

SEPTEMBER 23, 2025

C.S. LEWIS INSTITUTE - BASIC APOLOGETICS COURSE

Small Group Participant Guide

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"This is a journey of faith and reason — learning to know why we believe, defend truth, and share Christ with grace."

SET 1 - Session 3 – Who is the Real Jesus?

Introduction (from CSLI)

There are numerous bestsellers that have put out a confusing picture of Jesus and the early church. The DaVinci Code novel particularly drew on some of these trends, selling more than 60 million copies. Bart Ehrman, Elaine Pagels, and others, have championed a perspective that puts the Gnostic Gospels (discovered in Egypt in 1945) as a lost Christianity arbitrarily excluded from the Canon by Constantine and others. Some claim that Jesus was married and had a child; that His divinity was invented at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD; or that the Gospel of Judas gives a truthful account of events. This lecture addresses these questions: Are the Gnostic Gospels reliable? Was Jesus married? Was His divinity invented? Why is our view of Jesus so crucial to saving faith?

Synopsis

This session tackles modern claims that distort Jesus' identity — such as those popularized by The Da Vinci Code, Bart Ehrman, and Elaine Pagels. Questions include: Was Jesus married? Was His divinity invented at the Council of Nicaea? Are the Gnostic Gospels reliable? The lecture shows that there is no historical evidence Jesus was married; early Jewish and Christian sources affirm His singleness for ministry. Claims that Jesus' divinity was 'invented' in 325 AD are contradicted by overwhelming evidence: the New Testament itself and the writings of early church fathers long before Nicaea affirm His deity. Gnostic texts like the Gospel of Judas or Gospel of Thomas were written in the 2nd–3rd centuries, long after the eyewitness Gospels, and reflect philosophical distortions rather than history. The Priory of Zion 'secret' exposed in The Da Vinci Code is a documented hoax. By contrast, the canonical Gospels are rooted in eyewitness testimony, careful oral tradition, and early written accounts within decades of Jesus' death. This session grounds believers in the reliability of the New Testament and the uniqueness of Jesus' person and teaching. The goal is to build confidence that Jesus is who He claimed to be: the divine Son of God and Savior.

Ten Life Applications

- Recognize cultural claims about Jesus often recycle old errors.
- Be ready to distinguish fiction from historical fact.
- Value eyewitness testimony as foundational to Christian faith.
- See Jesus' singleness as a model of undivided devotion.
- Rest in Scripture's early, reliable witness to Christ's divinity.
- Appreciate the continuity of Christian belief across centuries.
- Respond calmly when confronted with 'shocking' new theories.
- Use challenges to deepen your own study of the Bible.
- Rejoice in the uniqueness of Jesus' teaching and person.
- Share truth graciously, speaking with both confidence and love.

Study Questions (from CSLI)

1. Who are some of the authors that maintain that much of the Jesus we see in the Gospels was invented by the early church?

2. What is the relationship of the Gospels to history?

3. What are some of the problems with this critical approach?

4. What is the importance of eyewitnesses?

5. Why is the time for the invention or creation of 'myth' too short?

6. How is the Jewish (and Middle Eastern) perspective on memory different from ours?

7. In what ways are Jesus' teachings utterly unique?

Building Faith Conversations

8. How do you respond when media or books (like The Da Vinci Code) raise doubts about Jesus?

9. What gives you confidence that the New Testament accounts are reliable?

10. Why does it matter whether Jesus was married or not?

11. How would you answer someone who says Jesus' divinity was invented at Nicaea?

12. What role do the early church fathers play in strengthening our confidence in Jesus' divinity?

13. How can Christians guard against being shaken by 'new discoveries' that challenge biblical truth?

14. What does Jesus' uniqueness mean for your personal faith?

15. How do eyewitness testimonies make a difference in believing the Gospel story?

16. What practical ways can we encourage others who are struggling with doubts about Jesus?

17. How should we balance confidence in truth with humility and grace when engaging skeptics?

Links to Lectures and Notes: <https://srmatthews.com/tsg>



Set1-Lecture3

Let's start out with a word of prayer. Lord, thank you for this time where we can focus on issues or questions that are raised within the culture and be able to respond to it. I pray that we might, as we hear these things and gain knowledge, that we might not use it to argue with people but to speak the truth in love to people that have questions, give honest answers to honest questions that people have. We ask this in Christ's name, amen.

In this session, I want to deal with various things that have been raised by books that have been written in recent period about Jesus or about the Gospels or about the truth of Christianity. In the last session, we dealt with the authority of scripture and sketched the case for the authority of scripture.

We'll be looking at in future times the argument from prophecy and resurrection. And I'm going to at least mention in this time where you can go to get more on the reliability of the text of the New Testament and the canon. But I want to focus on a phenomena of some rather unlikely bestsellers.

One of those has perhaps been most popularized is the Da Vinci Code by Dan Brown. It became a whole phenomena where millions and millions of copies have been sold worldwide. And it's become a movie and many people were influenced by the facts section.

In the beginning of the book, it says that other than the obvious fictional elements, the various elements that relate to things have been based upon fact, including the idea of the Priory of Zion starting in 1099 and the idea of Jesus being married and having a child and various other elements that are talked about within the novel were regarded as true and really influenced many people. Now, Dan Brown is not a theological scholar, but he was influenced and did a lot of research in some of these theological scholars. He picked up some of the tributaries, you might say, of the time.

Some things like a book, Holy Blood, Holy Grail, that we'll mention by Bajent, Lee, and Lincoln. We'll talk about that later. A book that's been put together, Bart Ehrman has a book called Misquoting Jesus, although that wasn't around when Dan Brown wrote the novel. He does draw from various sources similar to what Ehrman draws from. Bart Ehrman, again, deals with lost Christianities, has a whole book on that where he looks at various things, the Gnostic Gospels, various what are called pseudepigraphal books, books that were not included within the canon, and has a whole list of them. So we could see various other versions that were not included in the canon of the New Testament.

Most lay people don't know about these things. If you've been seminary educated, you are acquainted with it, but it can come as a shock when you look at the whole textual criticism of the New Testament and discover that the ending of Mark, say Mark 16, 9 to 20, is not in the best earliest manuscripts, or the story of the woman caught in adultery in John 8 is not in the Codex Sinaiticus and Vaticanus. And it can be a shock that some of these traditional sayings that are part of the scriptures are not regarded by the best textual critics as being part of the original text.

You also have other people such as Elaine Pagels, who has written a book called *Beyond Belief* more recently, and her earlier book, *The Gnostic Gospels*, put forward a discovery that we'll talk about in a little bit in Nag Hammadi of a whole bunch of literature that now is widely published. If you go to the major bookstores, Barnes & Noble or Borders, you'll see many of these Gnostic Gospels in separate texts with introductions published, and many people are reading them. There's a widespread readership for these things, many people that are exposed to them.

There's been a more recent announcement of the publication of the Gospel of Judas, and I've had people call me and really wonder, what's going on here? What is this? Should we regard it as reliable? Does this shake up anything of our understanding of Christianity? Things like that have really disturbed people and made them wonder about the truth of things that they didn't know or how that would affect their faith. So I want to deal with some of the related questions that are here, particularly the question that's been raised by *Holy Blood*, *Holy Grail*, and Dan Brown. It's also there in other works, and the idea was Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and had a child.

That's one question. Another one was, was Jesus' divinity invented at Nicaea, the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD? Was that something that was held from the beginning of faith in Christ, or was it something that came on rather late, as some people claim? And then we'll touch on the Gospel of Judas, give you an orientation there and where to go to find out more. We'll talk a little bit about the Gnostic Gospels and deal with the question, do the Gnostic Gospels change our picture of Jesus? And finally, we'll look at, was the Priory of Zion, as Dan Brown claims, or as *Holy Blood*, *Holy Grail* claims, was founded in 1099, the keeper of the secret of the Holy Grail? And the secret of the Holy Grail that's talked about in Dan Brown's book, *The Da Vinci Code*, is that the Holy Grail is actually the body of Mary Magdalene, and that she was the mother of the child of Jesus that became part of, say, the kingly line of France, or certainly in Europe.

In any case, these claims have often rocked people, and people don't know quite how to respond to them. So it's worth saying something with respect to them. First of all, this first claim, was Jesus married to Mary Magdalene, and did they have a child? So the question is, what's the historical evidence that Jesus was married? And the answer is none, absolutely none. And it's interesting to have a co-compatriot here, someone who agrees, that's from the Jesus Seminar. You have scholar John Dominic Crossan, who is a very great critic of the New Testament, that addressed this on a blog. He said, there is an ancient venerable principle of biblical exegesis, which states that if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, it must be a camel in disguise.

There's no evidence that Jesus was married, looks like a duck. Multiple indications that he was not, walks like a duck. And no early text suggesting wife or children, quacks like a duck.

So he must be an incognito bridegroom, camel in disguise. And he argues that again, there's no evidence at all for this. Almost everyone says that Jesus was single in order to focus on ministry. However, the counterclaim to that is that it was un-Jewish to be unmarried. In other words, the Jews would normally, or always, got married, particularly rabbis. Jesus was not formally a rabbi, but certainly considered one. So it's normally assumed that he would have been married, perhaps very young. However, there are several counterindications to this. First of all, in Matthew 19, verses 10 to 12, you have Jesus teaching on marriage and singleness, where he says that some are called to be eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom. And it's assumed that Jesus, perhaps, was in that category, or assumes himself to be there. Certainly, he thinks it legitimate that some would be eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom. Doesn't regard it as absolutely necessary to be married.

It seems that the apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 7, holds a similar view. That he argues that, you know, to be married is a gift, 1 Corinthians 7, 7. Some people have a gift in one way, and some a gift in that. Some have a gift of marriage, some have a gift of singleness. Then he proceeds in the rest of 1 Corinthians 7 to provide an argument for all things being equal for singleness, because it does give you more focused time to devote to ministry. The time that you spend with regard to a wife and pleasing her or husband and family takes a lot of time away from that which you could be doing, perhaps, to advance the cause of the gospel. But it's a matter of a gift.

Some are called in one way, and some are called in another, the apostle Paul argues. You also have within Judaism a very established sect that we all know about called the Essenes that were at Qumran. And particularly, the idea of the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered at Qumran. And a lot of the literature, many books of the Old Testament, as well as writings that they had. Now, this group, which is a significant size group within Judaism, actually advocated celibacy. So to say that it was un-Jewish to be unmarried or Jews had to be married leaves out the Essenes, as well as certainly Jesus' teaching.

So it's by no means monolithic, even though it was a general custom. You also had, even with rabbis, postponing marriage was allowed in order to concentrate on study of the law. And some rabbis decided to focus on that study, not to be married.

For instance, Simeon ben Asai was never married, even though he taught that men should be married. But one time he was asked why he did not. He said, what shall I do? My soul is enamored of the law. The population of the world can be kept up by others. So the rabbis were allowed to put off or sometimes not be married. So it's by no means absolute. Even the rabbi's teaching that it was normal to be married was not regarded as absolute or absolutely binding in the way that other law was. We have certain examples of wilderness prophets, such as John the Baptist or Banas, B-A-N-U-S, from Josephus, that seemed to have been unmarried. Finally, I would say that even if Jesus was married and had children, that would be no obstacle to his divinity.

Sex is good. Family is good. Jesus was fully human as well as fully divine. There would be no problem intrinsically with Jesus being married, it's just that there's absolutely no evidence that he was. I think you can be very decisive and clear on that kind of issue. So I think it's something that it's a value for you to know about that because you hear that claim coming up in a number of different instances in books and in popular discussion about Jesus.

Another question that's sometimes raised, and it's not only there in the Da Vinci Code, but it's there in a number of different times in other books, the idea that somehow in early Christianity, Jesus' divinity came rather late, that it was invented actually, according to Dan Brown, at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. And is this the case? Was Jesus' divinity invented at Nicaea or not? Was he, to use the words of Dan Brown, until that moment thought to be a mortal prophet? And it's often that scenario that many people say, well, Christianity was determined by the winners, and this idea of divinity came in rather late and then imposed on people. So what's the evidence against this? Well, I would say there's massive evidence against it. I don't have time to go into all of the passages in the New Testament that point to Jesus' deity.

But let me just mention a couple. Philippians 2.6 says that Jesus was in the very nature God. To use the Greek phrase, morphe theou, in the form of God. First Colossians 1, 15 and 16, he, Christ, is the image of the invisible God. By him, all things were created. In fact, it says in that context, all things were created in, through, by, and for him. First Corinthians 8.6, it talks about one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things come.

Jesus is the creator. Of course, the classic verse that's often known is, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Now, these are just a few of the many, many, many passages. I would say that there are probably 10 to 15 passages that explicitly talk about Jesus as God, use theos, or some form of that word, in relation to Jesus. But there are just as many, or many, many more, that talk about him as Lord, which is an often used word in the Old Testament for God. And then you have massive numbers of titles of Jesus that all point to him as God. In fact, I would say that the evidence for Jesus' deity within the New Testament is tremendous. It's like an avalanche.

You may dodge a few rocks from an avalanche, but sooner or later, it's going to get you. And that's the way the evidence for Jesus' divinity is. I used to think it was based upon several passages, until I came across a book by Lorraine Bettner, B-O-E-T-T-N-E-R, called *Studies in Theology*. And in that book, there are 100 pages devoted to the case from the New Testament on Jesus' deity. It's rather massive. You're just overwhelmed by the amount of evidence of Old Testament passages that apply to God, that are applied to Jesus, of the times that Jesus is worshipped, of the various titles of Jesus that could only be applied to God, and so on and so on.

It's a very impressive case for the deity of Christ there. Also, if you look at the various church fathers that wrote before 325 A.D., you see that they also held that Jesus was God. Let me just read a few, and I'll give you the dates and what they say. Ignatius, writing 105 A.D., that God was manifested in human form, that is, in Jesus. Clement, 150 A.D., it's fitting that you should think of Jesus Christ as God. Justin Martyr, the father of the universe has a son, and he's even God.

That was in 160 A.D. Irenaeus, writing about 180, he is God. Tertullian, about 200 A.D., talks about Christ our God. Origen, about 225 A.D., no one should be offended that the Savior is also God. Novatian, 235 A.D., he is not only man, but God also. Cyprian, in 250 A.D., talks about Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God. I believe that Jesus' divinity was proposed from the beginning of Christianity.

And at the Council of Nicaea, there was an overwhelming confirmation or stamping that this is what the church believed. And the vote, despite the fact that people have tried to say that it was a close vote, was 316 to 2. That would hardly be considered close. Brown's claim that until that moment in history, 325 A.D., Jesus was viewed as a mortal prophet is clearly false. Whether he was deity or not is one kind of question. But whether he was believed to be deity prior to Nicaea is not in any doubt. There's an overwhelming amount of evidence. It's a slam dunk on that kind of issue. So this idea is not only there in the Da Vinci Code, it's there broadly in the culture. It's an argument that he drew in the air in many different popular works or scholarly works in the more liberal segment of the community.

He just brought it to the popular notice, but it's very much held by many different scholars. Alright, what is this thing about the Gospel of Judas? Well, the Gospel of Judas is a codex found in Egypt about 30 years ago. And it was passed around for a little while. It's a very interesting history. If you just go to the Gospel of Judas on the web, you'll find a number of different sites where you'll find a very detailed discussion of the history of the Gospel of Judas. Plus, you'll find the text there. It doesn't take you very long to read. Now, it's a partial text. We don't have every segment.

There's some parts that have fallen away or are unreadable. The Gospel of Judas was written in Coptic. Its date was around 300 A.D. It seems to be the book that's mentioned by Irenaeus, one of the early church fathers, in 150-160 A.D., somewhere in that idea. Now, this whole codex, this whole collection of pages, was 66 pages

and has four documents, the longest of which is the Gospel of Judas. It seems to have been written by a Gnostic sect called the Cainites. And we'll talk a little bit later about what Gnosticism was. But in it, surprisingly, this is along the lines of what the Cainites held to, Judas is the best of disciples rather than the worst. And his act of betrayal was not an act of betrayal, but actually in obedience to Jesus' request. So it turns the tables on Judas. But since it was written, most likely in the middle of the second century, that's 150 or later, perhaps even to the end of the second century, the question is, what reliable message or ideas does it teach about Jesus or Judas? I would say nothing. It doesn't tell us anything about Judas or Jesus. It does tell us a lot about second century Gnosticism, which was a group that was not Orthodox.

In fact, later, we'll see in just a minute, the Nag Hammadi texts that were discovered in 1945, that contain a lot of the teachings of the Gnostics, contain no traditional works of the New Testament. They were all Gnostic writings. It wasn't as if, in the picture scenario that many try to show, that you had all these books that had more or less equal acceptance, and then somehow arbitrarily the Council of Nicaea chose the 27 that we have. It's that the Gnostic texts were totally separate and rejected by almost all from the very beginning, and were significantly later, middle to late second century or beyond, up into the third century. If you want to do further study, you'll find readings that we'll have listed with this study, that will give you further things to explore. One particular book that's valuable has a chapter, it's in dethroning Jesus, about the Gospel of Judas.

And you can find the references to that later on. Okay, another question is, do the Gnostic Gospels change our picture of Jesus? Okay, well what are these Gnostic Gospels? Well, as I mentioned a second ago, they were discovered at Nag Hammadi, Egypt around 1945. So it's not a new discovery, it's been known for quite a while, and it's just been popularized and brought into a whole narrative or a whole position in more recent times. But it involved a whole bunch of works, but including the only Gospels are the Gospel of Truth, Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Philip, Gospel of the Egyptians, and Gospel of Mary. And these texts or manuscripts themselves were dated around 350 AD, and points back to our earlier movement, Gnosticism, that I alluded to. It's a second century movement that put forward these ideas, that salvation involves a special secret knowledge or insight, that somehow creation or matter is evil, as part of the explanation for evil.

Classical Christianity has one kind of understanding of that, that whereas Platonism, Neoplatonism, and Gnosticism think that somehow matter is associated with moving away from the spiritual into the material. Somehow there's a god in some subsidiary gods called a Demiurge that makes the world impure and corrupt. So usually Jesus is divine and not human, for somehow the material is associated with evil. So again, salvation is equated with knowledge or special insight. And it certainly does not involve Jesus dying on the cross for our sins, which is repugnant, or his raising bodily from the dead. Again, that was very alien to Greek thought, and also to Gnosticism itself.

Should these Gnostic Gospels reshape our view of Jesus? I would say absolutely not, because they are second century documents. Gnosticism is a second century movement, whereas the Gospels are clearly first century documents. Now, the Gospel of Thomas has gotten some prominence, because it was included by the Jesus Seminar in the five-fold Gospel. You had Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and then the Gospel of Thomas included in a text. And we mentioned in the previous lecture that there was a color code on whether it's totally unreliable, probably unreliable, and probably reliable, totally reliable. And they had the vote not only in the four Gospels, but on the Gospel of Thomas was included as an equal text to the rest. And perhaps with the assumption that the Gospel of Thomas was pretty early. And there's been an attempt by some to push it back, or even to associate the Gospel of Thomas with Q. I'm not going to go into that. You can find out some discussions of that in books and texts that I can provide resources for in our readings.

In any case, about the earliest date you have for the Gospel of Thomas is about 80 to 90 by Elaine Pagels, who wrote her work on the Gnostic Gospels. Bart Ehrman, not an evangelical Christian at all, would date the Gospel of Thomas early second century, say 100 to 150, whereas I think many of the Gnostic works would be certainly 150 and beyond, say late second century. I think, though, that the argument is shifting. People like Craig Evans and Norman Perrin give very decisive, I think, objective arguments to date the Gospel of Thomas as actually quite late in the second century. Let's say after 175 AD, probably in the 180s or even later. And here are the way the arguments go.

You can find it in *Fabricating Jesus* or in other places by Craig Evans. He argues, and others argue, that the Gospel of Thomas shows familiarity with 14 of 27 New Testament books. None of the early church writers, such as Ignatius, have that scope of knowledge, have that many books that are available or show that scope of knowledge. Also, a more decisive argument as well is that the Gospel of Thomas has a number of Syrian forms and speech. There are over 500 Syrian sayings and words through its 114 sayings. And it shows an acquaintance with a work that's called Tatian's Diatessaron. Tatian's Diatessaron is a harmony of the Gospels where you have all four Gospels put together in a coherent account. And we know the date of the Diatessaron to be about 175 AD. So if it shows acquaintance with all these New Testament books as well as Tatian's Diatessaron, it would push it after 175 AD. So it's a quite late 2nd century document. So it's not by any means early. Whereas the New Testament Gospels go back to the, at least the message of the Gospel, back to the 30s.

Paul's Epistles to the 50s. And in our last talk, we talked about the Gospels as being perhaps the first one marked 60s. And maybe all the Gospels before 70 were at least within the scope of the 1st century, pretty early. Only John, by some evangelical scholars, is thought to be 80s or 90s AD. But that's by no means certain. That's a matter of opinion. But the question is this. The message of the Gospel goes back to a very early message. Like in 1st Corinthians 15, you have the Apostle Paul saying this. 1st Corinthians 15.1 2nd Corinthians 15.2 Notice particularly in verse 1, where it says that, Gospel which I preached to you, which also you received. And then verse 3. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received. That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and so on.

Now, the Apostle Paul does claim in his books that he received his message and his teaching from Jesus. But there's also a time where about three years after his conversion, he went down and received the right hand of fellowship from the early church. From the people like Peter and John and James. Accepted him as an Apostle, and later on to be Apostle particularly to the Gentiles. But he was accepted, and it seems to indicate a tradition, which is put, it seems, almost in a creedal form. Where again he says that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. That he was buried and raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. It seems that this tradition goes back very early, perhaps within three to five years, after the events of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. So it's by no means a late invention, it's very early. This is regarded as a very early teaching. So you have the Gospels very early in the first century, and the Gnostic Gospels very late. If you look at the chronology of Jesus' death, it would be, Jesus was born about four to six BC. Somehow that person that started the dating got it off a little bit. So somewhere around between four and six BC Jesus was born. He died when he was about 30.

That's what Luke says. That doesn't mean exactly 30, we'll say about 30. Some people estimate that Jesus died on April 7, 30 AD. That's a good, solid, informed estimate about when Jesus died. Now that's not absolutely certain, but it's still a good, educated guess as to when it happened. Because we know when Passover was in each one of those years. So very early, say three to five years after that, say by 35, there's this tradition. Paul's writing about this in the 50s, where his letters were written. The Gospels also passed on through oral tradition, very scrupulously memorized, as we talked about in the last lecture, and then finally written down.

It's interesting, Ken Bailey argues, that in the Jewish tradition, if something was really valued to be important, it would be memorized. If something is secondarily important, then it's written down. It's kind of the inverse of the way we think of it.

Maybe something we want to be preserved, we would write down. Now maybe that's exaggerating it a little bit, but it's still more to the case of that culture. Something that was to be preserved was passed on scrupulously from eyewitnesses, and memorized and passed on very carefully by the elders of the churches that were founded. Because it was something of great value, and what wasn't to be played with in a fast or loose fashion. To be very carefully preserved. So the Gnostic Gospels are late 100s, say 150 or later, perhaps a little bit before 150, but at least well into the second century documents.

Whereas the Gospels are 30 to 60 or 70, maybe a little bit later. Certainly all first century documents, even the last one, John, again that Bryland's fragment that I mentioned in the last lecture pushes it back to at least late first century or earlier. Certainly not second century. At least the evidence would go against that idea. So which is more reliable? Would it be more reliable to say that the Gnostic Gospels that are second century, 150 or beyond, or more reliable echoes of who Jesus was or first century documents that come within three to five years and within the first half of the first century or maybe a little bit beyond that? I think that's a no brainer to be able to decide. Gnostic Gospels are late reflection of that which is true.

Was the Priory of Zion, another question is, was the Priory of Zion keeper of the secret of the Holy Grail since 1099, as Dan Brown says in the Da Vinci Code or as the authors of Holy Blood, Holy Grail suggest? This is a really interesting story because it's one of the claims at the very front of Dan Brown's book. He says the fact is that this Priory of Zion came on documents or documents are there that are historical. They're written in 1099 that talk about this Priory of Zion and there was this story of the Holy Grail that was passed on after that.

Supposedly Knights Templar discovered this long lost document showing the history of the movement and Leonardo da Vinci is said to be the Grand Master going back to 1510 to 1519, somewhere in that time period. The problem with this claim is that it's all a hoax. Brown relies on the 1982 book Holy Blood, Holy Grail and the authors relied on documents provided by anti-Semitic Frenchman Pierre Plantard who spent time in jail for fraud in 1953. Plantard and five other men started the small social club in 1954 called the Priory of Zion and it's S-I-O-N. It's really named after a local mountain that was there and its cause was not dealing with Knights Templar or ancient lost documents. The club's cause was low cost housing in France.

Then in the 1960s and 1970s Plantard created, maybe say in another way, forged a series of documents proving the existence of a bloodline from Mary Magdalene to the kings of France and surprise beyond that to Pierre Plantard himself. But he made a fatal mistake. He listed as part of this Priory of Zion and one of the friends of the French president as a grandmaster of the Priory of Zion. And so there was a legal case about this. In 1993, 11 years after Holy Blood, Holy Grail was written, in a legal case Plantard testified under oath that he'd made up the whole Priory scheme. The court ordered a search of Plantard's house and found other documents proving Plantard to be the true king of France. The judge gave Plantard a stern warning and dismissed him as a harmless crank. Numerous articles and books reveal Plantard's hoax, yet millions of readers believe it to be a fact. We're probably less aware of it because on the continent, I remember there was someone, it was at a lecture where I was speaking about this, and he was from France and he said there were tons of articles in France about this kind of issue and about the expose on Pierre Plantard.

And some people in the United Kingdom knew about it. But, you know, it's been known actually for quite a while. By the way, if you want a whole stack of arguments on this kind of issue, you can go to a website, priory,

P-R-I-O-R-Y, dash, of, dash, scion, S-I-O-N, I think it's dot com, but it doesn't matter, you just put Priory of Scion in there, and you'll find a whole stack of articles that you can read, and if you wish, download, on this subject. It comes from many different angles showing the history of it, showing a number of the different articles that were written all along the way, and really exposing it from a number of different angles. So far from this being the truth, it's been exposed as a hoax or as a fraud. So it's interesting.

I have another lecture, we have an article that I wrote in the CS Lewis publication, Knowing and Doing, that's available at cslewisinstitute.org, that lays out some further inconsistencies or problems of the Da Vinci Code. I also have a lecture that's available on the CS Lewis Institute website to go into this in much more detail. And also Catherine Sanders, we did a conference earlier on this subject. So if you want something in more detail on the Da Vinci Code, you can look at that. So there are many subjects that we could deal with, like, for instance, the textual reliability of the New Testament is another one of these subjects that's worth mentioning. And I'm not going to take the time to do this.

Perhaps at a later point we can do a whole lecture, not in this series, but as part of the CS Lewis Institute, on Bart Ehrman's book, *The Misquoting Jesus*, because it gives the impression, even though I think he knows otherwise, that the texts of the Gospels are totally unreliable or greatly unreliable, certainly giving shocking ideas, or at least shocking to lay people, about some of these passages that are dubious or to be questioned. There's a couple tapes, couple videotapes, that are there on the CS Lewis Institute website by Bill Kynes, Reverend Dr. Bill Kynes, on these issues. And one is on the textual reliability of the Gospels.

I really point you to that. It's a really excellent hour-long lecture on it. There's another lecture on the canon. Was the canon determined by the winners or not? And so he has a great discussion by Bill Kynes on the CS Lewis Institute website on this particular question. So there's a lot of different resources that are available on this kind of issue that's being seriously questioned within the culture. So in conclusion, what's the evidence that Jesus was married to Mary? And the answer is none.

Was Jesus' divinity invented at Nicaea in 325 AD? And the answer is absolutely not. What about the Gospel of Judas? Well, it gives us information about 2nd century Gnosticism, but I believe no reliable information about Judas or Jesus. Did the Gnostic Gospels change our picture of Jesus? I'd say not at all. They're 2nd century forgeries or 2nd century documents that want to reshape the idea of Christianity within their philosophy but give us no real historical knowledge of Jesus. And I think if we were to ask this question as well, is the New Testament text hopelessly corrupted? I would say no, it's at least 98% to 99% certain in terms of the reliability of our knowledge of the text. And that's what actually the book that's co-authored by Bruce Metzger and Bart Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*, actually advocates, a very high reliability of the text. Was the canon determined by the winners? The answer is no. None of the Gnostic Gospels were considered to be canonical or even given serious consideration to being so.

So we'll stop at that point and we'll have some discussion.