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A Christian Response to “The Da Vinci Code”: What’s the Attraction?

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Now, why would so many persons be drawn to this story? Of course, it is not just *The Da Vinci Code*, either. Earlier this month, the news media were captivated by the release of *The Gospel of Judas*, thirteen little pages of reconstructed papyrus found in an abandoned cave that supposedly were about to completely upturn Christianity. There can be no doubt the document is very old. In fact, one of the bishops of the church, Irenaeus, dismissed it as obvious heresy in 189 A.D. What we are experiencing now in the modern age is that the old heresies are coming up all over again. It is a bit like rewinding history, and all the ancient heresies that were tried long ago, opposed by the church, and declared by the church to be false, they are coming back.

People seem to have taken a renewed interest, for example, in the Gnostic gospels. During the early centuries of Christianity many groups tried to hijack Christianity and make it into something else, even as today there are cults and sects who do the same. Because there were so many of these radical groups, archaeologists and other scholars are always coming up with new documents and shreds of evidence—the Nag Hammadi library, for example—and when they are released to the public, the very fact that the church rejected them seems to be proof positive to the postmodern mind that they must be true.

We are living in strange times. Here’s the question: Why would persons prefer a lie to the truth? Over the next few weeks, all the shows on the cable news networks and talk radio will most certainly be talking about this new movie, discussing the storyline and the art and the history. They will be talking about the argument this movie makes about Jesus, and the Christian response to it. But what they will not be talking about is this: Why would persons prefer the false gospel to the true?

This is why: If the true storyline concerning Jesus Christ was that He was merely a mortal prophet who came to establish an earthly dynasty and to help us all celebrate the divine feminine and be a part of His circle of knowledge and enlightenment, then the fact is that we do not have to think about the fact that we are sinners. If that is what the life of Jesus is all about, then it is not about how we must be redeemed from our sin, but rather about how we can simply be enlightened and informed. The truth is, the human heart would much rather be told it is uninformed than that it is sinful.

If the truth about Jesus is that he was merely another human being, then God does not lay claim upon your life. He does not lay claim upon your marriage. He does not lay claim upon your sex life. If this is true, then God does not much care about any of that; he simply wants you to be informed. There is no “take up your cross and follow me.” There is no discipleship. There is no dying to self and living to Christ. There is none of that, and there is no judgment. All of which

sits well with the postmodern mind, for there are many people who think the best news they could hear is that they will never have to face judgment. As a matter of fact, the only way to understand the world around us is to acknowledge that the vast majority of our neighbors do not believe they will face judgment.

The reason false gospels are so attractive and so seductive is because it is convenient for us to be told that *we* are not the problem. We would much rather believe that the problem is a conspiracy—that humanity has been held in darkness because some have conspired to suppress the truth.

Beginning in Matthew 16:13, we encounter one of those great texts that informs us about the identity of the Gospel, the identity of Christ, and the identity of the church: “Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say ‘John the Baptist’, others say ‘Elijah’, others ‘Jeremiah or one of the prophets’.’ He said to them, ‘but who do *you* say that I am?’ Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father, who is in heaven.’”

That is the central truth claim of Christianity, and in this passage and the verses that follow, we see the constitution of the Christian church based upon this truth—the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Look at Jesus’ question to his disciples: “But who do they say that I am?” That is almost like a pollster’s question, and it will not be surprising if pollsters all over the country are asking a question much like that one over the next few weeks. Brace yourself for the release of the polls and for all of the discussion about this movie. The newsmagazines and newspapers will be going to Americans and saying, “Who do you say Jesus is? Here is what *The Da Vinci Code* says, and here is what this expert says. What do you say?” Without doubt, the answer will be a mass of confusion, and that is nothing new. When Jesus asked His disciples, “but who do they say that I am?,” what came back was a report of confusion. “Well, some say Elijah, some say Jeremiah, some say one of the prophets”—mass confusion.

But then Jesus turns to His own and says, “But who do *you* say that I am?” Though Jesus has been revealing Himself to His disciples through His words, His deeds, and His presence, He had never asked them this question until now. Yet Peter says, “I know. You are the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Promised One, the Consolation of Israel, the one whom God promised, the Prophet that Moses promised in Deuteronomy, the Suffering Servant promised in Isaiah’s prophecy, the one who would come and save His people from their sins. You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!”

Brothers and sisters, that is why we are here. It is because every one of us as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ have made the same confession of faith, and we have stood in the line of Peter and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!” When we say that, we are confessing together that this is the one who came as the Christ, the one who came as the Messiah, the one who was fully divine, the one who had no sin, the one who was conceived of the virgin Mary, the one who lived a sinless life, and the one who died on the cross as our substitute, paying the penalty for our sins, shedding His blood for the salvation of sinners. “Thou art the Christ,” the one who rescued His people from sin, the one who came not only to lead people out of captivity to Pharaoh and Egypt, but the one who came in the new Exodus to lead sinners out of captivity to sin into salvation. “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” not only the one who was crucified for us, but the one whom God raised from the dead—His own Son, even of the same substance as the Father. “He who has seen me” Jesus said, “has seen the Father. I and the Father are one.”

What is our response to this movie and this book? Very simply, it is the response the church is called to every single day in the face of falsehood and evil. Share the Gospel. Confess Christ. Follow Christ joyfully, and show your joy to a fallen world that so desperately needs to know Jesus the Christ. Our friends and neighbors, coworkers and family members are going to be talking about Jesus, because they are going to be talking about a movie. They are going to be talking about a story, and they are going to be allowing themselves to enjoy the idea of a giant conspiracy theory.

In coming weeks, the Lord may well use you as a means of taking the Gospel to one who desperately needs to hear the truth rather than a lie. It may be that the Lord will use you as an agent of clarification in a world of confusion. It just may be that the Lord will put you in such a place that you are going to hear the murmuring of those who are talking about a movie. You are going to hear the excitement of those who thought it was a thrilling story. You are going to hear the critique of those who will talk about plotlines and lighting and all the things that Hollywood cares about. You will hear some people say, “You know, I really wonder—was it true?” You are not there by accident. God will sovereignly place you where you can be a witness to the Gospel and say, “I have a story that will top that one! You want to know an exhilarating, thrilling story? Let me tell you a story that leads from death to life. Let me tell you about who Jesus Christ

really is, because I know Him as more than a character in a plot. I know Him as the Lord of my life.”

Let us pray that God’s church will be emboldened “to be ready to give an answer for the hope that is within us.” Let us pray that just as the New Testament commands us, we will do so with gentleness and humility. But brothers and sisters, let us do so with courage and clarity. And let us pray to see a church that says in response to this movie and to all falsehood, “We are not afraid to talk about this. We have met heresies before. Just give us a chance to tell you the truth.”

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