

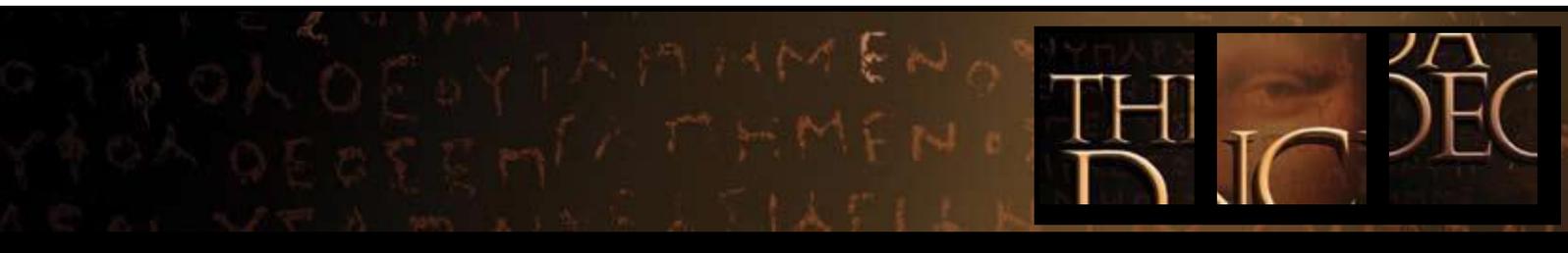
HOPEFM

MYSTERIES UNEARTHED

**The Da Vinci  
Decode  
episode 4**

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The Da Vinci code  
and the Bible





NOTES...

Sir Leigh Teabing says:

*“The Bible is a product of man...not of God. The Bible did not fall magically from the clouds. Man created it as a historical record of tumultuous times, and it evolved through countless translations, additions and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book.”* The Da Vinci Code, pp. 312-313

*“More than eighty gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John among them.”*

The Da Vinci Code, p.313

*“The Bible, as we know it today, was collated by pagan Roman emperor Constantine the Great.”*

The Da Vinci Code, p.313

*“Constantine 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. The earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned.”*

The Da Vinci Code, p. 317

*“Fortunately for historians...some of the gospels that Constantine attempted to eradicate managed to survive. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the 1950’s hidden in a cave near Qumran in the Judean desert. And, of course, the Coptic Scrolls in 1945 at Nag Hammadi.”*

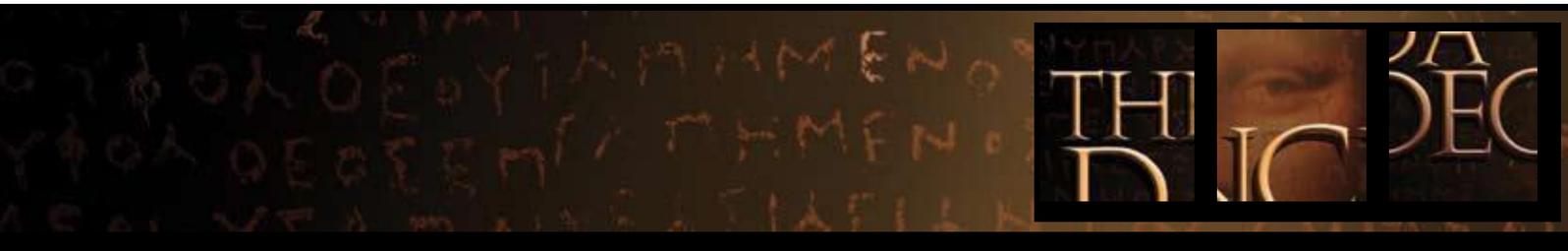
The Da Vinci Code, p. 317

*“...the Nag Hammadi and Dead Sea Scrolls...The earliest Christian records. Troublingly they do not match up with the gospels in the Bible.”* The Da Vinci Code, p. 331

Let’s fact-check that:

#### 1. The Dead Sea Scrolls

- Jewish scrolls – not Christian writings
- Contain the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) plus other Jewish documents
- Over 99% agreement with texts of today and 2000 years ago.



## The Differences between the OT and NT

Notes...

Collection of Jewish books written c. 1500BC – c. 300Bc	Collection of books written by Jewish believers in Jesus, about the life of Jesus and the early church, 10-60yrs after Jesus lived.
written mainly in Hebrew	written in Greek
Last book written c.400BC. Collection (“Canon”) finalised by c. 250BC.	Last book written by AD99. Collection finalised soon after.

### 2. The Nag Hammadi manuscripts

1. Written later than the accepted gospels, c. 150-200AD
2. Written after the death of disciples like Thomas and Philip, whose names they use
3. Written by Gnostics, not Christians
4. Christian scholars have welcomed them
- 5 Sexist.

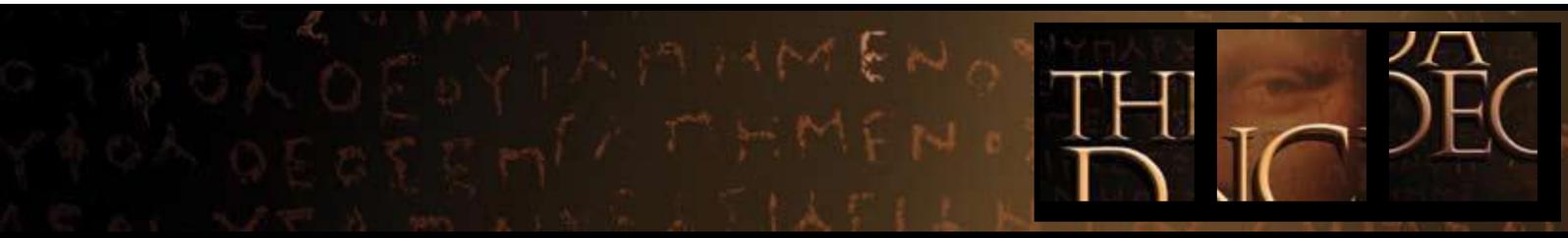
*“Simon Peter said, “Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of Life.” Jesus said, “I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too many become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”* (Gospel of Thomas, Saying 114)

Gnostic books were never seriously considered as Gospels to be included in the Bible.

### 3. Changing the Bible?

**Revisions:** By Constantine’s time, copies of the Bible had spread all over the world. Even if someone wanted to change them, it would be almost impossible. By that time the originals had been lost, so changing those was also impossible.

**Differences:** Small mistakes crept in during the copying process - no major history or belief of Christianity was affected. Modern Bibles like the NIV footnote the differences between manuscripts.



Notes...

**Testing sources:**

1. How many copies do we have?

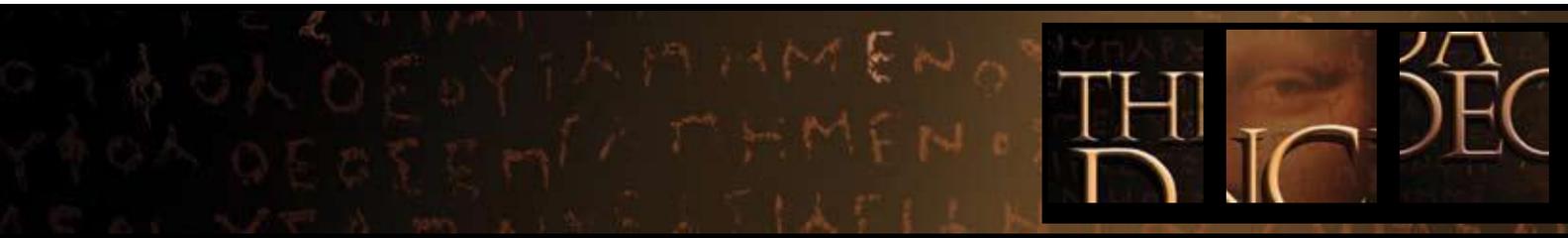
AUTHOR	DATE WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPY	TIME SPAN	NUMBER OF COPIES	ACCURACY OF COPY
Caesar, Gallic Wars	1 <sup>st</sup> century BC	900AD	1,000 years	10	?
Tacitus, Annals	1 <sup>st</sup> AD	1100AD	1,000 years	20	?
Plato, Tetralogies	4 <sup>th</sup> BC	900AD	1,200 years	7	?
Aristotle	4 <sup>th</sup> BC	1100AD	1,400 years	49	?
Catallus	1 <sup>st</sup> BC	1550AD	1,550 years	3	?
Homer, Iliad	9 <sup>th</sup> BC	400BC	400 years	643	95%
New Testament	1 <sup>st</sup> AD	2 <sup>nd</sup> century AD	<100 yrs (fragment) <250 yrs (complete)	c.25,000	99%

2. How much time separates our copies from the originals?

John Rylands fragment (P52) - Manchester	Dating c.115-130AD	Several verses from gospel of John
Bodmer Papyrus II - Geneva	Dated 150-200AD	Almost all of gospel of John
Chester Beatty Papyrii (P45) – Dublin	Date 200AD	Large parts of New Testament
Writings of Church Fathers	Dating from 100AD	Quotations from the gospels

**When was the New Testament written?**

- Reference point: the crucifixion of Jesus, c.AD31
- The Book of Acts does not record the death of apostle Paul, c.67AD, nor does it record the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD. It is dated before this time
- The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are dated c.50-65AD as are the most of the writings of the apostle Paul
- The apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 15:6) refers to 500 witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, most of whom were still alive at the time of his writing the book.



### 3. So did Constantine change the Bible?

Notes...

Constantine (emperor of the roman empire ad313-337) was favourable towards Christianity, perhaps for political reasons. He financed the production of a Bible, but did not compile it or edit it.

- a. even if Constantine wanted to tamper with the Gospels, they were too widespread around the world to get hold of many of the copies
- b. manuscripts from well before Constantine are functionally identical to today's Bible
- c. Copies of Gospel manuscripts from 200 years before Constantine match gospel manuscripts from after his time, with no evidence of tampering or serious change
- d. Parts of these gospels are quoted in the writings of church leaders before the Council of Nicaea, and are the same as the gospels we have today
- e. History has no mention of Constantine burning gospels of any kind – Christian or Gnostic. Rather, the early church had already identified the Gnostic gospels as fakes long before.

### Why were certain books included and others excluded?

The early church examined the writings carefully using three main tests:

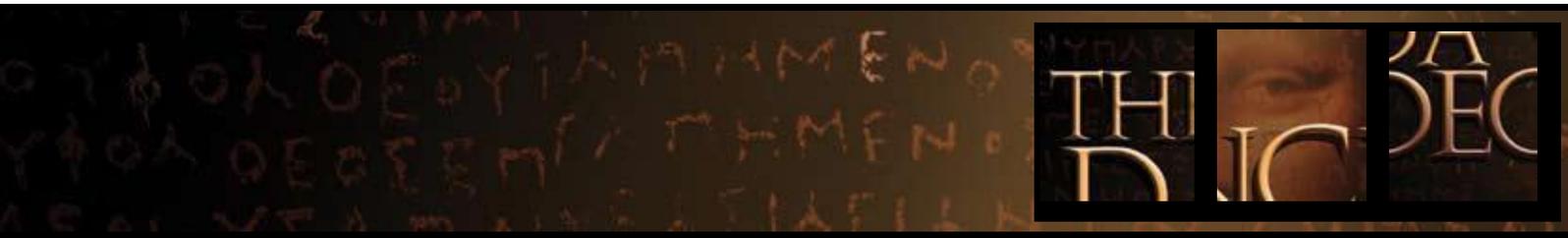
- a. Known authorship by an apostle or an associate of an apostle
- b. Content agreeing with the received apostolic teaching in the church
- c. Widespread acceptance within the Christian Church community.

*“One thing must be emphatically stated: The New Testament books did not become authoritative for the Church because they were formally included in a canonical list; on the contrary, the Church included them in her canon because she already regarded them as divinely inspired, recognising their innate worth and generally apostolic authority, direct and indirect.”*

*Prof. F.F. Bruce*

### When?

- The four gospels were brought together very soon after the writing of the Gospel of John, and were known collectively as “The Gospel” early in the 2nd century
- By 180AD it is clear that the four gospels had an established and authoritative position in the church
- The book of Acts was accepted early, as it was written by the author of the third gospel (Luke), and shared the authority and prestige of that work.



**Ignatius and Polycarp** (c. 115AD) seem to be acquainted with collections of Paul's writings.

*Notes...*

**2 Peter 3:15-16** makes mention of at least some of Paul's writings as being authoritative in the Church.

**Origen** (185-254AD) states that the following writings were accepted by all:- the four gospels, Acts, thirteen Pauline writings, 1 Peter, 1 John and Revelation. Writings that were still disputed by some were: Hebrews, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, James, Jude, the epistle of Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermes, the Didache, and the Gospel according to the Hebrews.

**Eusebius** (c. 265-340AD) mentions that all of the current New Testament books were widely accepted, except James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, which were disputed by some.

**Athanasius** (367AD) records the first list of canonical books comprising the 27 books of the current New Testament.

**The Councils of Hippo** (393AD) and Carthage (397AD) were among the first to list the 27 books of the current New Testament. This list has been accepted up to the present day.

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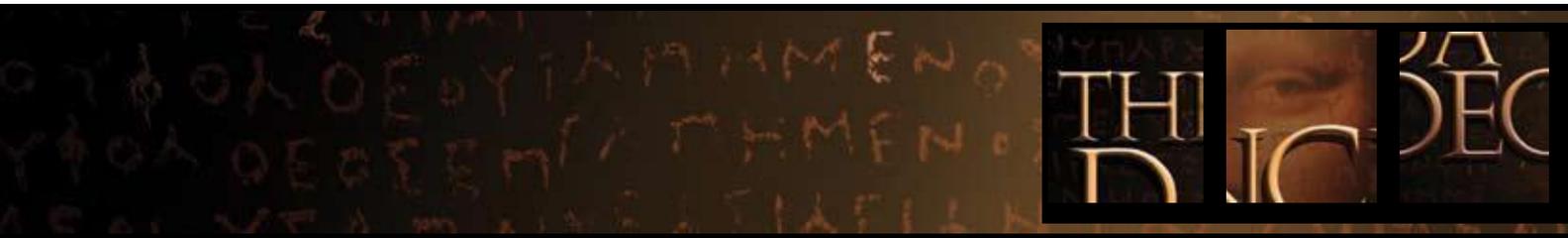
#### **4. What happened at the Council of Nicaea?**

*Dan Brown claims:*

- Constantine “upgraded Jesus’ status almost 4 centuries after Jesus’ death”
- that the Council of Nicaea in 325AD officially voted that Jesus should be upgraded to ‘the Son of God’, and that it was ‘a relatively close vote at that’.

#### **What really happened:**

- a popular teacher, Arius, had been teaching that Jesus was created by God. This was a strange idea to Christianity, and church leaders from all around the world got together to deal with it
- The council did not debate whether or not Jesus was divine – the Church had understood for 300 years that He was
- It debated whether He had always existed as God, or had been created by God the father
- Saying that Jesus was the first creation made him subordinate to God the father, whereas the mainstream Christian teaching had always maintained that Christ had always existed and was of the same essence of the father.
- The vote never happened. Out of the bishops (numbering between 200 and 318 at various times in the conference) only 5 objected at any time to some of the wording. Only 2 refused to sign the creed, probably for political reasons.
- The council issued a statement expressing traditional Christian doctrine that God the father and Jesus Christ His Son are “the same” and “of one substance”. The view of Arius was condemned.



Notes...

### 5. Has the Bible been changed in translation?

- Greek language an academic discipline with its own objective rules, meanings
- Independent university specialists of various religions or no religion study and translate.

#### Translations vary:

- Formal equivalence aims for a completely literal translation
- Dynamic equivalence translations tend to explain and simplify more
- Some translations use older English, like the King James Version which was completed in 1611. Others use more modern expressions.

**King James Version: Mark 10:45** “for even the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

**New Living Version: Mark 10:45** “for even I, the Son of man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give my life as a ransom for many.”

*“We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eye-witnesses of his majesty...and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origins in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*

**2 Peter 1:16, 19:21**