

## **The Da Vinci Code Has The Bible Been Corrupted? Part 1**

One of the most popular novels of all time is leading many to believe in so-called long-hidden “facts” that refute history as recorded in the Bible.

Could the historical background of the novel be more reliable than the Bible? How can we separate fact from fiction when it comes to *The Da Vinci Code's* story of conspiracy and cover-up? *Has the Bible Been Corrupted?* On this *Day of Discovery*.

This is the land of the Bible. Bethlehem, birth place of Jesus and home to the Church of the Nativity, the oldest active church in the world. According to the novel *The Da Vinci Code*, the builder of this church, the Roman emperor Constantine, changed the Christmas story to make Jesus more than just the son of carpenter named Joseph—but the very “Son of God.”

To see why *The Da Vinci Code* appears to be so plausible, and to answer the question, “Has the Bible been corrupted?” Mart De Haan and Jimmy De Young have returned to this setting, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

**Mart De Haan:** Hi, I'm Mart De Haan.

**Jimmy De Young:** And I'm Jimmy De Young, and we've come here to the little town of Bethlehem to visit the church behind us, the Church of the Nativity. According to the New Testament gospel records, two thousand years ago, Mary and Joseph made their way here to this little village and Jesus was born. Then in the fourth century, Constantine sent his mother, Helena, here into the Holy Land to build churches over the sites that had significance to the life of Christ. This church, marking the birth of Jesus Christ here in Bethlehem.

**Mart De Haan:** For 1,700 years, this church has stood as a monument to the opening story of the New Testament Gospels. Over the centuries, millions of visitors from all over the world have come here to make a tangible connection to their belief that, here in Bethlehem, the Son of God was born into time and space. But have we been deceived by those Gospels, and by this church?

Ever since the fourth century, people have been talking about Constantine, the Roman emperor who used his authority not only to build churches like this, but to move followers of Christ from persecution to favored-people status. More recently, however, a popular best seller has generated international interest by claiming that Constantine not only used his power to legalize Christianity but also to rewrite the Christian Scriptures and to corrupt the Bible, the foundation that the church was built upon. Is it possible? Could that be true? Is the Bible a fabrication of the emperor who commissioned the building of the Church of the Nativity? Has a novel by the name of *The Da Vinci Code* exposed the truth about the Bible?

In my lifetime I've seen a continuing series of challenges to the authority and authenticity of the gospel story this church was built to remember. Rarely, however, has the challenge been as deceptive and far reaching as that created by *The Da Vinci Code*.

### ***The Da Vinci Code:***

“More than *eighty* gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion—Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John among them.”

[italics in the original]

**Dr. Darrell L. Bock** [author, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code: Answering the Questions Everybody's Asking*; research professor, New Testament studies, Dallas Theological Seminary]: One of the major problems with the novel is its portrait of the Gospels. It claims that there are eighty gospels out there. Now there are actually closer to, when we add in both the biblical and the extrabiblical material, somewhere between fifteen and eighteen gospels. And then there are other works that have other titles that are gospel-like, but there are only a handful of them. So it's nowhere near eighty.

**Richard Abanes** [author, *The Truth Behind The Da Vinci Code*]: The Gnostic gospels, those are key to *The Da Vinci Code*. The Gnostics were a group of people in the early history of the church who sort of took basic Christian ideas and blended them with their own thoughts on spirituality and the world. And they wrote their own gospels, writings that talked about Jesus Christ.

But these were not written until 250 to 350 A.D., and they were rejected by early church leaders.

### ***From the Gnostic gospel The Sophia of Jesus Christ:***

“Again, his disciples said: ‘Tell us clearly how they came down from the invisibilities, from the immortal to the world that dies?’

“The perfect Savior said: ‘Son of Man consented with Sophia, his consort, and revealed a great androgynous light. His male name is designated “Savior, Begetter of All Things”. His female name is “Begettress Sophia”. Some call her “Pistis”.’ ”

[translated by Douglas M. Parrott]

**Richard Abanes:** *The Da Vinci Code* actually appeals to these very texts and says they were the original gospels, when they were not. And that's a problem. In these gospels you will find things that have nothing to do with Christianity and are very odd and bizarre and were rejected by early leaders.

**Dr. Darrell L. Bock:** The other problem is that it isn't a case that the church laid out these eighty gospels and then made a choice. There were four gospels that rose to the top very early and distinguished themselves from everything else. In fact, the earliest part of the Bible that we have in place with solid use, etc., are the four gospels and that usage is well established by the end of the second and beginning of the third centuries.

**Dr. Paul L. Maier** [professor of ancient history, Western Michigan University; coauthor, *The Da Vinci Code—Fact or Fiction?*]: What's interesting in the development of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament to add to the thirty-nine of the Old Testament is how they're all very coherent; they all have eyewitness flavor in testimony, which were the two rules for canonicity or the standard of belief in those days.

Excluded were quite a few of the so-called apocryphal gospels and apocryphal epistles that never could measure up to that standard. They were obviously not done by eyewitnesses and their testimony was horrendous at times in terms of the central beliefs of Christianity.

For example, the gospel of Thomas, now so many people today seem to be in love with the gospel of Thomas.

Now Thomas was discovered at Nag Hammadi in Egypt in the bend of the Nile River back in 1947. Nobody noticed it at the time, because the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered at the same time. But this is a Gnostic library that came to light and included in one of the documents was the gospel of Thomas.

Now the reason that the early church threw this one out, knew about it at the start along with the other apocryphal gospels, is because there was no coherence in the theology. Example—and your woman viewers will love this one—the disciples bring Mary Magdalene to Jesus, and they say,

“Lord, we have a problem. Mary Magdalene is a woman and of course women cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” Jesus says, “Don’t worry, I’ll turn her into a man and then she can make it.”

**Mart De Haan:** Sometimes it’s hard to tell what is light or shadow. Deception is seldom pure lie. The darkness of misinformation almost always mixes with the rays of half-truths.

***The Da Vinci Code:***

“The Bible is a product of *man*...Not of God. The Bible did not fall magically from the clouds.” [italics in original]

**Mart De Haan:** One man believed so much that the Bible was inspired by God that he devoted his life to preserve and translate the Scriptures—right here in the Church of the Nativity: the biblical scholar named Jerome.

**Jimmy De Young:** I’m here in a cave underneath the Church of the Nativity, here in the little town of Bethlehem—the cave next to the nativity cave where Jesus was born. In the year 385 Jerome came and took up residency here for thirty-five years of his life, and died here; during that time he translated the Latin Vulgate.

**Mart De Haan:** We owe a lot to those who gave so much of their lives to make sure, not only that the Scriptures were not corrupted by careless copying, but who also translated those same Scriptures into languages that could be understood by common people. Jerome isolated himself here in Bethlehem for over three decades. His translation of the Scriptures is known as the Latin Vulgate.

**Dr. Daniel B. Wallace** [director, Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts; professor of New Testament studies, Dallas Theological Seminary]: Jerome, as you know, produced the Latin Vulgate, and he did it on the basis of trying to find the very best manuscripts he could. He had the wealth of the Vatican behind him, essentially to access the manuscripts. And he had quite a few manuscripts that he was looking at. The reason he did his work is because the old Latin manuscripts were in such terrible disarray, and he had to come out with an official Bible.

**Mart De Haan** [shown at St. Jerome courtyard]: Here in the courtyard next to the Church of the Nativity is a statue of Jerome who spent so many years of his life translating the Scriptures here. But some today might ask the question: Was his work in vain? According to *The Da Vinci Code*, written history is almost always embellished and untruthful. Because it’s written by the winners, the losers never have a chance to write their own story. And, as a result, according to *The Da Vinci Code*, we can assume that the Bible as well has a good

amount of fiction in it. Now no one can deny the hand of human nature in causing the winners of history to—to write their story at the expense of the truth. But when it comes to the Bible, there are factors to hold in check the influence of human nature.

**Dr. Charles Ryrie** [*Ryrie Study Bible*]: The word “inspiration” in 2 Timothy 3:16 is, literally, to breathe out, not to breathe in. So the emphasis is on God as the originator of the Scriptures, of the Word of God, as He breathed it out through human beings, who then recorded it, without error. Not that they were perfect, but what they produced was perfect.

**Mart De Haan:** According to scholars, because of the way the Bible was copied and distributed and translated, we have every reason to believe that the Bible that we have in our hands is a reliable representation of those original manuscripts.