

20. Fact and fiction

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"Almost everything our father taught us about Christ is false" (The Da Vinci Code, p.235). That is a part of a fiction that millions of people around the world buy hook-line-and-sinker nowadays.

The author Dan Brown who became a campaign guru of Satan himself has used the power of a story to promote lies that sound credible to the undiscerning. Unbelievers have turned further from the faith, and weak believers have become confused. And it doesn't help that unbelieving scholars appear on television with trumped-up "evidence" supporting some of the novel's most disturbing claims.

People walk away asking provocative questions:

Q) *Were the books of the New Testament voted into the Bible?*

No, all Scripture is inspired by God, not by men. God never uses majority votes to decide what He is going to do. After all, He is a sovereign God.

Q) *Did the Emperor Constantine elevate the status of Jesus from a human teacher to the eternal God in 325 A.D.?*

No, the writings of the church fathers that are already included in the New Testaments are from 100 to 300 A.D. prior to Emperor Constantine. The Christians from every generation since the apostles called Jesus "God."

Q) *Were Jesus and Mary Magdalene secretly married?*

No. This is one of the dumbest concepts of anyone who stands against the deity of Jesus Christ. Jesus got crucified and stabbed with a spear in the heart. How in the world did He manage to get married after He died? Besides, after His resurrection, He no longer had the same body like human as He had before.

Q) *The Gnostic Gospels and the Dead Sea Scrolls are earlier, more reliable sources for the real, historical Jesus than the mythical accounts in the New Testament.*

No. Actually the other way around. The Gnostic Gospels are later books of the second and third centuries that often present bizarre, unhistorical and mythical accounts of Jesus' life and origin. The Dead Sea Scrolls contain the Old Testament Books, nothing about Jesus. Another flat out lie of Dan Brown.

Unless author Dan Brown repents and makes a public declaration and clarification about his misleading fiction, he will be one miserable soul in hell for leading many people away from the truth of God.

To respond to the false history and fanciful fictions of this kind, we need to have discernment and diligence. Discernment draws a definite line between fact and fiction, wisdom and foolishness, and good and evil. Diligence prepares believers with ready answers to critical questions.

Hebrews 5:14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

2 Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

You are wondering why this preacher is hot under the collar for this? It is because gullable people buy this deception without much thinking.

Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.

If you eliminate the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ from Christianity, there is nothing. That is what the enemy of our God satan is trying to accomplish.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fact and Da Vinci Code is nothing more than a fiction pretending to be a fact.

A. THE FIRST HERALD

Mark 16:1-8 Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. 2 Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. 3 And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" 4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away--for it was very large. 5 And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6 But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. 7 But go, tell His disciples--and Peter--that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you." 8 So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Jesus Christ was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again from dead for our justification. A dead Savior cannot save anybody. But our Savior Jesus didn't remain in the tomb. In fact, in the Book of Acts, the church gave witness primarily to the Resurrection.

The Resurrection proves that Jesus Christ is what He claimed to be, the very Son of God and God Himself. He had told His disciples that He would be raised from the dead, but they had not grasped the meaning of this truth.

These women have proved themselves to be the most devoted followers of Jesus, and were the first to witness His resurrection.

There was a stone in front of the tomb that would weight about 1 ton – 2,204 pounds. These ladies could not have been rolled away, because they were not strong enough or nor by the disciples because they were not brave enough.

Their first surprise was finding the stone already rolled away from the door so that they were able to enter into the tomb. The second surprise was meeting two angels in the tomb. You might say, "Hold your horse, preacher. Mark says that there was one angel in the tomb." I am glad you have noticed that. Mark focused on only one angel while Luke 24:4 and John 20:12 noted two angels.

In Exodus 25, we find a description of the Ark of Covenant by God to Moses:

Exodus 25:18-20 And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. 19 Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat. 20 And the

cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat.

The Mercy Seat was located in the Holy of Holies inside of the Tabernacle they had in the Wilderness. The high priest would come in once a year and sprinkled the blood of the sacrificed animal on the top of the Mercy Seat that signifies the atonement has been made.

When Jesus died on the cross, the penalty of our sins were cleansed by the blood of Jesus, because the atonement has been made through Jesus Christ.

Two Cherubim sitting at the end of each side of the Mercy Seat. We find two angels sitting at where Jesus used be laid.

John 20:12 And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

The actual event of Jesus' resurrection is nowhere described in the Bible. However we must realize what Jesus' resurrection means to us?

- 1) The resurrection means that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.
- 2) The resurrection means that we have assurance of our own resurrection.
- 3) The resurrection means that God has an eternal plan for these bodies of ours.
- 4) The resurrection means that Christianity and its God are unique and completely different and unique among world religions.
- 5) The resurrection means that the cross was the payment, and the resurrection was the receipt, showing that the payment had been perfect in the sight of God the Father.

The invitations of Jesus to Mary and His disciples are filled with grace. The disciples had completely failed Jesus, especially Peter. He had every right to be dump them, but in His grace He extended this kind invitation to them.

Jesus distinguished Peter because He had special hope, special forgiveness, special restoration just for the one who denied Him the worst.

This shows us that the invitations of Jesus are always filled with His grace which is quick to forgive and slow to anger. Yes, we foul up, we mess up and we sin against God. But in His wonderful grace, He picks us up from our mess and strengthens us to go on as long as we come to Him with sincere and repented hearts.

I asked you to underline the word 'trembled.' The actual Greek word for this is 'ekstasis' where we get the word 'ecstasy.'

B. A TECHNICAL DIFFICULTY?

If you have New International Version, you would notice a note by the editor: "The earliest manuscripts and some other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20." It is not just NIV, but also some other versions say similar thing exception of KJV and NKJV. This has troubled many Christians regarding the reliability of God's Word - does this passage belong in our Bible?

Only two manuscripts, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus do not contain this portion of the Book of Mark, but all other manuscripts include it. KJV and NKJV are based on the majority text.

C. THE UNBELIEVING HEARTS OF THE DISCIPLES

Mark 16:9-13 Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. 10 She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. 11 And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe. 12 After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. 13 And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either.

The disciples did not receive the testimony of the women, nor did they receive the testimony of these two men either. They were equal opportunity unbelievers. Unbelief always brings pain and suffering to people like disciples had.

D. THE COMMISSION TO THE ALL THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS

Mark 16:14-18 Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. 15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; 18 they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

Unbelief is bloody, heavy, most ungrateful and inexcusable sin that men can ever commit against God. Then you might ask, "What about the people in Nepal who have never heard Jesus Christ?" They are not your concern. Your eternal destination is your concern.

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

V15 is a command, not a suggestion. Interest in missions is not an elective course in the university of God's grace. It is something in which every follower of Jesus is expected to major. It is not only pastor's or evangelist's job, but it is everybody's.

This command was not obeyed by the disciples for many years, they stayed at Jerusalem. It was only until the church was persecuted that it began to spread out to the world. But it did spread, and continues to.

In our church, we have abroad missions as well as home missions:

We support "For the Zion's" Ministry in Jerusalem, Israel, "Blaga Vest Shumen" in Shumen, Bulgaria, "Truth and Hope Foundation" in Sofia, Bulgaria, "Barrett Cruce and his family" in Costa Rica, Gilmer and Julie Paden who are planning to go to Philippine and "New Creation" in Nogales, Mexico. I believe that we are going to help the folks from New Creation build a dormitory in their facility sometime soon. I am sure that our Missions Director Barry Smith will let us know.

For the home missions, we have the Resurrection Celebration that is an outreach event on Resurrection Day every year. We are hoping to reach out to the Indian communities around this area in the future. Barry Smith is working with Roland Rivera to reach out to our neighbors around the communities of Sahuarita and Green Valley.

If you read v16 without a whole lot of thought, it sounds like we have to be baptized to be saved. This kind of theology is known as "Baptismal Regeneration." It is a heresy. God's grace alone saves people, not anything else man can do including baptism. I don't care what some denominations say about it. The Word of God makes it clear to us. God's grace alone, nothing to add, nothing to subtract.

Note that Jesus did not say that condemnation belonged to the one who was not baptized, only to the one who does not believe. Jesus does not make baptism essential to salvation. Condemnation rests on disbelief, not on baptism. So salvation rests on belief. Baptism is merely the picture and public declaration of the new life not the means of securing it.

But does it mean that we can ignore baptism? No, it is one of those things Jesus told us to do. It is important for us to obey His command including baptism. If you have not baptized yet or you had a baptism before without any commitment to God, it would be great to be baptized soon. Sometime in July we will have our own baptism for those who'd like to baptize.

E. ASCENSION OF JESUS

Mark 16:19-20 So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

Jesus goes ahead to heaven to prepare a place for us, to make intercession for us and to give gifts to men.

When we go out to do the work of God, Jesus will work with us. The disciples did what Jesus told them to do, and then Jesus did what only He could do – the accompanying signs. This is an excellent pattern for ministry. The preaching comes first, then the signs following. Signs are to follow believers, instead of us follow after signs.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) **No other religion or theology can bring any challenge to our God's truth.**

Our God is one true God who has no deception in Him.

2) **Whatever comes our way, we must test all of them against the Word of God which had the final authority.**

3) **The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the evidence of our eternal life and hope in Him.**