

Refuting the DaVinci Code

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I'm hoping to wrap this up today. I want to get back into Acts for a few weeks and then we'll go over basic Christian beliefs as our, you know, part of our "Back to the Basics" series. I don't want to spend too much more time on this and it's really sad that we have to spend an awful lot of time refuting something like *The DaVinci Code* which is about as non-scholarly of a work as you could possibly get.

The guy...I guess the guy writes a pretty good novel. I don't know if I'm any judge of what's good literature and what's not. But he chooses to deceive people by claiming on the first page of his book that, you know, that historical things that he deals with are fact. He calls them fact. He says all descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents and secret rituals in this novel are accurate.

No, Mr. Brown. I'm sorry, they're not accurate.

So...I mean, if an atheist wants to write a novel and slam Christianity in his novel, I mean, that's what novelists do. Novelists write novels, but they have, you know, they have an idea, they have an agenda and they've got the right to do that, you know, freedom of speech and all. And so they can, you know, as they write this novel, you know, interject their ideas, their views. But if you're going to make up history don't lie to people and tell them that you're...the history that your fictional characters are talking about are really true.

Take a look at 1 John chapter one. Again, Brown, he has this agenda. If you don't have the handouts, by the way, there's some handouts on the table because this could be rather wearisome without the handouts. And I made some of the copies in yellow to liven things up a little bit.

But whatever the case, Brown's agenda, he's a neo-Gnostic or a neo-pagan. He wants to bring back Gnostic ideas, salvation through secret knowledge. He wants to deny that Jesus is God which is weird because the Gnostics didn't deny that. They denied Christ's humanity. Yet Brown's arguing for a human Jesus. So he not only misunderstands Christianity, he also misunderstands ancient Gnosticism. But he has a radical feminist agenda. He thinks that Christianity is anti-woman. He proclaims that the new morality and the new tolerance which is the idea that all religions lead to God, all behavior is equally valid; therefore anybody who believes that you can only be saved through their

religion is automatically an intolerant bigot. They are guilty of hate crimes. They are the cause of all the wars in the history of mankind and we would be better off removing them from the planet earth. And that's all the new tolerance. You know, with tolerance like that, you know, who needs intolerance?

But whatever the case, we've been covering for several weeks the inaccuracies. And what I've been doing is just reading a few passages that show that the New Testament Documents, unlike the Gnostic writings from the Nag Hammadi literature that Dan Brown refers to. Unlike the Gnostic heretical writings the New Testament writings claim to be historical data recorded by eyewitnesses or people who knew eyewitnesses and that they had apostolic authority behind it. The pupils of Jesus acknowledged to the leaders of the Church that these things were reliable writings about what Jesus did and said.

And so I've been reading passages like from Luke chapter one, Acts chapter one and some 2 Peter and 2 Timothy. Now I'm going to take a look at a few passages from John's writings – 1 John chapter one, look at verses one through three. John says this: "That which was from the beginning [which is God], which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."¹

You see, the apostle John is saying here, "We are telling you what we have seen, what we have heard, what our hands have touched." I have no idea what that means unless what it means is he's talking about touching Jesus' body after Jesus has risen from the dead to verify that, "Yes, my eyes are not deceiving me. My ears are not. When I think I see Jesus risen from the dead, my eyes are not deceiving me. My ears are not deceiving me when I think I hear his voice because he invited us to touch his wounds and we actually touched his wounds."

When you read the Gnostic writings it's all a bunch of fairy tale stuff. Nobody's claiming to be an eye witness unless, of course, it's pseudopigraphal where a guy claims to be the apostle Thomas or claims to be the apostle Peter and these writings were written at the earliest a hundred years after the fact, like the gospel of Thomas. Most of them are written 200 years, two to three hundred years after the fact. Take a look at John chapter 19 and verses 31 to 35. I mean, the amount of eye witness details that we find in the gospels alone, let alone the book of Acts, is overwhelming. Not only is there no way that a person who didn't witness these events, there's no way that they could have just made this stuff up, but they would have had no reason to unless they were recording history and they were eyewitnesses.

Verses 31-35 of John 19: "Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day [the day before

¹ 1 John 1:1-3 (All Scripture references are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise indicated.)

a major feast], that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.”² By breaking the legs or the ankles then the person could no longer push up on the cross and could no longer breathe. And death would come rather quickly. And so they said, “Well, just, you know, break the legs of the crucified ones.”

“Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe.”³

Basically, the author writes about himself as being a third person. We know it’s the apostle John. Just compare this gospel with the other three gospels and the biggest difference between this gospel and the other three gospels – there’s a lot of differences – but the biggest difference is the apostle John is never mentioned by name. He talks about times where John was present and he’s never mentioned by name. John the Baptist is mentioned by name, but John the apostle is never mentioned. And, in fact, he’s spoken of in the third person, “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

And it was just a...John, the son of Zebedee or the two sons of thunder, God had humbled him to the point where he didn’t even mention his name. There’s no reason for his name not being mentioned unless he’s the author. He is just too big of a character for his name to not be mentioned here.

But whatever the case this guy is talking about something in the third person but he’s claiming to be an eye witness but he’s claiming that when Jesus’ side was pierced immediately came out blood and water. And then he acts like people aren’t going to believe that. And it looks like he thinks, “Well, you know, blood and water in the Old Testament – all the washings and the animal sacrifices – maybe God’s trying to tell us something here.” So he’s not exactly sure what’s going on. All he knows is: “Yeah, blood and water and I’m telling you the truth. You got to believe me because I saw this stuff.”

Well, this is one of the strongest evidences that Jesus, in fact, died on the cross. Medical journals have been written to show that when you see...that when that portion of the body has been punctured and there is a flow of blood and alongside it is a flow of transparent watery looking substance, that is a sign that the medical evidence that the body is a corpse. And there’s only two possible causes of death: one is rupture of the heart and the other is asphyxiation and both are consistent with crucifixion.

And so what we have here is eye witness testimony that the eye witness didn’t fully understand. And then almost 2000 years later medical knowledge had increased to the point where we saw, “Hey, that is evidence that Jesus was dead on the cross.” I mean,

² John 19:31

³ John 19:32-35

this is eye witness stuff. There's no way that you can say the apostles were just telling fairy tales. They weren't really eye witnesses. And they we just trash the New Testament.

The New Testament has, by far, more evidence for it, it's authenticity, than any other ancient writing. If we're going to trash the New Testament we need to trash all of ancient literature and nobody wants to do that. There is more evidence for the life of Christ than there is for the life of any one of the Caesars. So do we really want to throw out all ancient history before, I don't know, five, 600 AD? So, by far the New Testament has the most evidence.

Look at John 21, verses 20, 24 and 25. Verse 20: "Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper,"⁴ If you read the other gospels that's John. So the disciple whom Jesus loved is the author of this gospel is John himself. And John had leaned on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays you?" When Jesus said, "One is going to betray me." Peter asked John – he figured John was so close to Jesus maybe Jesus would tell him. And, whatever the case, Peter asks, "Lord, what about this man?"

Now, let me give you the context of this. Jesus has just told Peter, "Peter, when you were a young guy you were a tough guy. You went where you wanted to go. You did what you wanted to do. When you get older they're going to stretch your arms out. They're going to take you where you don't want to go and they're going to kill you."

Now, if Jesus just told me that I'm going to die a horrible death called crucifixion, I would probably either start weeping or just stand there stunned. Peter was kind of an unusual guy. Jesus just tells him, "Peter, they're going to kill you. When you get old they're going to stretch out your arm. They're going to crucify you." And he's looking at Jesus as just one last chance for Peter to get under Jesus' skin. I mean, he was constantly saying things that you would...you know, right after he said it in Matthew 16. Nobody would make this stuff up. The guy's going to be one of the big leader's in the early church. Nobody's going to make up that he constantly was inserting his foot in his mouth.

When we write novels we don't make our heroes guys who deny their master three times on the biggest night in the guy's life. Whatever the case, you know, he says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."⁵

And Jesus says, "Whoa, flesh and blood didn't reveal this to you, but my Father who is in Heaven."⁶

Five minutes later Jesus is talking about, "They're going to kill me when we go to Jerusalem." And so Peter rebukes him. So, I mean, he goes up and down. Five minutes

⁴ John 21:20

⁵ Matthew 16:16

⁶ Matthew 16:17

after he acknowledges that Jesus is the Messiah, Son of the living God, he rebukes God. He tries to correct God.

Jesus tells him, “Peter, you’re going to die a horrible death.”

And so what Peter does is he’s standing thinking, “Hey, what about him?” And he points to John.

And you look at Jesus’ response. Jesus said to him, verse 22: “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me.”⁷ What he’s saying is, “Peter, that’s none of your business. If I want this guy to stay alive for 2000 years, so be it. That’s none of your...I’m talking to you, Peter. Now, you follow me.”

This is not the stuff of mythology. This is true history that’s being recorded. But anyway, but he’s talking about the disciple who rested his head on Jesus’ breast during the Last Supper. You compare it with the other gospels, he’s talking about the apostle John. And then verse 24 says, “This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.”⁸

So, one of two things: Either John is so humble he’s writing about himself in the third person or John dictated this to a scribe and the scribe put that ending in that this is the same disciple that Peter was talking about there – the disciple whom Jesus loved who rested his head on Jesus’ shoulder – that same disciple is the one who is giving you this information. And then he says in verse 25: “And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.”⁹

Now, you go to the Gnostic gospels it’s a whole different genre of literature. I mean, it’s talking about, “Cursed is the man who gets eaten by a lion.” Well, duh. I mean, obviously if a lion is chewing on you you’re having a bad day, you know. This is not some really big spiritual knowledge. But then he talks about, “But blessed is the lion who eats a man.” It’s like because now he’s got like a man’s flesh in him. It’s like: What in the world are you talking about? This is like weird stuff here. Jesus didn’t waste his time saying dumb things.

And one other passage I want us to look at just from 1 Corinthians 15:3-8. And even the radical Jesus Seminar; they are as far left as you could possibly get, the radical Jesus Seminar acknowledges that the apostle Paul did write 1 Corinthians and he wrote it about 55, 56 AD. So just about 20 to 25 years after Jesus’ death the apostle Paul writes this down. They don’t want to call Paul a liar, either. But they also admit he wrote Galatians. In Galatians Paul said that James, the half brother of Jesus, Peter and John gave him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship because they recognized that Paul was preaching the same gospel, the same gospel message that they were. And even the Jesus seminar

⁷ John 21:22

⁸ John 21:24

⁹ John 21:25

acknowledges that Paul taught that Jesus is God. He's fully God. He's fully man. He's Savior. He died on the cross for our sins and he bodily rose from the dead and he's going to return some day.

Paul said, "I was preaching the same gospel message that these other guys taught."

Now, they don't want to call him a liar so they want to say that Paul somehow changed Christianity. Well, then you're calling him a liar 'cause he claimed he wasn't changing it. He was preaching the same message as Peter, James and John preached and they recognized that he was preaching the same message.

But in verses three to eight Paul quotes an ancient creed that was recited or sung in the early church and listen to what it says: "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas [that's Peter], then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time."

And even the Jesus Seminar acknowledges, "Yeah, this is probably a creed that was recited or sung at the churches." Most New Testament scholars date the origin of this creed to about 33 to 37 AD, the decade in which Jesus was crucified. All this eye witness testimony and this is the evidence we have for the teachings of the New Testament. And the list goes on and on and on. When it comes to the Gnostic writings, all you get are a bunch of Johnny-come-lately's, some guy who has no connection to the apostles, who was not appointed by the apostles, was not appointed by any pupil of the apostles, a guy teaching heresy. All the Apostolic Fathers and they're disciples after them that were leading in the early Church said these guys are heretics. They're preaching new teachings that have no basis in Christianity. And that's the kind of literature that Dan Brown wants us to turn to.

And so let's look at point "N" on page two. I want to close with this. There is strong evidence for the New Testament canon. The canon...all that canon means is the list of books that belong in the Bible. Dan Brown says we got it wrong. We should have added these Gnostic writings and they actually predate the Christian writings. The only reason why there's very few of these copies around is because they were destroyed by these powerful political guys, the early church.

Let me tell you something. He's got the Christian church as being so powerful before 325 AD. It wasn't. Christians were getting slaughtered before Constantine, the Emperor, professed faith in Christ. They had no political power. Life expectancy was probably 40 or 50 years. It depends how loud you were when you shared the gospel message. They didn't have political power.

And we showed were he misrepresents the whole Council of Nicea in previous messages. But there's strong evidence for the New Testament canon that the books in our New Testament belong in our New Testament today and that the books that are not in the New Testament canon don't belong there.

Most of Paul's writings have been accepted as authentic by virtually all New Testament scholars. I believe even the Jesus Seminar only has problems with – most of the members – with 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. And there, supposedly, it's because Paul's talking about elders and deacons. So the Church...there's no way the Church was that organized during the life of Paul.

We now know the Jewish synagogues were patterned, were organized the same way. So all he did was say...he had the same organization that the Jews have in their synagogues we Christians are now going to incorporate that kind of organization into our churches. And so they're just holding on to outdated scholarship to throw out – 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.

But even the furthest left, I mean, liberally scholars who deny the New Testament, they used to assume that Paul never wrote any of Paul's letters; these were all legends that came hundreds of years later. But then we started finding older and older manuscripts. And then we started reading them and looking into the evidence for them and now almost all of Paul's letters have been accepted even by anti-Christian New Testament scholars. They make their living studying the New Testament, but they're trying to disprove it. They have to admit that most of Paul's writings are authentic. And Paul taught Jesus is...always existed as fully God. At a point in time he added a human nature, became a man, died on the cross for our sins, bodily rose from the dead and will someday return; exactly what the Jesus Seminar and then Dan Brown, exactly what they want to refute; exactly what they refuse to acknowledge as being part of the story of the true Jesus of history.

Keep in mind, too, when I talk about a Jesus Seminar; as far left as the Jesus Seminar is, they are writing articles refuting Dan Brown's *The DaVinci Code* because it's an embarrassment even to them. Dan Brown says that Jesus wasn't deified, wasn't turned into a God until 325 AD. Jesus seminar says, "No. That's baloney. Jesus was deified in the first century AD." And if you press them on it they would say, "Yeah, as early as 50 AD the apostle Paul believed Jesus was God." Then they try to explain, but that wasn't really popular within the church."

No. Read Larry Hertado's work *The Lord Jesus Christ*, 700 page tome that was just recently published and he showed that when Paul...when people...when his readers disagreed with him Paul argues. He liked the argument. He argued for his position. But if he just mentioned something in passing it's because his readers agreed with him on that. And Paul never has to argue that Jesus is God. His readers just automatically accept it. That was the teaching of the early church. And so Larry Hertado says...he calls it binitarian worship where the Son was worshipped on the same level as the Father.

That goes as far back as the early 30s AD. Larry Hertado is one of the world's leading New Testament scholars.

Dan Brown, historically speaking, the guy needs help. I mean, he not only misunderstands early Christianity, he doesn't even understand ancient Gnosticism.

Ok. Luke and Acts had to be written before 61 AD. When you read Luke and Acts, you read the first few verses, they're both written to Theophilus by the same author. And Acts is the sequel of Luke. Luke talks about the life and ministry of Jesus the Messiah. Acts picks up where he left off...where the author left off and talks about the first 30 years of the history of the church.

Now, Acts does not...it talks a lot about the temple but it doesn't record the destruction of the temple. That's an odd thing to leave out. The temple was destroyed in 70 AD. He talks about Peter and Paul. About half of the book of Acts is devoted to Peter. The other half is devoted to Paul. Yet he didn't mention their deaths. They were put to death somewhere between 64 and 67 AD under the reign of Caesar Nero. All scholars agree on that.

He doesn't even mention the death of James – yet James has a very significant...James the half brother of Jesus. It mentions the death of James the son of Zebedee, John's brother in Acts 12, but it doesn't mention the death of James who was the leader of the Jerusalem church after Peter and the apostles left. Yet James was put to death, thrown off the top of the temple, stoned and he was still saying, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." So a guy crushed his skull with a club. It's recorded in Josephus, the Jewish historian who lived from 37 to 97 AD. It's recorded in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*. Nobody doubts that James was killed about 62 AD.

Well, why didn't he record those things in the Acts? It's the Acts of the Apostles, the story of the apostles and he's just going to leave out their death. The whole ending of the book of Acts is so anticlimactic. It talks about these guys raising the dead, Paul being stoned and left for dead. But then he gets up. And Paul being scourged, the apostles being arrested and scourged and then it just ends with Paul preaching the gospel in chains in Rome under house arrest for two years. And it just ends.

And what does that take us to? It takes us right to 61 AD. And it only makes sense. He gets right up to the current day and Luke sealed the letter and handed it to whoever was going to travel to see Theophilus and hand the book of Acts to him. But since Acts is the sequel to Luke, Luke was probably written in the mid to late 50s AD at the latest.

Some New Testament scholars may not like that, but the burden of proof is on them to prove anything different.

Even the author of Acts, he's talking about Paul and Barnabas did this, Paul and Barnabas did...I mean, if they guy wants to lie why not say, "I was at the feast of Pentecost from the beginning." He doesn't. So he has all these other things going on:

Peter did this. Peter did that. Paul and Barnabas did that. Then in Acts 16, all of a sudden, you've got the apostle Paul and he's going somewhere and all of a sudden it's we, we, we. They call them the we passages of the book of Acts so that the author is somehow a companion of Paul and Silas and Timothy. And by process of elimination the early church figured out this is Luke. In fact, the probably didn't even have to go through the process of elimination. We'll talk about that in just a minute.

Papias was a pupil of the apostle John who was selected to lead the early church. He was one of the Apostolic Fathers. That's what they're called. He confirmed that Matthew wrote Matthew's gospel and that he originally wrote it in Hebrew and it was later translated to Greek and that Mark wrote his gospel and got his gospel, based his gospel on the preaching of Peter. When Peter left Rome Mark wrote down the gospel message that Peter preached.

John's gospel is quoted or paraphrased very early by Ignatius who wrote in 107 AD, another leader in the early church who was a pupil of the apostle John, who was fed to wild beasts in 107 AD. Polycarp, Papias, Justin Martyr in 150 AD. There's no reason to reject the four gospels as being historically accurate an coming from either the eye witnesses who knew Jesus or from People who knew the eye witnesses.

In fact, if you shoot down to point nine there on page three. Ok, I could see why if the early church made this up – though there's no evidence for that – but if the early church made this up, I could see why they would say the apostle John wrote the gospel of John. See, 'cause from already the late second century – probably between 150 and 190 AD – already we have manuscripts saying, “The gospel according to Matthew,” “The gospel according to Mark,” “The gospel according to Luke,” “The gospel according to John.” They were not originally attached.

So you might say, “Well, the Church just made that up like the Gospel of Thomas. That was made up. The Gospel of Peter, that was made up by heretics.”

The problem is: why would the apostles choose Matthew. Now, they're trying to start a new religious movement and you want to convert Jews to accept Jesus as the Messiah. Why Matthew? Now, he was an apostle, but he was a tax collector. That means he was appointed by the Roman Empire who had enslaved the Jews to collect taxes from his fellow Jews to give to Rome. And then to top it off tax collectors usually ripped their fellow Jews off to make a little bit of extra money on the side. That's not good public relations. You're trying to start a new religious movement and you say, “Oh, yeah. Why don't you read this gospel? It was written by one of the apostles himself. His name is Matthew.”

And then Jewish person would say, “Whoa, whoa, Matthew? Not Matthew the tax collector?”

“Yeah, yeah, that's him.”

I mean, that is not good public relations. It's not good public relations to say, "Yeah, follow these leaders, the apostles, they were the pupils of their rabbi Jesus the Jewish Messiah. Follow these guys."

And then people would say, "Wait. When Jesus got arrested, weren't they hiding under beds? Didn't Peter, the leader and the spokesman of the apostles, didn't he deny Jesus three times?"

That's horrible public relations. The only reason why you would write those things down was if it was true. Why would you have ladies showing up at the tomb – the first to see the risen Christ, the first to see the empty tomb – when a woman's testimony didn't hold up in a court of law in the first century AD? It was a chauvinistic society. Why not have Peter and John be the first ones at the tomb?

This makes no sense at all unless these guys are telling the truth. Why would you make Matthew an author if he really wasn't the author when he was a tax collector? Most Jews would have considered him a traitor.

Mark and Luke were not even apostles. Mark was a colleague of Peter. Luke was a colleague of Paul, but he had access to Peter and the other apostles. But neither one of them was one of the original apostles. You would not make up their names unless they really wrote those books.

Point five: We know that Hebrews was written before 70 AD. How do we know that? We don't even know the author. I agree with Martin Luther. It was probably Apollos and his long line of argumentation that argues for that. How do we know that Hebrews was written before 70 AD? By the way, the Gnostic writings, the earliest one is the gospel of Thomas written somewhere between 140 to 170 AD. So between 110 and 140 years after Jesus was crucified. And most of them go back to the third and fourth century AD. So, I mean, we're talking hundreds of years after the fact.

The New Testament writings, on the other hand, were all written while eye witnesses were still alive and leading the early church and these people were willing to die for their faith which tells us: This is eye witness testimony. Call them liars if you want. However, men do not die for what they know to be a hoax. Men do not die for what they know to be a lie.

You want to call them liars? You want to call them deceived? Go for it. Just try. Nobody's doing that. Everyone wants to say, "Well, they weren't liars, but they didn't get it right." That makes no sense at all. That makes no sense at all.

Hebrews was written before 70 AD. The author of Hebrews is writing to Jews who accepted Jesus as their Messiah. And then, because persecution was setting in, they were thinking of ceasing to go to a Christian fellowship, ceasing to go to church, breaking from the Christians and going back to the temple sacrifices. And that way, their life expectancy would go up. Nobody would be persecuting them. A person who was just

starting, they hadn't even been persecuted to the point of shedding blood. They probably had their property confiscated and were being ridiculed. But they saw the writing on the wall. They saw that persecution was coming.

So the author argues: "Listen. Don't...why would you want to go back to the Old Testament animal sacrifices? The bloodshed of animals never took away sin. The priests are still in the temple. They're still standing and they're still offering sacrifices which tells us that the bloodshed of animals doesn't take away sin because if it took away sin they'd be seated. Their work would be done. But they're still working, so their work is not yet done. Jesus, on the other hand, offered himself – one sacrifice for the sins of all mankind – and now he is seated at the Father's right hand. His work is done.

Now, think about it. If he were arguing after 70 AD, after the temple had been destroyed, that would not be his argument. After 70 AD his argument's not going to be the priests are still standing and still offering sacrifices so their work is not done. It would be pretty obvious; no they're not. The temple's been destroyed. So after the temple's destroyed do you know what his argument would be? Look. You have to trust in Jesus. If God meant the Jewish temple to a permanent thing, why did he allow the Romans to destroy it a few years ago? You have no temple. You can't go back to the animal sacrifices. So just trust in Jesus' one sacrifice for the sins of all mankind.

Remember, he's trying to persuade people. Why would he pretend the temple was still standing when his readers would know that it had been demolished already? The only explanation there is he's writing before 70 AD while the temple was still standing.

The Gnostic gospels all date after 140 AD, most of them way after it. All of the New Testament books date between 30 and 100 AD. Some radical left scholars – like the Jesus Seminar – will try to push for a 100 or 115 AD date for some of John's letters. Good luck.

The manuscript evidence for the New Testament, you have way more copies...you have over 25,000 hand written copies of the New Testament. Second place of all ancient literature – Homer's Iliad, only 643 copies. We only have seven hand written copies of Plato's writings.

Now, a lot of people might say, "You don't just count copies. That's not a way to tell if something's reliable."

Well, then what's the big deal when you found the Nagamadi literature, when you found all these ancient manuscripts? Just one copy of things and they're all, "Wow. Look what we found. This is amazing."

So you're saying if you find more of them and older ones it's not going to be a big thing? No, it's a big thing for everything except when it's the Old or New Testament. Then somehow it's not important.

No, and the age of these copies. They were finding fragments...John Rylands....a fragment of John Rylands' gospel of John chapter 18 was dated between 100 and 125 AD. Now some arguing that it should be dated close to 100 AD. A copy of a fragment from John chapter 18, Jesus before Pontius Pilate; they found it in Egypt.

It took a while for the gospel to be spread to Egypt. I mean, you could reproduce the entire New Testament in quotes and paraphrases from the early church Fathers in manuscripts by about 200 AD. And there's nothing that even comes close to that in all of ancient literature. Now, it would be nice if we had the originals. But don't hold your breath. We don't have the originals of anything that early on in history. It's just not there.

But whatever the case let me read to you a little bit from James Garlow and Peter Jones' *Cracking DaVinci's Code*. You can get this at Barnes and Noble if you like. It says this. "Most of the New Testament was never questioned. By AD 200 two categories of books existed. The first category is those books always and everywhere accepted. In this group were the four gospels, the letters of Paul and the book of Acts."

You see, nobody throughout the ancient church, which spread throughout the Roman Empire and even beyond, nobody questioned any of those books. Yet the Jesus Seminar wants us to question them, although even now they don't question some of them. They don't question Paul's letters. Dan Brown wants us to just toss them aside and accept his conspiracy theory.

"These books make up four-fifths of the New Testament and were received without question by the whole Church. The four gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – had a special place in the Church from the earliest days as eye witness accounts of the life of Jesus."

And Garlow and Jones go further to say, "A canon list called a Muratorian Fragment is dated to the latter half of the second century – so, probably between 170 and 200 AD. But the reason why they came up with this list was because Marcion – well, we know it was around that time because Marcion is mentioned as a contemporary of this letter. It was in response to Marcion. He was very similar in thought to the Gnostics and he came up with his own canon of Scriptures: Paul's letters – just remove all the Old Testament quotes because the Gnostics believed the Old Testament God was an evil God – and Luke's gospel – but remove all the Old Testament quotes. So he did his own little Jesus Seminar; only one guy was voting.

The Muratorian Fragment, with the exception of Hebrews, James and 1 and 2 Peter includes references to all the New Testament books including the four gospels by name or by occurrence. Now, that doesn't mean that the other ones weren't accepted, but they were not mentioned.

Also, a Greek manuscript known as T-45 dated around AD 200 has all four gospels together.

The Magdalene College Greek fragments of Matthew's gospel is an early book that contains only the four biblical gospels. One scholar argues that this selection comes from the first half of the second century. Another, basing his argument on ancient writing forms, dates it as early as the first century. So about Carson P.D. an expert in ancient fragments actually dates portions of Matthew's gospel, portions of Mark's gospel as well, one portion from the Dead Sea – case seven – dates them as early as about 68, 70 AD. In fact, he dates Matthew's anywhere from 50 to 70 AD. And this is just a copy. This isn't even the original. The reason these were rejected by New Testament scholars is because they have their own agenda, their own anti-Christian agenda.

A German scholar believes that the titles – the gospel according to Mark, to Matthew and so forth – were added when the gospels were first completed and circulated together. In other words if you were just mailing somebody the gospel according to Matthew you didn't have to write, "The gospel according to Matthew." The guy that you mailed it to knew what he was getting. But when you put the gospels together you had to show which one was which. And the German scholar, and German scholarship is on the cutting edge in New Testament studies, he believed the titles were added when the gospels were first completed and circulated together between 69 and 100 AD. He reasons that if scribes had added the titles later in the second or third centuries, there would be no way to explain the surprising fact that in the thousands of Greek manuscripts, the gospels all have the same titles. So somebody was just attaching different titles to them you wouldn't have all this agreement. When one manuscript calls it the gospel of Matthew all the manuscripts call it the gospel of Matthew. When one calls it the gospel of John, all of them call it the gospel of John. So he said it had to occur very early on so as more and more copies were made they were all in agreement with it.

Now, the books that were still questioned in some areas – 1 and 2 Peter, the three epistles of John, Jude, revelation, James and Hebrews – Garlow and Jones say, "These books had the respect of the churches in certain regions, but were not accepted universally during the second century," that's from 100 to 200 AD, "when communication was difficult. Regional differences were the natural result of particular traditions and temporary differences rather than a refusal to recognize a unified canon. Gradually, as the fifth of the books became better known – as this fifth of the books, the fifth portion – they, too, were accepted."

See, basically what he's arguing, what the authors are arguing here is that, you know, not everybody....you had a time period....Let's say the books were beginning to be written in 50 AD. I would argue even earlier. Matthew's gospel was being written while Jesus was giving his sermons. Matthew was a tax collector. I think Jesus made him the stenographer, the secretary of the 12 apostles.

But let's say the New Testament was started to be written in the 50s AD, the reason why it took all the way to 200 AD to be accepted throughout the church is because, you know, 150 AD you might have one gospel in your church, but by then, by 150 AD you have knowledge of all four gospels. You might half of the book of Acts. You might have the

letters of John, but you don't have Peter's letters. So, in other words, no one region had all the books of the New Testament. So some had Peter's writings and they knew it was from God. Some had John's writings.

Not only do we as Protestants need to believe for our faith to make sense – and there's good evidence for these beliefs – not only do we have to believe that God wrote for us a Bible containing an Old Testament and New Testament, but we also have to believe that God, through the Holy Spirit, guided his Church into identifying which books belong in that New Testament.

Now, that scares Protestants because, you know, the Roman Catholic Church says, "God guides his Church through the pope, you know."

And it's like, "Ooh, we don't want to go near that."

But the fact of the matter is: Even after the Bible was completed in its writing, God didn't stop guiding his Church and just say, "Well, just read the Bible. You want guidance from me? Just read the Bible."

God continues to guide his Church because he's guided them to find which books belong in the Bible. What that tells us is that God is still guiding his Church today. Now, he's not going to have Phil Fernandes or Eric Purcell write a 67th book of the Bible. We don't have the apostolic authority that the early apostles had. But what that means is: God is guiding a little church like Trinity Bible Fellowship. And God is trying to guide us. He's talking to us. It's sometimes we're just not listen. In fact, I argue with most Christians most of the time we're not listening.

Basically, Jesus said, "If I don't go to the Father then the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, won't come to you."

And sometimes we Protestants, especially when we're not of the Pentecostal or the charismatic bent, sometimes we start, "Ooh, let's...hey, we don't get into that stuff."

No, you have the Bible and God speaks to us in the Bible. If you hear a little voice in your head go see a psychiatrist. And the fact of the matter is: God is still guiding his Church. He's still speaking to his Church. We've got to test things with the Word.

You say, "Yeah, I hear a word from the Lord," and it doesn't pass for God's Word? I'm going to pray for you. I'm not going to take your advice.

Now, you get a word from the Lord that's consistent with God's Word and I pray about it and God confirms it to my spirit then I got to start applying that truth to my life.

But whatever the case God guides the Church to find which books belong in the Bible. It makes no sense – here me out. It makes no sense for God to write us a Bible and then just to leave us on our own trying to find which books belong in. And I am glad that God

guided the Church to find the New Testament and not the later bogus writings that came into the picture.

See, by the time of the Council of Nicea, 325 AD and afterwards, canonization was basically subtraction, not addition. By the fourth century AD we knew which books belonged in the Bible. But there were also a bunch of bogus books that different churches throughout the world have. And they said, "Man, we really love the five gospels."

And you're like from Jerusalem or Rome or Antioch, you're saying, "What are you talking about five gospels? There's only four gospels."

"So, don't you guys have the gospel of Thomas?"

They're like, "Gospel of Thomas? Thomas never wrote a gospel."

So they start hearing about all these other bogus books. And so by the fourth century AD what the Church had to do was say, "Let's remove the bogus books from the authentic books that we really know came to us from the apostles through the inspiration of God." So think of canonization as subtracting, throwing out the bad, not adding the good. The good were already accepted.

And the biggest problem with canonization was geography. The Church was spread out throughout the world and nobody had copies of all 27 books for the first hundred years or so.

Now, the test for the New Testament canonization of books: apostolic authorship or authority. Did an apostle write it or did an apostle at least give a thumbs up and say, "Yes," like Peter would say, "Yes, Mark wrote a gospel based on my preaching and it is accurate and it can be read in the churches." So apostolic authority or apostolic authorship; basically, the apostles either had to write it or put their stamp of approval on it. And you don't have anything like that for the Gnostic writings. In fact, the pupils of the apostles and their pupils condemned all the Gnostic writings as being heretical.

Is it, number two: Is it spiritually edifying for the entire Church? Do you realize, according to 1 and 2 Corinthians Paul wrote at least four letters to the Corinthians? We only have the second and the fourth letter. We don't have the first and the third. Apparently the Corinthian Church said, "Whoa. This is written to us and not to anybody else." And the Corinthian Church was messed up and Paul was nailing them for some of their problems. And so there were probably some problems that they had that most churches through the centuries weren't going to have.

If Paul wrote home to his mother and said, "Hi, mom. I'm doing fine. Barnabas is a little sick. I'm doing fine. My wounds have been healing up pretty good."

The Church could look at it and say, “This isn’t edifying for the entire church so we don’t need to canonize that.”

And test number three: Is it consistent with previous revelation – both the Old Testament and the New Testament? The Gnostic writings automatically are not consistent. The Gnostic writings deny Jesus’ humanity. The Gnostic writings taught that salvation was through secret knowledge, not through faith in Jesus. And the Gnostic writings denied the Old Testament as being God’s Word. In fact, they believed the God of the Jews was an evil God; the God of the Old Testament was an evil God. So, is it consistent with previous revelation? The Gnostic writings were not.

And so basically, in closing, God guided the early Church to recognize his written Word. The Gnostic writings were written too late. They were heretical and they lacked apostolic authority. In fact, they stressed objective inward knowledge, secret knowledge that, “Oh, God spoke to me,” rather than objective truth in history. They didn’t have to base their teachings in the life and the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Basically, the ancient Gnostics were the new agers of their day, the pagans of their day. And so basically somebody’s inner experience – you know, what does this mean to you type of thing – was more important and metaphysical speculation was more important to them than what actually happened in history and who Jesus really was.

Dan Brown, he claims the Gnostics believed that Jesus was really human, but he wasn’t divine. No. The Gnostics believe Jesus was divine but that he only faked being a human. He only appeared to be a human. He really wasn’t a human. So if Jesus wasn’t really a human the Gnostics argued he really didn’t die on the cross. He really didn’t rise from the dead. So the Gnostics really did not care a whole lot about history because history takes place in the material world and the fact of the matter was, they were almost eastern or Hinduistic or Platonic in their thought. They did not have a whole lot of respect for the physical world.

Now, I’m sorry to kind of bore you for three weeks on this, but this is becoming more and more important. Right here at Olympic College we have neo-Gnostics. We have a lot of our neighbors and friends are jumping on Dan Brown’s band wagon. And the media is heralding him as if he is some kind of a scholar. And so even though his work is rather laughable when he talks about what occurred in history we need to respond to it; to be able to respond to it because it’s just the latest piece of garbage that Satan is throwing at the Church. And I wish we could just spend all our time proclaiming God’s pure, beautiful truth. But the fact of the matter is: as pastor of Trinity Bible Fellowship my job is not only to proclaim the golden nuggets of God’s truth, but it’s also my job to help you clean up the trash in our society.

Titus chapter one, verse nine Paul tells Titus that the overseer, the lead pastor in a church, is not only supposed to exhort others in sound doctrine, but he’s also supposed to be able to refute those who contradict. And so every once in a while we’ve got to deal with the garbage that is out there. Most of the time we just do that under the banner of the

Institute of Biblical Defense and you guys can go to our website or order cassettes and just find out about how to refute this stuff. But this is not like...you know, this is not something that's just going to affect part of our culture. This is something that is, you know, hitting our neighbors all over the place. It's influencing millions upon millions of people. And so this, like the Jesus Seminar, is something that we need to respond to from our pulpits.

When everything is said and done, our faith shouldn't be shattered because not only do we know what the New Testament says, but we've experienced the Lord Jesus in our lives. We know him personally. For somebody to disprove the existence of Jesus to me it would be like disproving the existence of my brother Mark. I know him because I know him personally. I know Jesus because I know him personally. But what I'm saying is....so Dan Brown isn't going to trip us up.

You know, it's like Paul said that for this reason I suffer these things. He was about to die. "For this reason I suffer these things. But I am not ashamed for I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day."¹⁰ He said, "I'm willing to suffer for Jesus and to be shamed for Jesus 'cause I know him and I long for the day when I'll see him face to face and he will guard me and he will protect me and he will bring me to his side."

So we know. He's not going to trip us up. But our friends and neighbors, they don't better most of the time. They haven't studied the history of Christian thought. Most Christians haven't studied the history of Christian thought. So we got to do our homework and explain to them how we got our Bible and why we left out the trash – the gospel of Thomas, the gospel of Peter, the gospel of Mary. And the list goes on and on and on.

And so our job gets a little more complex each time. It's a simple gospel message, a beautiful, simple gospel message – salvation through Jesus alone. At the same time there are so many complex heresies being crammed down our neighbor's throats. The least we can do is refute error and then point them to the truth; the cross of Calvary and the Lord Jesus Christ, our great God and Savior.

Let's close with a word of prayer.

Father, in Jesus' precious name I thank you for a congregation, a group of people, who are willing to have to put their thinking caps on and sometimes listening to a message that gets into a lot of deep stuff that they might not really have a whole lot of interest in. But I thank you for a congregation that not only loves you and not only loves your Word, but they also love their neighbors and their relatives and their coworkers. And so when their loved ones get deceived, or are being deceived by lies of the evil one, I thank you, Lord, that you've given us a congregation here that cares enough to do their homework, to look further into it and to be able to do what the apostle Peter said – to give a reason, a defense of the hope that we have; yet with gentleness and reverence.

¹⁰ 2 Timothy 1:12

So help us, Lord, to deal with wisdom towards outsiders as Paul said. Help us to contend earnestly for the faith like Jude said. Help us to speak the truth in love which is what Paul told us to do in the book of Ephesians.

And so I thank you for this congregation. I pray that you help us grow in spiritually, but also in our knowledge of your Word and in our knowledge of how to refute the false ideas that compete with the truth of Christianity.

So we just love you, Lord. We thank you for sending your Son to die on the cross for us and providing salvation for us. We thank you for using us and working through us even though we don't deserve the honor of serving you. And we just pray, Lord, that you'd empower us to be all that you've called us to be until that day when your Son returns as King of Kings and Lord of Lords and takes his stand upon the earth. In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen.

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