

SERIOUS TIMES

MAKING YOUR LIFE MATTER IN AN URGENT DAY

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Da Vinci and Friends

At first glance, the plot isn't anything that stands out above the normal mystery fare: The murder of a curator at the Louvre in Paris leads to a trail of clues found in the work of Leonardo da Vinci and to the discovery of a centuries old secret society. But as the plot unfolds, we find that the clues in Leonardo's work - and the mission of the secret society - revolves around the Holy Grail.

But instead of being the chalice that Jesus used during the last supper, the novel suggests that it's the bloodline of Jesus.

The Da Vinci Code contends that Mary Magdalene was the wife of Jesus and the mother of his child. As she bore descendants, specifically a daughter named Sarah, the bloodline is, in fact, the Holy Grail. Mary is to have fled after the crucifixion (with Jesus' child) to the south of France, where they established the Merovingian line of European royalty. This became the basis of a secret society to preserve the bloodline, and protect the secret, until time to make it known to the world. Along the way, Brown also suggests that the church invented the deity of Jesus, and that these truths have been covered up, primarily by a secretive Catholic group known as Opus Dei.

The Da Vinci Code is the bestselling novel, to date, of the twenty-first century and will soon be a major motion picture featuring the Oscar-winning duo of director Ron Howard and actor Tom Hanks.

Buckle your seat belt.

Now comes *The Jesus Papers* by Michael Baigent (tagline: "What if everything you think you know about Jesus is wrong?") boasting hidden archives, secret societies, Masonic records, and the private collections of antiquities dealers and their moneyed clients (and featured on the main page of AOL, no less); the publication of the so-called *Gospel of Judas* from the National Geographic Society (a translation of a third or fourth-century manuscript); and James D. Tabor's *The Jesus Dynasty: The Hidden History of Jesus, His Royal Family, and the Birth of Christianity* (which concludes that neither God nor Joseph was Jesus' father, but instead a Roman soldier named "Pantera"). Throw in Bart Ehrman's *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* and Roy Teel's *The Way, The Truth, and the Lies: How the Gospels Mislead Christians*

About Jesus' True Message, and you find the historicity of Jesus – as portrayed in Scripture – under greater assault than at any other time in recent memory.

It would be tempting to write such things off as too ludicrous to be bothered about. I once read an interview of film director Oliver Stone when he was facing criticism for the distortions and factual errors in his films, particularly the faux documentary expose on the Kennedy assassination *JFK*. In a lecture at American University, he said that films shouldn't be the end-all for what is true. "[People] have a responsibility to read a book," he said, and then added that "[Nobody] is going to sit through a three-hour movie and say, 'That's that.'"

He's wrong. That is *exactly* what *countless* numbers of people do. And when the redefinition of the life and teaching of Jesus is at hand, it is more alarming than ever.

If you are a pastor, you simply must speak to this. If you are one of the millions who have read the books, or will see the movie, you simply must think about this, remembering the words of the apostle Paul:

"Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!...I want you to know...that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:7-8, 11-12, NIV).

James Emery White

Sources

James Emery White, *The Da Vinci Question*.

Editor's Note:

In a new release, James Emery White addresses the question: Is the Da Vinci Code fact or fiction? He sifts through Dan Brown's claims about Jesus, Mary Magdalene and early Christianity and sets the record straight about what really happened. Just in time for the release of the movie, this booklet from InterVarsity Press is designed as a giveaway for Da Vinci readers and moviegoers.

To order the booklet (alone or in packs of five):

<http://www.ivpress.com/cgi-ivpress/book.pl/code=42>

For other resources, including downloadable manuscripts and service ideas for speaking to the Da Vinci Code:

<http://www.serious-times.com/information.asp?topicid=52>

*New to the Update? 2005 Updates are now archived for your perusal at

<http://www.serious-times.com/information.asp?TopicID=45>

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