You all might remember that is Opie from the Andy Griffith Show, and only if Aunt Bee knew what Opie was up to now. Some are saying that the movie will have as big of impact as Mel Gibson's Passion of the Christ.

*The book and the movie is called **The Da Vinci Code** and in this book some claims are made that strike at the root of what we believe as Christians.* Some of the claims that are made is that the Bible as we know it is unreliable, that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and had a child, and that Jesus was not really the Son of God, that He was just a teacher who the church turned into the Son of God because it wanted to shore up its power and suppress women.

Those are some claims that are made in this book, but what really strikes hard is that the author Dan Brown claims that all his information is based on historical fact. On page 1 Brown says: [All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate.](#)

Now why are we talking about this. Well, first it's because it is relevant. As we said this is a best seller book and has been now for over 2 years. People are talking about it and if not informed, certain people can be led astray. Now I truly believe that no amount of human untruth can obscure the truth of the Gospel, but folks are talking about this and as a believer

people are going to ask you some questions about it, and we all need to be prepared to answer those questions.

Second of all, I want us to begin to be interested in some of these things ourselves. When ever people begin to discuss church history, and church councils, and creeds...I think it's a good thing. I think this is an excellent opportunity for us to learn more about the history of the Christian church. That's one of the reasons why starting tonight we are going to start a new bible study on the history of the church and I hope you will come to it, so if you have been skipping out on Sunday night services, tonight is the night to get back into it.

Now if you haven't read the book, this is a brief synopsis of it. It starts off with the murder of a curator at the Louvre in Paris, leads to a trail of clues found in the work of Leonardo Da Vinci, and the discovery of a centuries-old secret society. In those clues of Leonardo's work and the mission of the secret society revolve around the Holy Grail. This Holy Grail is not put forward as what we traditionally think of as the Holy Grail, the chalice that Jesus used during the Last Supper and that some feel was also taken to the cross and captured some of the blood from the crucifixion.

The novel identifies the Holy Grail as the bloodline of Jesus. The book suggests that Mary Magdalene was the wife of Jesus and the mother of his child. And because she bore descendants, particularly a daughter by the name of Sarah, she is, in fact, the Holy Grail. After the crucifixion, she fled with their child to the south of France where they established the Merovingian line of European royalty, which then became the basis of a secret society to preserve that bloodline and to protect the secret until it was time to make it known to the wider world.

Along the way, Brown also suggests that the church invented the deity of Jesus and that it's all been covered up primarily by a secretive Catholic group known as Opus Dei. This is a blend of fiction and historical assertion that suggests the entire foundation upon which Christianity is established is false and a lie.

Now the claim that I want to debunk this morning is the claim that the church invented the idea that Jesus was the Son of God. Let me quote Brown in his book. This is a quote in the book between two of the main characters. "At this gathering," Teabing said, "many aspects of Christianity were debated and voted up – the date of Easter, the role of the bishops, the administration of the sacraments, and, of course, the divinity of Jesus." "I don't follow. His divinity?" "My dear," Teabing said, "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." "Not the Son of God?"

“Right,” Teabing said, “Jesus’ establishment as ‘the Son of God’ was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea.” So the belief that Brown puts forth and claims to be historical is that Jesus divinity was created by the church.

Now to understand the book and the ideas behind it we have to understand a belief system that was thought to have died out in the 4th century in which Brown basis much of his theology on. This belief system is called Gnosticism and it basically means higher knowledge. The Gnostics believed that matter was evil and spirit was good. Everything you touched was tainted, everything immaterial was good. It’s classic dualism.

The problem with this view is, if matter is evil and God is good, how did matter come into existence. The answer for the Gnostics was, through a chain of lesser and lesser gods. Here’s what it looked like. God, the pure God. Purely spirit, absolutely untainted, created a group of lesser gods called, “Aeons” who were mostly untainted.

These gods created lesser gods who created lesser gods, who created lesser gods, until finally, one of these spirits created the world and matter and people. Full knowledge of this complete chain of gods can only be revealed to those who are fully initiated. This is the nature of “gnosis.” *This is kind of the basis of Scientology, the religion Tom Cruise has made so famous.* So the whole premise of Gnosticism is not about believing in a set of beliefs but rather in trying to obtain this inner knowledge. So it is not so much a religious belief as it is about self-actualization. You are to find your own truth within.

One problem you can see is when some members of Gnostic communities tried to blend their gnosis with Christianity. If Jesus was God and came to earth, then he couldn’t be God anymore, because the true God could never assume material form, he would stay far from it. *And if you tried to argue with them, they would claim a higher knowledge. God told me so kind of thing. Isn’t that a great argument: You put B on a test and the teacher says the answer is A, and you say no, I know its B because God told me so. You don’t have the inner knowledge like I do. So you could believe in anything you want to believe in. You see how that might be popular? But the Gnostics had to deal with this idea of the deity of Christ.*

So there were basically two solutions the Gnostics came up with. The first was that Jesus wasn’t actually human. He was completely spiritual; he only appeared to be material. If you noticed, if you looked closely, Jesus never cast a shadow.” This explains why Jesus could walk through walls after Easter – he wasn’t really material. He was immaterial.

An alternative solution was to claim that he was fully human and

only fully human. Of course, to claim that, you've got to explain away almost everything the Bible teaches about him. That's what the Da Vinci Code is all about. So one of the claims made is the Jesus wasn't really divine, that the idea of this was conceived by the Church at the council of Nicea.

Now here is where Dan Brown tricks a lot of people. He mixes history with fiction and twists history to say what he wants it to say. He states that the divinity of Christ was established at the council of Nicea in 325 AD. Now there really was a council of Nicea and there really was a debate on the divinity of Christ, but not how it is presented in the book.

Now a little bit of history here. The church from the beginning believed that Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus had stated it over and over and time again. Now it was never written down because it didn't have to be. Everybody knew Jesus is the Son of God.

But after a while there came a Bishop named Arius who said, "I believe that Jesus is God, but a lesser God than God the Father." So there began to be this debate between Arius and the other Bishops over this, (Now the debate wasn't over whether Jesus was divine or not, but rather the relationship of the divinity to God the Father), and so Constantine, who was the first Roman Emperor to embrace Christianity and didn't like the idea that his new allies the Bishops were fighting, said, "I'll fix this, let's get together and settle what we believe about this."

So he called all the Bishops from around the world to come and to discuss it. Now Arius and his group said that Jesus was created by God, and is like God in all aspects but He is not pre-existent. Their phrase was "There was a time when He was not." The other group of Christians said, NO this is not true. God the Father did not make God the Son. Jesus has always existed."

So they voted on it, and in His book Dan Brown says it was a close vote, but in reality the vote was 298 to 2. And those two were kicked out of the church for being heretics. So at this council they formulated what the church believed about Christ. Now they didn't invent the idea that Jesus had always existed, but rather they articulated it.

Now the result of this is something we have today. I want you to open your hymnals (no, this is not the closing hymn!), turn to page #880. This is the Nicene Creed. Now I want us to read this first part and I want you to notice how it articulates the deity of Christ. Now Dan Brown states that the purpose of this Council was that Constantine wanted to establish his power, stomp out feminism and goddess worship. Now you see how when

you know the truth about history you can spot the fakes. Like Jesus said, “You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.”

Now I say all of this because the most important question any of us can ask is Who is Jesus Christ? That really is the most important question we can ask ourselves. You see, if Jesus is just another teacher like Buddah then you can ignore the parts of what he says you don’t like. You don’t have to listen. But if He is Lord of All, then that means His word is authoritative and you have to do what He tells you to do. But we can’t simply say that Jesus was a good moral teacher and that was it because Jesus never left that option open to us.

Now we started off this morning by reading the passage from Colossians. And this is just one of many that tell us about the divinity of Christ, and the books in our New Testament are all first century writings, the Gnostic Gospels didn’t come to at the earliest the 4th Century and some say as late as the 5th or 6th. Jesus made the claim. Jesus said I am Divine. I am eternal. Now what do we think.

C.S. Lewis has probably the best argument for this. He said really we only have three options when seeking out who Jesus is. He’s either one of these three things: Liar, Lunatic, or Lord. He’s either a Liar-He knew that He wasn’t the Son of God but He said He was and purposely led many astray. If that’s the case, you really can’t say that He was a moral guy. If He’s not a Liar then He is a Lunatic-He truly believed He was the Son of God when He really wasn’t. If that was the case that is not the kind of person you want to follow and devote your entire life to. So if He is not a liar, and if He is not a lunatic, the only other option is that ...He is who He said He is...He is Lord.

Now this is important because as we come forward this morning, we need to remember that Jesus was 100% God and 100% man. He was both divine and both human. So when Jesus hung upon the cross, it was God the Son suffering with His creation, to make atonement for our sins. ***As we come to the Lord’s table this morning, I want to again read to you the text we started off with. And I’ll end my sermon with it, And I want you to just let the truth of this passage sink in. (read text.)***