

Twenty Questions Raised by *The Da Vinci Code*

Excerpts from Answering the Questions Raised by *The Da Vinci Code*

by Dr. John Ankerberg with Dr. Erwin Lutzer

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Question 1: Why is *Da Vinci Code* being read so widely?

Lutzer: On the one hand, you have the feminist stream. Here Dan Brown says that it was Jesus Christ's intention that the church be based on Mary Magdalene, but angry, power hungry men stole it from her and built it on Peter. So you can imagine here that there are feminists who read this. In Chicago, there was a group of women who have a reading club, and a woman I know is part of that club. She says they just ate up Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*: "Absolutely, that's just like the men to do that."

Secondly, there is another stream; and that is sexuality. And what Dan Brown tries to show is that original Christianity believed in a pagan notion: that men encounter God through a sexual relationship with women, through these rituals, you see. Well, that certainly feeds into our sex-crazed age.

Then you have the whole idea of conspiracy. People love a conspiracy: "The church has been hiding this." "There are secret documents which, if those documents were found, why indeed, Christianity would be found to be a fake, a lie." Oh, people love that.

And then, of course, you have the Gnostic stream. We'll be talking about the Gnostics, but bottom line, Gnosticism teaches that you can have an experience of God independently of Christ. You can access God directly. Well, John, you can see how that feeds exactly where our culture is.

And then you take all that, and you wrap it into a novel that's a pretty good page-turner, and pretty soon you have people saying; I wonder whether or not this is true.

Question 2: Why was the Council of Nicea convened, and what was decided at the Council?

Ankerberg: And Erwin, you take exception to some of the things Dan Brown said in his book, especially about church history and Constantine. Dan Brown said in his book, "Until that moment in history," talking about the Council of Nicea, "Jesus was viewed by his followers as a mortal prophet, a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless. *Not* the Son of God," one of the characters says, and the other one says, "Right." Okay? Then, Brown goes on to say, "Jesus's establishment as the Son of God was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicea, and that was a close vote when they got there." Ok, what do you say to that?

Lutzer: Well, let's separate the fact from the fiction, okay? Let's talk about what happened at Nicea. And, John, when we talk about that, we have to go to the primary documents. We can't go to the mythologies and to some of the ideas that have arisen in the sixth or seventh centuries about Nicea. Let's go back and ask Eusebius, a historian who was there.

First of all, the reason for the Council was because there was a man by the name of Arius, who was denying the deity of Christ. And he would put his ideas in little jingles and people would sing them. And in the market place of Constantinople, it was said that if you bought a loaf of bread, you'd be asked, "Do you believe that Jesus is eternal or was He begotten?" And you had these discussions that were tearing the empire apart.

First of all, the reason for the Council is because there was a man who was *denying* the deity of Christ. The deity of Christ was the official teaching of the church. It's found in the New Testament, it is found in the teaching of the Fathers, and we can mention those. And then, Constantine decided to have a Council where this matter would be resolved.

Now it is true he gave the opening speech. There is some truth in Dan Brown's book, of course, Constantine convenes the Council that met at Nicea. And so they have a debate regarding the deity of Christ. The point is that Arianism was *instantly* dismissed by the Council. Arius, the heretic, was invited to state his views. Those views were rejected. Now, there was a compromising position that was then brought to the council; namely, does Jesus Christ have a nature that is *similar* to that of God the Father, or *the very same* as that of God the Father?

Ankerberg: I think that is so important Erwin. Look, for people that don't know their church history, Jesus lived and died about 30 A.D. Okay? You have the apostle Paul writing at 50 A.D. and dying at about 68; the apostle John writes about 70 to 90 and he dies close to 100 A.D., okay? Then you have the Apostolic Fathers, the Fathers that came after the apostles, who knew the apostles. They start to write.

Lutzer: And they all believed in the divinity of Jesus.

Ankerberg: Yes, Jesus declares his divinity; it's reaffirmed by the apostles and the ones that were the students of the apostles. And now, way down the pike, after all of this has been written, taught, preached, lived and died, okay? You're down to Arius, and three hundred years after Jesus, you get to Constantine. And this is what Dan Brown is talking about. Now, right in that area, keep going.

Lutzer: What happens is, then they have this debate at the Council, whether Jesus Christ's nature is the *same* as that of God the Father or *similar*; that was really the discussion. And they ended up by saying that Jesus Christ's nature is, in Greek "*homoousion*," that is to say, *the very same nature* as that of God the Father.

So, anyone who is watching today who has ever quoted the Nicene Creed, knows that it says that He is "God of very God." But the idea that Constantine *invented* the deity of Jesus Christ for political purposes, and the notion that, before that time, Jesus was regarded as a mortal prophet, is pure fabrication.

We could indeed, as you mentioned, go back to The New Testament; we could go back to the church Fathers. Let me name one. There is a man by the name of Ignatius in about the year 110. He is on his way to martyrdom in Rome. He calls Jesus Christ "God Incarnate." So there you have it; whether it's Polycarp; later on, we have Irenaeus; I mean, how many quotations do we need from the church Fathers to prove that they believed in the divinity of Jesus long before the Council of Nicea?

And then, you have Christians dying in Rome, John. I mean, why were the Christians willing to go to the beasts? Because they were calling Jesus Christ "Lord," which means "God." The early church believed strongly in the divinity of Jesus.

So Constantine comes along. He convenes the council and apparently, according to Eusebius, only two delegates of the 318 refused to sign the Nicene Creed. By the way, you know what Dan Brown says in *The Da Vinci Code*, when he says that the divinity of Jesus was voted on and had passed by a very close vote? Well, I would say that 2 voting "no" and 316 voting "yes," is not exactly a cliffhanger, is it?

So there's no question about the fact that the divinity of Jesus was always the basis of what the church believed. And that's the destructive character of Dan Brown's book. While talking about a historical event, he gives his twist, based on mythology—and we can actually trace some of the mythology that Dan Brown uses—and he passes it off as history.

Question 3: Did Constantine decide which books would be in the Bible?

Ankerberg: He also talks about the fact that Constantine re-wrote the history and he did it for a power surge, he wanted to gain power and in doing so, he commissioned the writing of the books of the Bible. He actually decided what the Canon was; the books that should be in the Canon and those that should be out. What do you say to that?

Lutzer: Oh, John, now I can really get exercised over this. Constantine, at the Council of Nicea, there is no evidence that there was discussion as to what book should be in the Canon. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were already regarded as being the Gospels. We'll talk about the Gnostic gospels in a later program, I'm sure. We don't have time to talk about those right here, except to say that Constantine had nothing to do with the notion of what books would be in the New Testament. In my book that I've written, I was able to trace it back historically to the eighth century, when a man wrote—five hundred years after the Council of Nicea—he wrote various mythologies as to what happened at Nicea and some of the other Councils. And in his book, he says that they simply took all the books and they left them on the altar, and in the morning, the ones that were inspired went to the top and the ones that weren't went to the bottom. Now anyone who believes that, well then, you know as the old saying goes, I've got a bridge that I'd like to sell them. And so, it's those kinds of mythologies that are passed along in *The Da Vinci Code*, dusted off, under the pretense of being historical.

People need to know that, under the Council of Nicea in 325, the books of the New Testament that we have today, that we call the New Testament, were believed and were essentially the books that were received. There were some discussions regarding the Book of Revelation, because some people thought that Revelation was a little bit esoteric. Some people doubted whether or not Peter had actually written 2 Peter. But, essentially, the books that constitute the New Testament today are the received books already back in 325.

Question 4: What do you say to people who have read *Da Vinci Code* and believe it is truth when it is not?

Lutzer: You see, it is a skillful blend of mythology and history, passing the myth off as history. For example, we know that Constantine did convene the Council of Nicea. I think also it may be true that he standardized worship and spoke about Sunday. The things that are false, however, that Dan Brown claims to be true are, number one, that Constantine invented the divinity of Jesus. That is just pure bogus. We actually dealt with that in the last program. And then, secondly, that Constantine tampered with what books would be in the Bible. And we touched on this last time, that indeed, he did not. There is not a shred of evidence that Constantine accepted Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and rejected other gospels. And we're going to be talking about those other gospels in this program, by the way, because *The Da Vinci Code* speaks about the Gnostic gospels, and we're going to get into those. But the Gnostic gospels were never debated as part of the New Testament, whether or not they should be accepted as authoritative. As we'll notice, they are totally spurious documents.

What Constantine did do, is he commissioned the historian, Eusebius to copy fifty copies of the New Testament for the churches in Constantinople. Unfortunately, we don't have any of those manuscripts. We wish that we did. But most Bible scholars that I have read believe that those fifty copies contained the twenty-seven books of our New Testament. And they're not just speculating on that, there are powerful reasons why that would have been so.

Ankerberg: Yeah, let's back up for people that don't know their church history again, Jesus lived [and] died by about 30 A.D.; Constantine is found here at 320; Nicea is at 325 A.D. So, three

hundred years later, is what Brown is talking about. Now, a whole bunch happened between the time of Jesus and the time we get to Constantine.

And we have the entire writing of The New Testament, by 90 A.D. Some like William Albright, of Johns Hopkins University, who is the foremost biblical archeologist in the world, said that in his opinion, “every book in the New Testament, from Matthew to Revelation, was written by a baptized Jew between 40 to 75 [A.D.]” Then he says, “Well, let’s put it up 50 to 80.” Okay? Even the guys in the Jesus Seminar would say it’s about that. So the books that we are quoting, that are from the eyewitnesses, and those who knew the eyewitnesses in Jesus own life, who wrote the New Testament.

Then, you have the Church Fathers; then you have these Gnostic gospels, which came up. And any person that was worthwhile in the ancient world, eventually, people wrote legends and wrote stories about him or her, and that came in later on. It wasn’t fact, and nobody believed it to be fact. And that happened concerning Jesus and the apostles. Well, that happens down here 150 to 200 A.D. And then we get down to Constantine here and the Council of Nicea about 300.

Here’s what Brown says in the book, with that as background. He has his character, Teabing—another professor—say that Constantine, at that time in 300 A.D., commissioned and financed a new Bible which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ’s human traits and embellished those gospels that made him godlike. That’s completely false.

Lutzer: Total mythology, total mythology.

Ankerberg: Now, why?

Lutzer: Because there is no evidence for it, that’s why. When we are dealing with these matters, what we need to do is to go back to the primary documents. You have somebody like Eusebius, who attended the Council of Nicea. And what you need to do is to read him. There are other historians that give us some insight as to what happed at Nicea. I read an entire book on Constantine, which had chapters on the Council of Nicea. And out of the Council of Nicea you had twenty different rulings come for the churches. Not one of them had to do with the contents of the New Testament or what books were to be accepted.

Question 5: What is Gnosticism?

Lutzer: Yes. Alright. The word “Gnostic” has to do with knowledge. And after the time of Jesus, maybe even during the time of Jesus, but after the time of Jesus, the movement began to gain a number of adherents, important adherents. The idea was that one could access God directly and have a vision of knowledge and insight, for the initiated, independently of Jesus Christ. The Gnostics used Jesus, as we will point out in a moment, but the Gnostics denied the incarnation; they universally denied the resurrection. But they believed that one could have a vision of Jesus in his own soul.

So, these are the Gnostics now. Their ideas were very esoteric; they bordered on the occultic; and they were the ones who took their ideas and put them into the mouth of Jesus. Now, just for the listeners to understand, here you have these Gnostics that lived say 150; after the year 150 and following. The Early Church knew about their writings. A man by the name of Irenaeus wrote a book entitled *Against Heresies*, where he said, “This is what the Gnostics believe; this is why we reject what the Gnostics say; they do not have an independent source of knowledge, what they’re saying is fraudulent.”

Question 6: What are the Gnostic Gospels?

Lutzer: But, let's fast forward: 1945 in Egypt near Nag Hammadi, you have a find of documents. Gnostic documents were discovered.

Ankerberg: Books.

Lutzer: Books. These were taken (they were written in Coptic), and they were of course divulged to the world, which indeed, they should be. I mean, anything that you find historically should be made known to everybody. And now, there was a lot of interest that came about as a result of this find, as we might expect. The surprise, the good surprise, from the standpoint of historic Christianity is that, essentially, they taught us nothing new. These new documents—of course they weren't new—but the new *find* of documents, essentially taught us nothing about the Gnostics that we already didn't know, because the Early Church knew about them and wrote against them.

Ankerberg: It substantiated what Irenaeus said in his writings when he was contradicting them.

Lutzer: Yeah, exactly. So, if anything, it validates what the Early Church was saying about the Gnostics. But today, of course, you have people reading the Gnostic Gospels and saying, "These are the alternative documents to Christianity."

Ankerberg: Some people say, come on, these people are smart people. Are they just dishonest? Answer is, "Yes". They *know* this is not true. They *know* this other evidence. They are choosing not to hold on to the stuff that's been there, what we call the traditional evidence. It didn't go away.

Lutzer: Right, and let me tell you why. Because if you go the Gnostic route, you can pretty well believe whatever you want to believe. Like one scholar says, that when you go the Gnostic route, you can take and you can pick and choose; you don't have to believe in the virgin birth, you don't believe in the resurrection, you don't believe in the uniqueness of Jesus. Everybody can have their own experience.

So, Gnosticism is really the religion of the day here in America. Dan Brown, capitalizing on that, has taken the route that these Gnostics have more credibility than the New Testament. Let every person listening to this program today hear me when I say, just simply consider the evidence rationally, based on good principles of history, and you will end up being overwhelmed by the power and the validity of the New Testament documents, and see these others for the straw that they really are.

Ankerberg: Yes. Talking about straw, Raymond Brown, the New Testament Roman Catholic scholar that is so well known across the world, said that, "The early Christians looked at the Gnostic gospels and they said it was rubbish." And he says, "I've looked at it today and it's still rubbish."

Question 7: Page 231 in the book, Brown has his characters say, "It's true that more than eighty gospels were considered for the New Testament, but they were turned down by the church and then destroyed." Is this true?

Lutzer: Alright, let's begin with number one: the idea that there were eighty gospels that competed for recognition in the New Testament. Two lies are in that one statement: number one: the Gnostic Gospels were never considered by any prominent Christian for inclusion of the New Testament; that's number one. Number two: There weren't eighty; there were fifty-two scrolls that have been found; five claim to be gospels, and those are the ones that we're talking about today. So, so much for lie number one.

Question 8: Number two: “It’s true that these gospels, part of the ancient library at Nag Hammadi, highlight glaring discrepancies and fabrications of the Bible we’ve got today; the modern Bible.” Is this true?

Ankerberg: That the scrolls that you’ve got, that you’re going to read from here, they highlight glaring discrepancies and fabrications in the Bible that we’ve got.

Lutzer: Alright, let’s stop there. The question is: What kind of fabrications are we talking about? It is the Gnostic Gospels that are fabrications. I need to give a word just before I read a few quotes from them.

Ankerberg: Right.

Lutzer: These Gnostics took their ideas and put them into the mouth of Jesus. And, there are two reasons why we reject these Gnostic Gospels. By the way, when I wrote my book, I went into Borders and I bought a copy of the Gnostic Bible, big thick book. In it, it says in the Introduction, “We offered these as sacred texts.” John, our listeners need to know that there is competition there as to what Bible we’re going to accept. Are we going to accept the traditional one or this supposed new one, this Gnostic Bible?

Now there are two reasons why the Gnostic Gospels are fraudulent. They were known to the Early Church to be fraudulent, and we know them today to be fraudulent. Why? Number one, because of spurious authorship. Not a person that I know actually believes that Thomas wrote the book of *Thomas*; and then there’s the *Book of Philip*. Nobody believes that the *Book of Philip* was written by Philip. My own Gnostic Bible, which was not written by evangelical Christians, says that it was written in the year 250 in Syria. We’re talking about 200 years after the time of Jesus. So, whose description of Abraham Lincoln would you believe? Somebody who knew Abraham Lincoln, or somebody who lived 150 years after?

Ankerberg: Well, let’s even stop it. The fact is, our country is only about 200 years old. Okay? Just a little over 200. Now, you want to talk about George Washington? That’s what we’re talking about here in terms of the Gnostics versus Jesus, that time span.

Lutzer: Yes. Right. So, you have fraudulent authorship. Interestingly, the New Testament rejects any book that is written by a fraudulent author. The apostle Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2: “We ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report, or letter supposed to have come from us saying that the day of the Lord has already come.”

Already then, people were writing the name of the apostle Paul to their documents. The apostle Paul clearly is saying that you should reject all letters that are fraudulently signed. People wanted to write their ideas and put their ideas into Paul’s mouth. Paul says, “Reject them.” That’s what the Gnostic Gospels are all about.

Question 9: Why is The Da Vinci Code called The Da Vinci Code?

Lutzer: The idea is this: Jesus was actually married to Mary Magdalene; but this truth had to be suppressed, it had to be kept under wraps. In fact, Dan Brown says there are all kinds of documents that would prove it, but they’re hidden and nobody has ever found them, which is kind of interesting.

Ankerberg: And he doesn’t bring them forth now, either!

Lutzer: Right. You know, what he’s doing is he’s basing his unbelief on documents that have never been seen by anyone. But anyway, the idea is, Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene; this

had to be kept under wraps. So there is an organization called The Priory of Sion that is committed to holding these documents and knowing the truth. But, of course, they couldn't tell the truth openly, or they'd be stoned or beheaded by the church. Supposedly, in the novel, that's why Opus Dei exists. It's the responsibility of the Catholic organization, Opus Dei, to keep a lid on all these secrets, you see.

And what Dan Brown claims is that when Leonardo painted a picture of *The Last Supper*—now remember, Leonardo is part of the Priory of Sion, therefore, he knows the secret; that Jesus was actually married to Mary Magdalene—Dan Brown claims that the person to the right of Jesus is not the Apostle John, as we've always believed, it's actually, of all things, Mary Magdalene. And then he looks at the table and notices that there is not chalice or cup; therefore, what he says is that the actual chalice, or cup, is Mary Magdalene, who bore in her own body the blood of Jesus when she gave birth to his child, which I think *The Da Vinci Code* says, was Sarah. And then, they go to France, and there they become part of French royalty. That's the novel, okay? But, it's passed off as history.

So the question that we have to ask is this: Is this a legitimate reading of Leonardo? And, John, because I'm not an art historian, all that I can do is to quote art historians. I think, for example, of Jack Wasserman, who is a retired art professor, in fact, he's a professor of the history of art. He says, and I quote here, "Virtually everything that Dan Brown says about Leonardo is false." So that's good enough for me. And there are other art historians who agree that it is false.

Now, when you look at the picture, you do notice that John the apostle does look effeminate. But actually, that's consistent with other paintings in Florence. And furthermore, as you look at the picture, you have to ask the question, "If John the Apostle is not in the picture, if this is Mary Magdalene, where is the beloved apostle in all of this?" Well, the answer is he didn't attend the Last Supper, apparently, which is kind of strange.

Ankerberg: Right.

Lutzer: So, it's a stretch to believe that that is Mary Magdalene. It's a stretch to believe that they are married, which, of course, is totally based on myth, and there's evidence to the contrary; and, most assuredly, that they went to France. All that really is based on mythology that grew up in France in about the twelfth century. So what we have and we're dealing with here in Dan Brown's book is a lot of mythology.

Ankerberg: People say, well, why would he do that? Why would he insinuate that?

Lutzer: Well, first of all, because if you go to France, you will find that there are these myths that circulate that date back to the twelfth century. So, if you're interested in mythology, you can go ahead and make these claims. The problem is, John, that if our faith is based on mythology, we don't have much hope to hang on to. What we need to do is to always ask the question, "What is the best **historical** evidence? Where does it point?" And, that's why we're actually having this show today, to be able to contrast the historical evidence of the New Testament, which is based on such good historical fact, versus the myths and the insinuations based on myths.

Ankerberg: Summarize the solid foundation that we have for people that didn't hear the first two programs. Versus the myth, Christianity is based on a solid rock of fact. What kind of facts?

Lutzer: Well, first of all, we can look at the New Testament documents and evaluate them. We can point out that the manuscript tradition of the New Testament is very strong. And we have quotations from the New Testament Fathers. We can point out that the New Testament that we have in our hands is based on documents that were written; and that we have, essentially, in our hands, those documents. That's number one.

Number two: internally, the New Testament documents are not self-contradictory. We don't have time to go into this, John, but just think of Luke 1, where Luke says, "I did a careful investigation

to study the life of Jesus.” Luke was around when he could actually talk to people and ask them, “What did you see?” And he talks about the careful way in which he investigated when he wrote.

And then, of course, you have external evidence. We have archeology which confirms the New Testament. We have other documents that confirm the New Testament. Now contrast that with the Gnostic gospels, which we spoke about and we’re going to have to speak about today again. Because it is the Gnostic gospels that supposedly say the Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene. Compare those. The Gnostic gospels have no references to lakes, to rivers, to cities. These are esoteric writings, and remember, as we showed in the previous program, written about 250 years after the time of Jesus. And I need to ask again, whose description of George Washington would you believe? Someone who knew George Washington? Or someone who lived 200 years after George Washington and wanted to put his own political ideas into George Washington’s mouth?

Question 10: Did Jesus wed Mary Magdalene?

Ankerberg: And the question we want to entertain right now is; did Jesus wed Mary Magdalene? Is there any historical evidence? In this novel, Brown makes claims, some assumptions, that are not historical. Now, people have always speculated and thought that the prime candidate for “Mrs. Jesus” would be Mary Magdalene. But here’s what Brown does. He says, “The Early Church needed to convince the world that the mortal Jesus, the mortal prophet Jesus, was a divine being. Therefore, any Gospels that described earthly aspects of Jesus’ life had to be omitted from the Bible,” and they got rid of them. [Brown says,] “Unfortunately, for the early editors, one particularly troubling, earthly theme kept reoccurring in the Gospels.” What was that? It was this, “Mary Magdalene, more specifically, her marriage to Jesus Christ,” that’s what was kept out. And Brown says through his characters, “it’s a matter of historical record,” on page 244.

Now Erwin, this is a straight out fabrication. Tell us why.

Lutzer: Well, two things that you have read that are false. Number one: It is nonsense to say that any Gospel that talked about the earthly aspects of Jesus Christ’s life, or his humanity, were rejected from the New Testament. You get into John 11, what does it say? Does it say Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus wept? Jesus is on the well as Samaria, *weary* with his journey.

John, we’ll emphasize this in a moment, but if Jesus were married to Mary Magdalene, that would have been big news. It would have appeared in the New Testament. Let’s just lay that out on the table. And so the idea that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene as being a matter of historical fact is, of course, a fabrication.

But let’s talk about Brown’s evidence for a moment. We do have to ask the question, “What did he base it on?” He based it on what we call the Gnostic gospels. I hope that all who are watching this program were able to see the program, the previous one that you and I did together. And if they haven’t, it would be great for them to be able to get a copy of it, because, there we talked about the Gnostic gospels. Spurious writings: they were not written by the people who purported to write them. We have the *Gospel of Philip*, which I’m going to quote in a moment. There isn’t a scholar around who believes that the *Gospel of Philip* was written by Philip the Apostle. These Gnostics took their esoteric ideas and they tried to pass them off as Christianity. The Early Church recognized that back in the second and third centuries. We recognize that today. So let’s understand that.

But, let me give you the quote, alright? This is the famous quote that Dan Brown uses to show that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene. This is from the *Gospel of Philip*, the Gnostic gospel: “The companion is Mary of Magdalene. Jesus loved her more than his students, he kissed her often on the face more than all of his students, and they said, ‘Why do you love her more than us?’ The savior answered saying to them, ‘Why do I not love you like her? If a blind man and one

who sees are together in darkness, they are the same. When light comes, the one who sees will see light, the blind man stays in darkness.”

Couple of comments: First of all, the phrase where it says “he kissed her often on the face,” as my translation says, that is inserted in the text. In the actual Coptic scroll, there’s a blank there, because obviously these scrolls are very old and, therefore, some of them have faded. So nobody knows what’s there. Maybe it means that he kissed her on the hand, it could be that he kissed her on the cheek, because, it says, “as he did the other apostles.”

Ankerberg: Yes, so you have to put your own assumption in there.

Lutzer: Right.

Ankerberg: Fill in the blank.

Lutzer: Right. And in the Middle East, even today, you know they kiss one another on the cheek. So that’s possibly what is meant. But the other question is, is there any reason to even believe this? Oh, first of all I should say that Brown says the word “companion,” when it says that Mary Magdalene was the companion of Jesus, means that she was married. There’s no evidence of that. Obviously, the word companion means companion; it doesn’t mean marriage like Brown says it does.

But even after all that is said, do we have any reason to believe this account at all? And the answer is “No,” for two reasons. Number one: my Gnostic Bible, which is not an evangelical book, says that this book was written in Syria in the year 250. So if we’re talking about a document written fully 200 years after the time of Jesus, how reliable is it? Well, the answer is, of course, it isn’t reliable.

There is a second reason why we know that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were not married. You know, the apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:5, “Do we not have a right to have a wife as the other apostles and Peter?” Obviously, if Jesus had been married, that would have been part of the record of the New Testament.

Ankerberg: Okay, now, let’s slow that down, because what Paul is arguing is, that they do, as apostles, have a right to take a wife, okay? Now, if you going to prove that point and you’re willing to use Peter and the other apostles as being the substantive proof, if Jesus had been married, you wouldn’t have to recognize these other guys; that would have knocked the ball out of the park. That would have settled the question. The Apostle Paul doesn’t mention Jesus at all, he mentions these other guys. That is a powerful bit of evidence—not silence, that’s powerful bit of *evidence* that shows Jesus was not married; he was celibate.

Question 11: Why did the Pope, around 550, why did he change Jesus’ relationship with Mary? He helped her as a sinner, but he made her into a prostitute in 550 A.D.

Lutzer: Yes. Very important, John, and I can answer that very quickly, okay? In the Gospel of Luke, in chapter 8, what you have is the story of Mary Magdalene and the seven demons that were cast out, okay? In Luke chapter 7, just the previous section, you have the story of the prostitute who came to Jesus. So what Pope Gregory did—and I think the date was 591—he preached a sermon in which he identified Mary Magdalene as a prostitute. That was a mistake. He should not have made that connection. Now, what Dan Brown says is that this was made deliberately to put Mary down. As long as Mary Magdalene was known as a prostitute, then of course, she could be dismissed. I doubt whether or not that was the Pope’s intention. But that’s what Dan Brown’s novel says.

But let's just clarify the fact that, in the New Testament, there is no proof that she was a prostitute. But clearly, she had seven demons; Jesus delivered her; and also, she and other women followed Jesus. That's a whole separate story of how Jesus in the New Testament elevated women. No rabbi would have allowed these women to follow him.

Question 12: Could Jesus have been married?

Now, John, there's another thing we should work into this program and I hope we have time, and that is to discuss the question of whether or not Jesus could have been married. And the answer is "No." I believe that very strongly. There is nothing wrong with sex—the marriage bed is undefiled, the Bible says—so it's not because sexuality is somehow impure or dirty. Within marriage it is blessed and sanctioned by God.

But, marriage brings together two people in the most intimate union imaginable. Jesus, being both divine and human, being absolutely perfect, because His humanity, of course, was united with His deity; in a sexual relationship, even in marriage, would be joined in the most intimate level to a sinner. And, what I always say is this, Jesus could have been married, if He could have found someone who is was holy as He Himself is. Which meant that He really had no options along that line.

But that said, Jesus is **going** to be married. The New Testament speaks about the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and it talks about us being gathered there along with Mary Magdalene, obviously, as a believer. And Jesus is going to be married to the church; that's to us, we are His bride; not in any kind of sexual union, but in a union of fellowship that is going to be blessed, and is going to be sanctioned, and going to actually introduce us to a marvelous eternity if we trust Christ as savior.

Question 13: Is it true that Jesus had to be married; otherwise, he couldn't have been a part of Jewish society in that day?

Lutzer: Dan Brown is groping wildly when he makes a statement like that. Of course, possibly, the rabbis in that day, it was customary to be married. But, there are exceptions to all kinds of things. And you can't argue from silence like this to try to pull out of history a historical fact that you want to find.

Ankerberg: Yes, Josephus shows that there was high honor given to the Essenes, and they were celibate. John the Baptist was single, and he was honored as a great prophet of God. So there is no reason why Jesus couldn't have remained single and been honored and a prophet of God.

Lutzer: That's right. And what we need to do is to understand that Jesus Christ's mission was to die. He actually came, you know, to become a sacrifice for sinners and died at possibly the age of 33. And there is not a shred of evidence that Jesus had a romantic relationship with a woman. Mary Magdalene is sometimes called the Apostle of the Apostles by some writers, because Jesus entrusted to her the responsibility of telling the others about the resurrection. I find this so beautiful, John. Just think: here's a woman, she may not have been a prostitute, but she had seven demons cast from her. I mean, imagine how she was plagued by evil spirits. Jesus delivers her. She becomes a companion, along with other women, of Jesus. They apparently help Him financially and so forth. And then Jesus elevates her, and says to Mary, who was there at the tomb, "Go and tell the other apostles what you have seen." This is so beautiful, Jesus elevating women, elevating the role of Mary Magdalene. No evidence of marriage, no evidence of a romantic relationship; but, He is saying to this woman, "You have the privilege of telling others about the resurrection."

Question 14: Who made the decisions as to what books would be in the New Testament, and when were those decisions made?

Lutzer: And that's why today, we're going to talk about the development of the New Testament. Because there are many people who are watching, who are asking several questions: Who made the decisions as to what books would be in the New Testament, and when were those decisions made? You know, the usual understanding is that there was some Council somewhere that debated the books and some people said, "Well, I think that these books should be in the New Testament," and somebody else stood up and said, "No, I don't think so." Interestingly, that's *not* how the decisions were made. So, John, let's begin from the beginning to help people understand the sequence here.

Ankerberg: Okay.

Lutzer: There are some books that when they were written, say by the Apostle Paul, they were immediately recognized by the church as Scripture. For example, if I may quote the words of the apostle Paul exactly, he speaks about the fact that some books would be accepted. First Thessalonians, for example, "I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren." That's 1 Thessalonians 5:27. He knew that when he was writing, he was writing documents that were to be spread to the churches because they were inspired by God. So he knew that early on. And the churches received these documents as being inspired. Now, if I could take a moment to read what I think is a very interesting text from 2 Peter.

Ankerberg: Okay.

Lutzer: And I'm reading this text so that the listeners understand how *early* the New Testament documents were accepted as Scripture.

Ankerberg: I think all of our listeners know that Peter was Jesus' right-hand man. Ok? He was the chief Apostle. Now you're reading what Peter said. Let's hear what he says.

Lutzer: In the book of 2 Peter, he writes: "...regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you, as also in all of his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which some things are hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, *as they do also the rest of the Scriptures*, to their own destruction" [2 Peter 3:15-16, emphasis added].

I hope that people caught the implication. Peter is saying that what Paul wrote was Scripture. It was inspired Scripture. Now that's during Peter's lifetime, it's during Paul's lifetime, that what he is writing is Scripture.

The point to be made is that the Early Church, from the beginning, began to recognize these books as being Scripture.

Question 15: How do we know that the early Christians didn't make a mistake, they didn't err, in which books would be included the New Testament canon?

Lutzer: Well, you know when someone asks me that question, what I say to them, John, is two things; first, show me some book in the New Testament that you think should not be there. The simple fact is when you read the twenty-seven books, they all fit together, they agree theologically. I mean, they are coherent. And really there is no book that that we could say should

not be there. The second question though, and this is the critical one: What book do you know of that you think should have been included in the New Testament?

There again, what we find is: there's no other book out there that gives us any serious competition at all. Now, someone else may press me and say, "Well, but could the church have made a mistake?" Theoretically, yes, because the church is not infallible. So we have a church that is fallible, choosing infallible documents. And what we need to say is that the early church can only *recognize* the documents as being infallible. You can't have a church having a Council and deciding, "Oh, this book is inspired by God," if, in point of fact, it isn't. All the Councils in the world can't make an uninspired book inspired.

Just like this, if you have a letter by Abraham Lincoln, [if] it's an authentic letter, all the Councils in the world can't make it unauthentic. On the other hand, if you *don't* have an authentic letter from Abraham Lincoln, all of the Councils of the world cannot make it authentic.

So, let's recognize here that the church is fallible. And that shouldn't surprise us when you stop to think of it: it is fallible human beings that did write infallible scripture. I mean, David certainly was not a man who was infallible, he sinned greatly, and yet he wrote inspired scripture. In the very same way, the church, though it is fallible, we believe, chose documents that are completely free from error; documents that have come to us inspired by God.

But anyway, there's the challenge. Show me the books. Show me the books. Show me what you've got, if you think that a book should have been included.

Ankerberg: Yet, Dan Brown in *The Da Vinci Code* has Langdon, his Harvard Professor, saying, "Anyone who chose the forbidden gospels [that's the Gnostics], over Constantine's version [that's what we think we have in the New Testament right now], was deemed a heretic." He's got it reversed, in the sense that, the fact is, the [New Testament] Gospels were there before the Gnostic gospels.

Lutzer: Let's just lay this down once and for all John: Gnosticism was a parasite. It was trying to feed off the success of the Christian movement. And here you have Platonic ideas about one's relationship with God, and all kinds of mystical experiences, and so forth. And you have these teachers who are insistent that they are going to promote their views and pretend that they are Christian. The early Christian church saw through this, wrote against these things—we think of Irenaeus, who wrote a book entitled *Against Heresies*. And by the way, Irenaeus has an awesome quote I have to throw in here. He says the Gnostics take the Scriptures, and they are like a person who takes a beautiful photograph of a King, cuts it in pieces and reassembles it to become a fox [*Against Heresies*, 1.8.1]. That's what the Gnostics did with the New Testament writers.

Ankerberg: And, keeping that in mind, of what Irenaeus said, in *The Da Vinci Code*, Dan Brown says something different. He says, "Fortunately for historians, some of the gospels that Constantine attempted to eradicate [again, these Gnostic gospels], managed to survive," like it's a good thing.

Lutzer: Well, yeah, we can be glad that the Gnostic gospels were found. I mean, let them survive. What we're pleading for on this show, John, is, simply look at the evidence; there's nothing hid under the table here, some kind of a great secret: you know, "They were lost and now they're found and, oh, these wonderful secrets have been revealed." Now let's look at these "secrets", let's compare them with the New Testament, and we'll soon find out how badly they come off. And we'll see how fraudulent the Gnostic gospels are.

So, again, the listening audience needs to understand that Constantine made no decisions about what books would be in the Bible. Not one single shred of historical evidence. It's all fabrication.

Ankerberg: Yes. Old Papias, the student of the Apostle John, records what the Apostle John told him. Basically, you have Matthew, Mark and Luke as being Gospels that are recognized by the apostle John. And then, of course, Papias knew the Gospel of John itself. And then he starts talking about Paul's letters. Okay? So this is about 120, 110 A.D. That's 200 years *before* Constantine. So you have the Gospels in place. And then, as you go through, the other church Fathers that go up to about 150 A.D., even in the writings against Marcion, Marcion talks about the four Gospels that are already in place. He talks about some of the things in Paul's letters. And the fact is, the church Fathers respond by quoting from the New Testament documents.

In fact, this is something I think is real important for people to realize. If we didn't have any one of the 24,000 copies that have survived coming down from the original books, that have been copied. If we lost all of those, you could replace the entire New Testament, except for eight verses, just from the quotes of those documents in the church Fathers, that according to the British Museum.

Question 16: Was Jesus the original feminist?

Lutzer: I want to comment on "Jesus was the original feminist." That's a very interesting statement. We can't agree with Brown because of what "feminist" means today, okay, but there is some truth in that. Jesus did break the mold. I mean the very fact that He sat with a woman on the well, and was willing to talk to a woman without men present. I mean, He was breaking the customs of the day. You have Jesus actually allowing women to touch Him in several instances in the Gospels. And Jesus was constantly taking women who were beaten down and giving them dignity.

Mary Magdalene and other women, for example, followed Him; and that itself, no rabbi would have done that. So Jesus really elevated the position of women. Now, does that mean that Dan Brown is right when he talks about sexuality and so forth? The answer is "No." But Jesus did elevate women to a remarkably high position.

Question 17: Was sex the original sin?

Lutzer: No. Because sex, by the way, never was the original sin. Adam and Eve in the Garden, it was not sex that was the original sin. That's very important. Now, some theologians have taught that throughout the centuries; and it shows you how people can get off onto something if they don't base their theology squarely on the Bible. But that, of course, has nothing to do with the point that Dan Brown wants to make: of making sexual expression the way to get to God.

Ankerberg: Original sin was when Adam and Eve *chose* to disobey God. They made a choice; it had nothing to do with sex. Sex was good and something that God gave before the Fall.

"The church made Mary Magdalene into a prostitute for a reason," Dan Brown says. That's not true either.

Lutzer: Well, you know the Pope, in 591, Pope Gregory, did preach a sermon in which he confused the prostitute of Luke 7 with Mary Magdalene of Luke 8. So, there is some truth to that. We should not consider her to be a prostitute; there is no evidence for that. But the point is that that was not done, so far as I know, to somehow suppress Mary Magdalene. It was just taking something that wasn't in context and preaching it. And since that time, we've realized of course. But she was a woman out of whom seven demons were cast.

Question 18: What is goddess worship and why does Dan Brown say that it is the true way to experience God?

Lutzer: Now, of course my book is against *The Da Vinci Code*, but *The Templar Revelation* contains a lot of these pagan ideas that are found in *The Da Vinci Code*. And what the authors say is that John actually did not put himself under the authority of Jesus—this is John the Apostle—but rather, the fact is that Jesus was a disciple of John. Notice how things are twisted. And catch this: John's anointed successor was actually the Gnostic sex magician, Simon Magus, who is mentioned in the book of Acts [chapter 8]. Talk about a twist of history!

But now we come to the part about Jesus and sex. Jesus Himself turns out to be the son of a goddess, and the anointing by Mary of Bethany—the authors believe that she is Mary Magdalene—was a sexual ritual performed by a priestess. Quote: “The anointing of Jesus was a pagan ritual. The woman who performed it, Mary of Bethany, was a priestess. Given this new scenario, it is more than likely that her role in Jesus' inner circle was as a sexual initiatrix.” That is to say, that Mary introduced Jesus to sex.

Ankerberg: She initiated Jesus into the whole system, via sex.

Lutzer: Right. Now, if that doesn't rankle Christians, what has to happen before we become upset?

Ankerberg: Right.

Lutzer: This is pure blasphemy. And could Jesus be a part of that when He said that “he who looks upon a woman to lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart?” [Matt. 5:28]. If there's anything true about the New Testament it is its call to purity. The Apostle Paul says, “Do not be deceived, those who are immoral [and then he lists others], will not enter into the kingdom of heaven” [1 Cor. 6:9-10]. “It is the pure of heart that see God” [Matt. 5:8]. So the question is, “How can Dan Brown, and the authors of *The Templar Revelation*, twist things so badly that they make sexuality the heart of encountering God?”

Ankerberg: And they do. Now, before you go on, let me just document the fact: Brown claims that Constantine not only eliminated goddess worship in the Roman Empire, which would mean that it had to exist for the first three hundred years of Christianity, that was true Christianity; he also collated the Bible; used Christianity for political gain; moved Christian worship from Saturday to Sunday; decided that Jesus should be made into a deity where he was a mortal man before. He states all these things through his characters in his books. And actually, Constantine did none of those things, but this thing of the sexual aspect of all that he's talking about, keep going.

Lutzer: Well, how could Dan Brown even come up with this? I mean, we know it's a novel; and if he'd just said, “Oh, this is pure novel,” we'd say, “Well, yeah, it's a badly written part of the novel, but okay.” But he claims it to be based on history.

What these authors do is they take all of paganism with its expressive sexuality—encountering the divine through sex, etc.—and they say, contrary to all historical evidence, this was the original Christianity. And then they come along and they say it is the New Testament authors that came along and they hijacked Christianity and turned it into what it is today.

Now, there's one problem with all that: there is not one shred of historical evidence for it. The original Christianity was Jesus teaching purity; teaching holiness; exhorting them to leave the world, to leave immorality. And He, of course, had His apostles. Some of them ended up writing some of the books of the New Testament. You have the Apostle Paul, of course, converted later. He writes many of the books of the New Testament that exhort us to holiness. This is the teaching of the Church. This is what the Church has always taught, based on good, solid historical evidence. The rest is pure bogus.

Ankerberg: Let's stick with Paul. You and I took some folks and we visited Corinth. And in the Temple there, they had exactly what Brown is talking about. They had this goddess worship....

Lutzer: Yes, and a thousand prostitutes.

Ankerberg: ...and a thousand prostitutes. The way you worshiped is a Hugh Hefner philosophy; you went in, you had sex with the prostitute, and you were suppose to have a divine moment right there. Okay? That would sell. Alright? Paul, writing the book of 1 Corinthians in 50 A.D.—Jesus passed off the scene, resurrected, 30 A.D.—twenty years later, Paul writes to the church at Corinth about that practice. He says, you know, that's what some of you were, but now you've been changed, you've been transformed, because you've put your faith in Jesus Christ [1 Cor. 6:9-11].

Lutzer: Exactly, and now you're called to a life of holiness. And so the Apostle Paul was speaking against the very thing that Dan Brown advocates in his book.

We've come to a point in this series, John, where I think people need to just be outraged. You know, the idea that people are reading the book, *The Da Vinci Code*, and coming away believing part of it, or thinking, "Could it be true?" or, even saying, as some have, "I could never be a Christian again, because Christianity is based on lies." That, of course, is absolute bogus!

We urge people who are listening today: just look at the evidence. History in Dan Brown's book is like a house of cards held together by ropes of mist. And yet, it's purported to be the true historical fact. And that's our problem.

Question 19: If Dan Brown is wrong, how can I independently find out that you are telling the truth about Jesus Christ?

Lutzer: Well, what they need to do, if they want to do their own research—which is perfectly fine—go into a library, find a seminary; go back, read Eusebius, read what the early documents have to say about the development of the canon. Look at the Gnostic gospels. See what the ancients said about them, take a look at them and evaluate the evidence. If you do that, no question, you're going to be convinced that the New Testament is reliable and Dan Brown's scenario of Christianity is pure fabrication.

Question 20: If Dan Brown is wrong, what is true message of Christianity?

Ankerberg: You visited The White House and you had a neat experience that took place there that ties into what we're talking about in terms of the truth of Christianity. And I want those of you that are listening right now to really not miss the point that Erwin is going to make, because this talks about what the true Gospel of Jesus Christ is. Tell us about it.

Lutzer: Yes. We don't want to leave anyone watching these shows without understanding why Jesus is the *only way*. He's the only One *qualified* to take us to the Father. He's the only One who has the righteousness that we need to be saved. There's nobody else out there.

Ankerberg: And this is what the Church Fathers all said as well.

Lutzer: Exactly. But, you know, we went into The White House, I and two of my daughters. This was when the elder Bush was President, and security was not as tight at it is today. And the Secret Service allowed us in. They just said go on in, because we were with a Secret Service Agent whom we had met. And wherever we went, they said, "Oh, you're with him? Just go on it." In fact, we were even allowed to put our toes into the Oval Office. We couldn't go to the President's desk, but every battery of guards along the way said, "Oh, you're with him? Go on in."

Now I ask people to visualize us dying together. And Jesus meets us on the other side of the curtain. And there are angels guarding the way to The Holy City. And I can just imagine that the angels say to us, "Oh, you're with Jesus? Go on in."

And then we have a flashback because of all of the sins that we've committed and we see that God is more holy than we believed Him to be. And we say to ourselves, "I can't go in." But the angels say, "You're with Him. Go on in."

Then, I like to visualize the Father, after we have gathered together, He says to the Son, "Thank You so much for bringing My children home because I love them." And then He says this, "I've carefully examined them, and I find no fault in them."

That, John, is the reason why we preach Christ, the Christ of the New Testament: because He alone can take us all the way to the Father, to present us to the Father faultless, because we've received His righteousness [Jude 1:24]. That's the good news of the Gospel that I hope everyone who is listening responds to.

Ankerberg: You spoke at Promise Keepers one time and you had a great illustration for people in our audience that have committed great sins and they feel guilty. And they don't think they can come to Jesus because they don't think Jesus would love them or accept them, because they've gone too far. Can you recall that illustration and give it to us?

Lutzer: I can. It's a long one, I have to make it short, don't I? A man is in a room and there are these card files that are based on his entire life, every incident, every sin. And he looks at these cards, which are so many. He's weeping, and a Man comes in—Jesus—and takes every one of those cards, and at the bottom, signs His own name, Jesus Christ, in His own blood.

And so the man is totally acquitted from all of those sins, because Jesus looks upon those sins as if He, Jesus, committed them. He bore them for the man and took them away. The file cards in our lives are cleansed and forgiven by Christ.