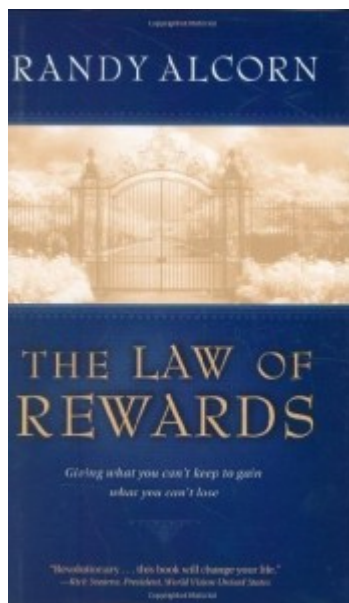


The Law of Rewards

Dr. Michael Gleghorn explore the biblical doctrine of eternal rewards. The Bible promises believers heavenly rewards for earthly obedience.

Introducing the Law of Rewards

The hit movie *Gladiator* begins with a powerful scene. Just before engaging the German barbarians in battle, General Maximus addresses some of his Roman soldiers. “Brothers,” he says, “what we do in life echoes in eternity.” Although Maximus was a pagan, his statement is entirely consistent with biblical Christianity, particularly the Bible’s teaching on eternal rewards.



In *The Law of Rewards*, [{1}](#) Randy Alcorn writes: “While our faith determines our eternal destination, our behavior determines our eternal rewards” [{2}](#). The Bible clearly teaches that we are saved by God’s grace, through personal faith in Christ, apart from any works whatever (Eph. 2:8-9). But it also teaches, with equal clarity, that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that we may be recompensed for what we have done in the body, whether good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10). This judgment (which is

only for believers) is not to determine whether or not we are saved. Its purpose is to evaluate our works and determine whether we shall receive, or lose, eternal rewards (1 Cor. 3:10-15).

Alcorn writes, “Our works are what we have done with our resources—time, energy, talents, money, possessions.” [{3}](#) The apostle Paul describes our works as a building project. At the

judgment seat of Christ the quality of our work will be tested with fire. If we have used quality building materials (gold, silver, precious stones), then our work will endure and we will be rewarded by the Lord. If we have used poor building materials (in this case, wood, hay, or straw), then our work will be consumed and we will suffer the loss of rewards (1 Cor. 3:10-15).

This raises some important questions. What are we doing with the resources that God has entrusted to us? Are we seeking to build God's kingdom, in God's way, empowered by God's Spirit? Or are we merely engaged in empire-building for our own glory? Are we investing our resources in reaching the world for Christ, making disciples, and helping the poor and needy? Or are we only concerned with satisfying our own immediate wants and desires?

It's here that the worldview dimensions of our subject can be most clearly seen. Most of us would probably find it difficult to use our resources in the service of God or our fellow man if we thought that this life was all there is and that death is the end of our personal existence. But Christianity says that there's more – a *lot* more. And if Christianity is true, then Maximus was right: "What we do in life echoes in eternity." Randy Alcorn has observed, "The missing ingredient in the lives of countless Christians today is *motivation*. . . . The doctrine of eternal rewards for our obedience is the neglected key to unlocking our motivation." [\[4\]](#)

Questioning Our Motivation

Is the desire for eternal rewards a proper or legitimate motivation for serving Christ? Isn't it somewhat shallow, maybe even selfish, for our service to Christ to be motivated by a desire for heavenly rewards? Furthermore, shouldn't we serve Christ simply because of who He is, rather than for what we can get out of it? To some people, the promise of eternal

rewards sounds like a crass appeal to our baser instincts. But is it?

Before we jump to any unwarranted conclusions and possibly overstate the case, we may first want to take a step back, take a deep breath, and remind ourselves of a few things. In the first place, as Randy Alcorn observes, “it wasn’t *our* idea that God would reward us. It was *his* idea!”[\[5\]](#) If we search the pages of the New Testament, we repeatedly find promises of heavenly rewards for earthly obedience. Indeed, Jesus himself urges our obedience in light of future rewards (Luke 6:35). Not only that, in Matthew 6:20 he *commands* us to store up for ourselves “treasures in heaven.” Now this leads to an interesting little twist. In John 14:21 Jesus says, “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me.” We *could* make the argument, then, that the one who does *not* seek to store up treasures in heaven is being disobedient to Christ’s command and demonstrating a lack of love for him!

In a somewhat similar vein, Alcorn wrote:

It is certainly true that desire for reward should not be our only motivation. But it is also true that it’s a fully legitimate motive encouraged by God. In fact, the two most basic things we can believe about God are first that he exists, and second that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him (Heb. 11:6). If you don’t believe God is a rewarder, you are rejecting a major biblical doctrine and have a false view of God.[\[6\]](#)

Of course, we must always remember that the Lord knows the motivations of our hearts – and these will be taken into account at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 4:5). In addition, Jesus solemnly warns us: “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven” (Matt. 6:1).

The biblical picture of rewards, then, would seem to go something like this. The Lord is absolutely worthy of our obedience and service, whether we ever personally profit from it or not (e.g. see Luke 17:10). Nevertheless, the Lord is a rewarder of those who seek Him and He commands us to seek His rewards as well! And when one really thinks about it, "Hearing our Master say, 'Well done' will not simply be for our pleasure but for *his!*"[\[7\]](#)

The Life God Rewards

What kind of life does God reward? For what sort of works will believers be rewarded when they stand before the judgment seat of Christ? The simplest answer to this question, and the most general, is that we will be rewarded for everything we've done that was motivated by our love for the Lord and empowered by His Spirit. Indeed, Jesus said that we would even be rewarded for simply giving a cup of cold water to someone because he is a follower of Christ (Matt. 10:42).

But the Bible specifically mentions many other things for which we can also be rewarded. The New Testament describes as many as five different crowns which will be given to believers for various works of faithfulness, obedience, discipline, and love. For example, there is the *imperishable crown* (1 Cor. 9:25), which appears to be rewarded for "determination, discipline, and victory in the Christian life."[\[8\]](#) There is the *crown of righteousness* which, according to Paul, will be awarded by the Lord "to all who have longed for his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8). There is the *crown of life*, "given for faithfulness to Christ in persecution or martyrdom."[\[9\]](#) In the book of Revelation, Jesus tells the church in Smyrna, "the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life" (2:10; see also James 1:12). Additionally, there is the *crown of rejoicing* (1 Thess. 2:19; Phil. 4:1), "given for pouring

oneself into others in evangelism and discipleship.”[{10}](#) And finally, there is the *crown of glory* (1 Pet. 5:4), “given for faithfully representing Christ in a position of leadership.”[{11}](#)

Of course, as Alcorn observes, “There’s nothing in this list that suggests it’s exhaustive.”[{12}](#) Indeed, as we’ve already seen, the Bible seems to say that we will be rewarded for every act of love and service which we did for the glory of God. But there’s another side to this discussion which we dare not overlook. The Bible not only indicates that we can gain rewards; it also warns us that we can lose them as well.

Paul compared the Christian life to an athletic competition in which our goal is to win the prize. This is why, he told the Corinthians, “I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize” (1 Cor. 9:27). The Bible suggests that the works of some believers will be completely consumed at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:15). Tragically, these believers will enter heaven without any rewards from their Lord. To avoid this catastrophe, let us heed Paul’s advice and “run in such a way as to get the prize” (1 Cor. 9:24).

Power, Pleasures, and Possessions

What should we think about power, pleasures, and possessions? Are they merely temptations that should be avoided, or genuine goods that can be legitimately sought and desired? Although some may find it surprising, each of these things *is* good—at least considered simply in itself. Each finds its ultimate source in God. And each existed *before* sin and evil corrupted His good creation. God has always been *powerful*. He clearly took *pleasure* in His work of creation, repeatedly describing it as “good” (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). And as the Creator of all that exists (other than himself, of course),

everything ultimately belongs to God (1 Cor. 10:26). Indeed, the Bible sometimes describes Him as the “*possessor* of heaven and earth” (Gen. 14:19). Clearly, then, there’s nothing inherently wrong with power, pleasures, or possessions.

So why have these things gained such tainted reputations? Probably because they’ve so often been misused and abused by sinful men and women. Indeed, describing sin and evil as the misuse, abuse, perversion or corruption of some good gift of God is part of a long and venerable tradition in the history of philosophy and theology. And one doesn’t have to look very far to find plenty of examples of man’s sinful misuse of power, pleasures, and possessions. Just turn on the evening news, or read the local paper, and you’ll find many such examples. But we must always remember that it’s the *misuse* of these things that is sinful and wrong; the things in themselves are good and desirable. And this is confirmed by the teaching of Scripture.

Consider the kind of rewards God offers us. For faithful and obedient service now, He promises power, pleasures, and possessions in eternity! Jesus made it clear that those who are faithful with the little things in this life, will be rewarded with great power and authority in the next (Luke 19:15-19). He taught that those who invest their time, talents, and treasures in building God’s kingdom here and now are laying up great treasures in heaven for themselves in the hereafter (Matt. 6:19-21; 19:21). And pleasures? The psalmist wrote of God, “In Thy presence is fullness of joy; in Thy right hand there are pleasures forever” (16:11).

Randy Alcorn has written, “God has created us each with desires for pleasure, possessions, and power.”[{13}](#) We want these things “not because we are sinful but *because we are human.*”[{14}](#) Although our sinfulness can, and often does, lead us to misuse these things, we’ve seen that they’re actually good gifts of God. “Power, possessions, and pleasures are legitimate objects of desire that our Creator has instilled in

us *and* by which he can motivate us to obedience.”[{15}](#) May we faithfully serve the Lord, trusting him as “the Rewarder of those who diligently seek him.”[{16}](#)

Investing in Eternity

A Christian worldview must be fleshed-out in the rough and tumble world of our daily lives if we’re going to be salt and light to the surrounding culture. Now, as always, true disciples must be “doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves” (Jas. 1:22).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told his followers:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matt. 6:19-21).

Many of us read these verses and only hear Jesus’ command not to store up treasures on earth. But if this is all we hear, then we’re missing the main point that Jesus is trying to make. As Alcorn observes, the central focus of this passage “is not the renunciation of earthly treasures but the accumulation of heavenly treasures. We’re to avoid storing up unnecessary treasures on earth not as an end in itself, but as a life strategy to lay up treasures in heaven.”[{17}](#) In a sense, Jesus is calling us to adopt a long-term investment strategy.

Think about the fate of all our earthly treasures. Isn’t Jesus right? Won’t they either wear out, break down, rust, become outdated, or get stolen? And even if none of this happens, we can’t hold on to earthly wealth forever, can we? “Either it leaves us while we live, or we leave it when we die.”[{18}](#) So is it really smart to pour all our time and energy into the

accumulation of earthly treasures? Is this really a wise investment strategy?

We've been discussing issues raised by Randy Alcorn's excellent book, *The Law of Rewards*. I can think of no better way to conclude than with this powerful and thought-provoking citation:

Gather your family and go visit a junkyard or a dump. Look at all the piles of "treasures" that were formerly Christmas and birthday presents. Point out things that people worked long hours to buy and paid hundreds of dollars for, that children quarreled about, friendships were lost over, honesty was sacrificed for, and marriages broke up over. Look at the remnants of gadgets and furnishings that now lie useless after their brief life span. Remind yourself that most of what you own will one day end up in a junkyard like this. And even if it survives on earth for a while, you won't. . . . When you examine the junkyard, ask yourself this question: 'When all that I ever owned lies abandoned, broken, useless, and forgotten, what will I have done with my life that will last for eternity?{19}

Notes

1. Much of the material for this article comes from Randy Alcorn, *The Law of Rewards* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2003). If you're interested in exploring this topic further, you may also want to read Bruce Wilkinson (with David Kopp), *A Life God Rewards: Why Everything You Do Today Matters Forever* (Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2002).
2. Alcorn, 7.
3. Ibid., 6.
4. Ibid., 99-100.
5. Ibid., 105.
6. Ibid., 116.
7. Ibid., 92.
8. Ibid., 91.

9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., 92.
13. Ibid., 111.
14. Ibid., 112.
15. Ibid., 113.
16. Ibid., 121.
17. Ibid., 22.
18. Ibid., 23.
19. Ibid., 23.

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“Did Christ HAVE to be Deity?”

Greetings Don,

I came across [your website article](#) concerning the deity of Christ and thought I would respond. if you have the time and interest, please entertain some of my thoughts and get back with me if time allows. My questions surround the topic of the necessity of Christ being deity. I accept that He is, but wonder if He MUST be for both the atonement and eternal salvation. What I would like to do is copy the text from my interaction with a good friend yesterday. That way I won't have to rewrite our dialogue. When you have time, please interject if you would. WB is my good friend, a pastor. I am DB.

WB: Your questions about Christ's deity in regards to salvation do sound like the JW's. "God can do it anyway he so

pleases" (even Calvin suggests this as well). If God wanted, he could have made a world without the possibility for sin as well. He can do it any way he pleases, but he has reasons for doing it the way he does.

DB: Yes, he does. But as God, he could do it any number of ways. If you hold to the middle/knowledge position, you would have to agree to this idea, and the idea that he chose the best possible way to redeem mankind. That, in-and-of-itself, doesn't demand that Christ be deity.

WB: The early church fathers reasoned (there, I used the dirty word "reason") that Christ had to be God for our salvation to be effectual. You have heard it before, even from me. Be patient as I explain it again. If I sin against you, how long does the sin remain? Answer: until you forgive me or until you die. Even if I die first, the sin remains as an offense against you.

DB: No problems here at all. I agree wholeheartedly.

WB: If I sin against God, how long does the sin remain? Until he forgives me or until he dies. Since he does not die, and is an infinite being, then the sin is eternal: actually, my sin against him becomes an infinite offense. Now: how can an infinite transgression be forgiven? (I hope we don't have to revisit justification in all of this). Only an infinite being can pay for an infinite sin – only an infinite being can absorb an infinite curse and satisfy the infinite penalty of an infinite crime. Only an infinite being can bear an infinite wrath. If Jesus was a man, his death would have no efficacy.

DB: Here's where questions arise on my part. I agree that my sin is an infinite offense against God. Actually, God is eternal and infinite and we are neither (in the absolute definitions of those terms—i.e. "immeasurable or without beginning or end"). Hence, maybe there is some reservation on my part to claim I, a finite being, can commit an infinite

act. I suppose since we live forever (in glory or judgment), our sins remain always or are cleansed and forgiven always; hence, they are infinite or erased. All that being said (I'm typing out my thoughts), I don't feel it requires that Christ must be deity to be a sufficient sacrifice for my sins. What is required is a perfect sacrifice. If Christ was a created being, one who was higher than angels and who took on the form of man, lived a perfect, sinless life with free will (like Satan but succeeding), his sacrifice would be sufficient. I don't understand how, using reason, it would not. Like us, he would have had a beginning. Like us, free will. Unlike Adam, he did not sin (even if he could have—if he was not deity, this would give even more credence to the example that even though he was a man, he did not sin vs. our position as Trinitarians). As he was sinless, created or not, his perfect example and sacrifice would be sufficient. It seems that if there coexisted TWO forms of deity at the same time, and it was possible for them to sin against each other as does man, then a mediator, who would then have to be deity, would be required. To require deity to be sacrificed for the sins of finite man seems overkill and doesn't pan out in my mind as reasonable. It's certainly plausible, but I don't see how it has to be. Please correct me here. If God requires a perfect sacrifice, Jesus would have been a sufficient sacrifice if God said he was having lived a perfect life (as a perfect man or perfect Adam).

WB: The applicability of Christ's atoning work to us as human beings depends upon the reality of his humanity.

DB: Absolutely.

WB: The efficacy depends upon the genuineness and completeness of his deity. DB: Not if God only requires a perfect, sinless sacrifice vs. the sacrifice of a deity. I still fail to understand why reason disallows this. It seems to me we are predisposed to this position to embrace our view of the trinity vs. the other way around. Reason, in my mind, doesn't

exclude this argument.

WB: The JW's reject this saying that God can do anything he pleases. Okay, why didn't he just let a muskrat die for our sins then? The beauty of the cross is not that we have been redeemed, but that the eternal Holy God was willing to undergo the kenosis (humiliation from glory to earth to servant to criminal to death to tomb).

DB: I agree—that is the beauty of the cross. But if God created for himself a son with free will (much like Satan—and NO, I don't think they were brothers!!!) to be a sacrifice for a lower mankind who despises them both and who hates them, then his suffering and sacrifice on our part for the love of his father, who he could disobey at will, is a lovely story as well. That's just as moving in my mind. If he was deity and couldn't sin (if he was impeccable), we can only glory in his suffering, not his resistance to sin. Again, reason warrants that conclusion.

WB: This reveals God. And it is this that is the centerpiece of the Christian faith (our salvation was the result, and the reason, but the emphasis is on the grand mystery of God himself. (How boring it would be to send someone else to do his dirty work).

DB: I addressed this above.

Hello _____,

Thanks for your e-mail. Don is overwhelmed with other duties and asked me to respond in his place. I hope you understand.

Since you claim to accept the doctrine of Christ's deity, I will simply assume this is a belief we share. Thus, rather than offering any arguments for this important doctrine, I will simply assume it is true for the purpose of this response.

Let me make just a few points by way of introduction. First, I think you raise an important issue that needs to be carefully considered and discussed. Second, I will have to reply in a somewhat abbreviated fashion, merely outlining what I consider to be some important points. Third, at the time of this writing, I freely admit that I CANNOT offer a conclusive argument that it was necessary for Christ to be God in order to provide an acceptable atonement for the sins of man. However, I want to offer a cumulative case for this position which I think is nonetheless compelling. This will involve both a response to some of your statements, as well as a brief, positive presentation of some evidence which I think makes it at least highly probable that Christ would indeed have to be God to provide an acceptable atonement for our sins. Finally, I offer these thoughts for your consideration since you wrote to Probe requesting a response. Although I have to reply rather quickly because of many other pressing duties, I am also offering a tolerably thoughtful response that I ask you to read carefully.

Please allow me to focus on your statements beginning with the remark, "Here's where questions arise on my part." You state:

"I don't feel it requires that Christ must be deity to be a sufficient sacrifice for my sins. What is required is a perfect sacrifice. If Christ was a created being, one who was higher than angels and who took on the form of man, lived a perfect, sinless life with free will (like Satan but succeeding), his sacrifice would be sufficient. I don't understand how, using reason, it would not."

I wonder HOW you actually KNOW this to be true? Granted, you MAY be right. But HOW do you really KNOW? I note that you appeal to "reason" – a faculty for which I too have great respect – but it's important to remember that reason, like ALL of man's faculties, is fallen. This remark is not intended to denigrate reason. But it's common knowledge that man often

makes errors in reasoning about all sorts of things. Not only that, we often begin our reasoning from false presuppositions, which often results in correctly reasoning to false conclusions. Finally, we almost never have all the essential information which we would need to reason to the right answer – even if we didn't continually commit errors in our reasoning.

I would argue that the question of whether or not it was necessary for Christ to be God in order to provide an acceptable atonement for the sins of man is the sort of question about which it would be quite easy to reason incorrectly. I would also argue that YOU BEAR THE BURDEN OF PROOF here. This is so for the simple reason that Christ was in fact God (as you admit), and the Father did in fact send His Son to be “the propitiation for our sins” (1 JN. 2:2). Since God is a rational moral agent, it seems fair to assume that He had some good reason for actually doing things as He did. Not only this, I think it's fair to ask whether God would have sent His only Son as the sacrifice for our sins if He could have achieved this end in some other way. It is at least odd that God would have sent His only Son to do what a morally perfect creature could just as easily have accomplished. Since God did in fact send His Son, however, you clearly bear the burden of proof in demonstrating that this was, in fact, not necessary. I don't think you can do so. Hence, I think your argument is ultimately unsuccessful.

Let me briefly illustrate this last point from a section of the dialogue between you and your friend:

WB: The applicability of Christ's atoning work to us as human beings depends upon the reality of his humanity. DB: Absolutely. WB: The efficacy depends upon the genuineness and completeness of his deity. DB: Not if God only requires a perfect, sinless sacrifice vs. the sacrifice of a deity. I still fail to understand why reason disallows this. It seems to me we are predisposed to this position to embrace our view

of the trinity vs. the other way around. Reason, in my mind, doesn't exclude this argument."

Concerning your final comments, I would agree that reason, in itself, doesn't necessarily exclude the possibility that God only requires a perfect, sinless sacrifice rather than a Divine one. But remember my comments on "reason" again. Just because human reason cannot exclude the possibility that you mention does not in any way prove that a Divine sacrifice was not necessary! And since you bear the burden of proof here, I must ask you HOW, specifically, you KNOW that God does NOT REQUIRE A DIVINE SACRIFICE? Since this is what God actually did, I would argue that it is more reasonable to believe it was necessary than that it was not. Admittedly, this does not PROVE my argument is true, but I do think it's more reasonable. And I am not obligated to assume the burden of proof here anyway.

I think you make an interesting, and potentially revealing, comment when you write:

"It seems that if there coexisted TWO forms of diety at the same time, and it was possible for them to sin against each other as does man, then a mediator, who would then have to be diety, would be required."

Again, I wonder HOW you KNOW this? Why, specifically, would a Divine mediator be required? Certainly reason does not demand this! Why would any mediator "be required" at all? It's quite possible that the gods could mediate their own dispute, just as two men might do. It's also possible that a man, or a talking raccoon, could serve as a mediator. But here's what's interesting. If your logic is valid, and a god must mediate between gods, why would it not also follow that a God-Man must mediate between God and man?

But here's another point. The example of reconciling two gods

likely involves the reconciliation of equals. But this is not the case when we consider the reconciliation of man to God. Here, the parties are NOT equal. God is the Creator, man is His creation. It seems at least reasonable to believe (and is in fact true, I think) that the Creator may have a particular character which requires that reconciliation be achieved ONLY through a means which is perfectly consistent with all His attributes. And this, of course, may radically limit the means by which such reconciliation can actually be achieved. Again, I personally think it would be odd for the Father to send His only Son to accomplish on behalf of man what a morally perfect creature was capable of. Indeed, you yourself confess:

"To require deity to be sacrificed for the sins of finite man seems overkill and doesn't pan out in my mind as reasonable. It's certainly plausible, but I don't see how it has to be."

But since this is what God actually did, you bear the burden of proof in demonstrating that such a sacrifice was, in fact, overkill! Since God is a rational moral agent, it is at least reasonable to think that a Divine sacrifice may indeed have been NECESSARY. And if it was necessary it cannot, by definition, be overkill.

Let me conclude with two more observations. First, we both agree that Jesus was, in fact, the God-Man. I could easily demonstrate from the Scriptures both that Jesus believed this of Himself and that His disciples believed it as well. But here's the point. Every time that Jesus, or one of His disciples, makes the claim that He is the ONLY way to God there is, at least potentially, an implicit argument that only a God-Man can reconcile man to God! I could quote many verses, but let me offer just a few. When Jesus says to Nicodemus, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so MUST THE SON OF MAN BE LIFTED UP; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life" (JN. 3:14-15, emphasis mine), He is speaking as the God-Man. I admit that it is not necessary to

interpret such a statement as requiring a Divine sacrifice, but it certainly has this potential – and that’s something to think about. In other words, since Jesus is the God-Man, He could be implicitly understood as saying that ONLY such a One as He is capable of reconciling man to God. It’s the same with many such statements of Jesus (e.g. JN. 14:6, etc.). And Jesus’ disciples, who also believed in His deity, repeatedly claim that there is no other way for man to be reconciled to God. For example, in Acts 4:12 Peter declares, “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.” Again, this does not PROVE that a Divine sacrifice was necessary (the burden is yours to show it was not), but it may certainly be read as implying its necessity.

Second, consider this. In Paul’s famous verse on substitution, 2 Cor. 5:21, we read: “He (the Father) made Him (the Son) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Luther referred to this as the “Great Exchange.” Christ takes our sin on Himself and gives us His righteousness in its place! Now an argument could be made that, in order to be acceptable to God, man must be clothed in His righteousness. If this is so, then it would seem to follow that a Divine substitute was not superfluous, but ESSENTIAL. For how could we become “the righteousness of God” in Christ, unless Christ was actually God? It’s reasonable to believe He could only give us God’s righteousness if He was, in fact, God. And if such righteousness is essential for our reconciliation to God, then it follows that a Divine substitute would be necessary to achieve this goal. Again, I fully admit that this argument is NOT CONCLUSIVE—it is merely suggestive. But as I’ve said repeatedly (I’m sure you’re sick of it!), you bear the burden of proof – not me. Thus, I think I’ve offered some good reasons to believe that a Divine sacrifice was indeed necessary and not overkill. I also think I’ve demonstrated that you’re far from proving your own position (if in fact it’s actually your position; I’m not

saying it necessarily is).

Wishing you God's richest blessings,

Michael Gleghorn

Probe Ministries

“What is a Christian Perspective on Reiki?”

My friend is a Christian who practices [Reiki](#) and thinks that it's the Holy Spirit working through her. She has a heart for healing and I don't want to discourage her from pursuing that or deny that the Spirit is at work in her. But I fear that these counterfeits are keeping her from realizing her true potential in Christ.

I guess I have two questions: how can I lovingly discuss with her what the Bible says about these practices, when she doesn't fully accept it as God's Word; and can you tell me more about Reiki from a Christian perspective?

Thanks for your questions. It's terribly difficult to reason with someone from the Scriptures if they do not already accept their Divine authority. If she's open to doing some reading in the area, you may want to encourage her to look into what conservative scholarship has said about the inspiration, authority, and inerrancy of Scripture. *A General Introduction to the Bible*, by Norman Geisler and William Nix is a fairly exhaustive treatment of the subject. Many books on Christian apologetics have chapters dealing with the trustworthiness of the Bible. One book you may want to recommend is *I'm Glad You Asked*, by Ken Boa and Larry Moody. It is an excellent,

beginner's level text in apologetics and has a chapter entitled, "How Accurate is the Bible?," which might prove helpful. Suffice it to say, until a Christian accepts the Bible as the inspired word of God, it is difficult to use it as the final authority for proper Christian belief and practice. Such a person can always claim that the texts they don't like are simply not inspired by God, etc. Thus, this is a critical issue to deal with.

Having said that, I think you are exactly right about your friend. There are very good grounds for rejecting Reiki if one is willing to listen to the Bible. In a book entitled *Basic Questions on Alternative Medicine*, a corporate project by members of the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1988), there is a short chapter on Reiki (pp. 61-63). I will draw some information from that chapter. Although Reiki claims to be an "ancient healing practice that Buddha (and Jesus) used," all records of it were lost. It was allegedly rediscovered by Mikao Usui, a Zen Buddhist monk, in the mid-1800s "during a psychic experience." Additionally, it is claimed that details about lost aspects of the practice have "been revealed through channeling." Channeling is the New Age term for mediumship and involves contact with, and usually possession by, "spirit guides." The authors of this chapter state that a second-degree Reiki practitioner "learns about spirit guides and how to contact and use them in healing sessions." They further state that third degree Reiki masters give "complete control of healing sessions to their spirit guides." Healing sessions appear to be based on the use of "life-energy" (i.e. *ki*, *chi*, or *prana*), which is sent from the practitioner into the patient's body.

The greatest concern would seem to be the identity of the "spirit guides." Since they are typically contacted in ways expressly forbidden in Scripture, and since they advocate unbiblical ideas and practices, it is honestly quite difficult

to view them as anything other than the biblical demons. The authors of this chapter conclude by stating: "Reiki is antithetical to biblical Christianity. Channeling is a way of communicating with spirits to obtain information not otherwise accessible. It is denounced in the Bible as sorcery, mediumship, and spiritism (Lev. 19:26, 31; 20:6; Deut. 18:9-14...)."

It seems to me that Reiki has the potential to be spiritually harmful. I would pray for your friend and encourage her to give serious consideration to the biblical warnings mentioned above.

I wish you all the best with your friend.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

+ + + + +

A former Reiki master who has become a Christian wrote this testimony to Sue Bohlin:

"Reiki is something that is very mis-stated, and misunderstood, by those outside of the Reiki circle. Having been in it, I can tell you everything you need to know. I will tell you right up front that it was a hard one to shake, that it was VERY real and beneficial, but that it is decidedly non-Christian.

"I highly recommend anyone looking into it to just stop. Prayer is very powerful, and is our direct link to God through Christ. If we petition directly for healing, it may come. If we have faith that it WILL come, our chances are far better. As with anything we are to test, does Reiki point either the practitioner or the client to Christ? No. Big no. It uses a Universal energy that is non-personal and can be manipulated.

You can pray to God, to the Earth Mother, to Mother/Father God, etc. But it in fact leads you AWAY from Christ.

“It is all about what you FEEL in your hands, what you FEEL in your spirit, what the client FEELS in their body/emotions/spirit. In that regard it is very very real. My hands get hot, I hit a place of extreme peace and quiet, I heal people who feel a tingle or hot spot or whatever. Their headache, menstrual cramps, emotional distress, bruises, whatever, goes away. But is God glorified? No way. Is self glorified? Yes.

“If it is so good and right, why do practitioners go on to other things once they hit Master level? The teacher who taught me was going on to acupuncture and other new Reiki teachings. Always something else, something new, something you NEED to be a true master. Sound familiar? It is like everything else in this world, but Christ. There is no lasting peace, no connection with the universe, there is a big void in your soul that is not going away. WE ALL NEED CHRIST! I told my wife when she questioned my stopping in my search for peace once I found Christ (she had followed my years of searching through New Age theologies, etc) that Jesus Christ filled the hole. All the puzzle pieces fell into place and everything suddenly made sense. For a long time after that I tried to make Reiki fit into Christianity but it didn't. I prayed a lot about it. God firmly and solidly showed me in Scripture how it couldn't work. The two major things against it, regardless of how well it works, are 1) it does not point anyone to Christ and in fact points people away from a single true God, and 2) it is no different than all the pagan rituals in the Old Testament that would have people pray to the rain god or fertility god, etc. They must have worked or people wouldn't have kept praying to them, and God's people wouldn't have been attracted to them. But either way it isn't what GOD has asked us to do. Everything we need is in Him. We can pray for any healing we need.”

“Why Do You Believe the Bible is Inspired and the Qur’an is Not?”

I have read several of your articles on Islam, and have noted you state several times your belief that the Qur’an is not an inspired text, and the Bible is. Whilst I agree with you on this, I would be interested in the reasons and evidence you have for this belief.

Although I don’t know how others might respond to your question, my own view is this. First, the Bible claims to be an inspired text: “All Scripture is inspired by God” (2 Tim. 3:16). Of course, this does NOT prove that it really is inspired. However, if the Bible nowhere claimed to be inspired, then we would hardly have good reason to believe that it was. Thus, what the text claims for itself is important.

Second, I think there is strong evidence to embrace biblical inspiration for a number of reasons. For sake of time, let me mention only one: the accurate fulfillment (in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus) of very specific Messianic prophecies (made centuries before Jesus was even born). The specificity of these prophecies, and their accurate fulfillment in the life of Jesus, constitutes strong evidence for divine inspiration. After all, who else knows the future with that kind of accuracy other than an omniscient God?

Finally, if the Bible is inspired by God, then it would seem logically impossible for the Qur’an to also be divinely inspired. Why? Because both texts teach very different

doctrines, doctrines that are not logically consistent with one another. For example, the Qur'an denies the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the Incarnation, etc. But the Bible teaches both doctrines. Clearly, both texts cannot be correct, for this would violate the law of non-contradiction. Thus, if the Bible is inspired by God, then it logically follows that the Qur'an is not (because it contradicts clear biblical teaching on a number of important doctrines).

Hope this helps.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“Did Christianity Really Come From Zoroastrianism?”

I am a Christian and have been one all of my life. I am moderately well versed in apologetics. As far as I can tell, as of now, there is only one real argument against Christianity and that comes from Zoroastrianism. I do not know how much you know about this religion, but it was founded by someone called Zoroaster or Zarathushtra who was born around 1200 BC and has a holy text called the “avesta.” It used to be one of the most popular religions in the world, but has since dwindled down to about 140,000 members, most in India.

The argument that people make is that the Jewish ideal of a savior comes from Zoroastrianism, apparently there is a strong savior figure in Zoroastrianism that will die, become resurrected, and then judge the dead. People claim that when

the Jews were taken in Babylon they were exposed to this faith and adopted parts of it as their own; they say this explains why the idea of a savior figure emerges in the parts of the Bible that were written during or after the Jews' stay in Babylon. People will then go on to say that Zoroastrianism developed many cults, particularly among Romans, about the time of Jesus that claimed a divine figure will come to earth and defeat "the bull" or something like Satan or the devil, and then judge everyone. These people claim that this made the acceptance of Jesus much more likely and also point out that the three wisemen that went to see Jesus were called "magi" which is a priest in Zoroastrianism. One of the tenants of Zoroastrianism says that the savior figure will be found by following a certain star, which is what the three wisemen did. Also Zoroastrianism seems to hint that the savior will be born by a virgin (but I am not sure of that).

People would claim that the prophecies that are fulfilled in the New Testament are added in by the authors and would counter the martyrdom of the authors as evidence for belief by saying that they eventually grew to believe it, which is possible according to modern day psychology. They would then say that Jesus was either made up, or a historical figure that happened to be very intelligent but also insane in a way that was not apparent to people around him. A very unlikely event, but one that must be used to explain something amazing as the spread of Christianity according to them.

Now I have of course not cited any evidence for my references on the argument for Zoroastrianism leading to Christianity which is because much of what I have learned is from people who I think reference A History of Zoroastrianism by Mary Boyce. I have not read that book (it is in two volumes I believe), so I cannot judge its arguments, but from a purely historical point of view, if Zoroastrianism really said all the aforementioned material before Jesus was around and then it traveled to Babylon, it does seem like a good argument

against Christianity.

I must admit that there some things wrong with this theory, one is that Zoroastrianism is very big about purification by fire, which Christianity never mentions, although it would be possible to think that Zoroastrianism was diluted by the time it got to Babylon and Christianity also does talk about hell being very fiery. I do not know how much of the language the avesta is written in we can actually translate, maybe all, maybe not that much. And I also am well aware of people distorting facts to suit their own purpose and I have no idea how respected Mary Boyce is among historians. I would also like you to check out the web page www.geocities.com/Pentagon/6315/religion/zoro.html as it argues that Christianity is the result of a cult and cites sources.

Please tell me your thoughts on this matter and on any other argument that Christianity resulted from cults or other religions; it has been pulling at my heart for a while.

Thanks so much for writing! The argument that Judaism/Christianity borrowed from Zoroastrianism is, as yet, unproven. In fact, if any borrowing was done, it was quite possibly the other way around (i.e. Zoroastrianism borrowed from Judaism/Christianity).

In the first place, the evidence actually indicates that Zoroaster wasn't even born until about the time of the Babylonian Captivity. Kenneth Boa states that his dates are sometimes given as 628-551 B.C. (*Cults, World Religions and the Occult* [Illinois: Victor Books, 1990], 45). Other scholars give similar, though not identical, dates (e.g. Herzfeld, 570-500 B.C.; Jackson, 660-583 B.C – see W.S. Lasor, "Zoroastrianism," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter Elwell [Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984], 1202). If these dates are even relatively accurate then it is quite possible that Judaism did not borrow from Zoroastrianism.

Rather, it may actually have been Zoroaster who borrowed from the religion of the Jewish captives in Babylon.

It is certainly true that Zoroaster spoke of such things as "...the coming of a savior and the resurrection of the body," etc. (Ibid., 44). But he may have borrowed these ideas from the Jewish captives in Babylon. Indeed, it appears that all of these ideas can be found in the Jewish Scriptures PRIOR to the Babylonian Captivity.

For instance, even if we grant the contention of the person who wrote the web article you referred me to, that Isaiah offers the first, full monotheistic conception of God (e.g. Isaiah 43:10-13), it by no means follows that Isaiah borrowed this conception from Zoroastrianism! Indeed, Isaiah wrote his book BEFORE Zoroaster was even born! The period in which Isaiah was writing was roughly that of 740-680 B.C. Thus, if there was any borrowing, it was Zoroaster borrowing from Isaiah—not vice-versa. Besides this, LaSor argues that Zoroaster was not a true monotheist anyway, but a polytheist. At most he was a dualist: "He exalted Ahura Mazda...as supreme among the gods...and viewed the world as an agelong struggle between Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu" (Ibid., 1202).

In addition, the coming of a savior is promised as early as Gen. 3:15 in the Bible. This was long before the birth of Zoroaster. Genesis was probably written between 1450-1410 B.C. And there are numerous other Messianic prophecies before the Babylonian Captivity (e.g. in Numbers 24:17 (Law); Psalm 22—especially v. 1, 7-8, 14-18 (writings); Isaiah 52:12-53:12 (Prophets)). All of these prophecies were given BEFORE the birth of Zoroaster and the development of Zoroastrianism. Thus, we need not think that Judaism/Christianity borrowed the idea of a Savior from Zoroastrianism; likely it was just the reverse.

The resurrection of the body seems clearly alluded to in Job 19:25-27. Although this book may have been written during the

time of Solomon (approx. 965 B.C.), the events themselves are almost certainly from the patriarchal period (approx. 2000 B.C.). Additionally, Psalm 16:10, written by David long before the Babylonian Captivity also alludes to the physical resurrection of the Messiah (see Acts 2:25-32). Thus, the idea of bodily resurrection (including the resurrection of the Messiah) would seem to predate the advent of Zoroastrianism.

Finally, angels are mentioned in the Bible frequently in Genesis (e.g. 3:24; 19:1; 28:12; etc). Thus, the biblical doctrine of angels is also prior to the beginning of Zoroastrianism.

As for the NT authors adding in Messianic prophecies after the fact, it is simply false. For example, a copy of the text of Isaiah, dating to around the 2nd cent. B.C., was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. This copy of Isaiah is thus PRIOR to the birth of Christ. The prophecies are genuine. Not only this, they also predate the origin of Zoroastrianism as I mentioned previously.

As for Jesus being either unhistorical or insane, both conjectures are entirely without merit. The first flies in the face of an immense amount of information from both ancient Christian and non-Christian sources that were roughly contemporary to Jesus. For instance, aside from the NT and early Christian writers, there are references to Jesus in the Talmud, Josephus, Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, etc. The second notion, that Jesus was insane, is pure speculation with virtually no evidence whatsoever to support it. People say all sorts of strange things, but the evidence in support of these theories is flimsy in the extreme. And the evidence against such ideas is truly overwhelming.

I hope this sets your mind at rest a little. The ties between Judaism/Christianity and Zoroastrianism are certainly interesting, but the evidence is insufficient to say that the former borrowed from the latter. Indeed, if any borrowing was

done, it was likely Zoroastrianism borrowing from Judaism/Christianity.

God bless you,

Michael Gleghorn, Ph.D.

Probe Ministries

I thank you for answering my question. I would just like to add to that response, which detailed how the Jews did not “steal” from Zoroastrianism, that in Deuteronomy 18:10 the Jews are forbidden to have anyone “pass through fire,” a practice that Zoroastrianism used and adopted. The passage goes on to say that they are forbidden to do many things that the other pagan cults did, such as the Zoroastrians. That would suggest that the adoption of Zoroastrian traditions would be unlikely considering that they were forbidden to have anything to do with them.

Thanks, _____, for this addendum!

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries Webmistress

“Is Tai Chi Always Related to Eastern Meditation Practices?”

I was interested to read your response to [the email regarding Christians training in martial arts](#) and I agree with it. I have a related question. Is Tai Chi always related to Eastern

meditation practices? I like the peacefulness and gracefulness of the movements but I am hesitant to learn it myself as I fear it is another form Eastern meditation.

You ask a very good question. In *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, the chapter on "The Martial Arts" has a number of interesting quotes, comments and practical advice useful for Christians considering involvement in the martial arts (Ankerberg and Weldon, Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1996; pp. 351-378).

Probably the first question we need to answer is whether or not Eastern meditation is inherently bound up with Tai Chi. Can the physical exercises be separated from the meditative elements of Tai Chi? Historically, "the development of Tai Chi is often credited to Chang San-Feng (ca. 1260-1368)...His strong interest in the I Ching and other occult pursuits were well known and, in part, eventually led him to develop Tai Chi" (Ankerberg & Weldon, 363). The origin of Tai Chi appears to have strongly influenced the philosophical rationale for its various movements. For instance, one text states: "[T]he movements of Tai Chi Chuan and the [I Ching] hexagrams upon which they are based are both methods of describing the circulation of psychic energy in the body of the meditator" (Da Liu, *Tai Chi Chuan and I Ching*, New York: Perennial/Harper & Row, 1978; cited in Ankerberg & Weldon, 366).

But does this mean that the physical movements cannot be separated from the Eastern meditation practices? It seems to depend on who you ask. One book on Tai Chi states, "The great majority [in China]...have always engaged in it, and do so still, quite without mystic or religious purpose" (Edward Maisel, *Tai Chi for Health*, New York: Dell/Delta, 1972; cited in Ankerberg & Weldon, 369). However, another source declares, "The ancient and elegant system of Chinese exercise known as T'ai Chi Ch'uan is designed primarily to maintain and enhance health by giving full expression to the life-force, or ch'i, of the universe, embodied in each of us...Tai Chi is more than a

mere physical exercise...it is a silent meditation, an energizing exercise...a daily ritual and prayer...It embodies the vibrant philosophy of Taoism..." (Jerry Mogul, "Tai Chi Chuan: A Taoist Art of Healing," Part One, *Somatics: The Magazine-Journal of the Bodily Arts and Sciences*, Autumn 1980; cited in Ankerberg & Weldon, 369).

Personally, I would be hesitant to say that Tai Chi exercise programs ALWAYS incorporate Eastern meditation practices. However, it would probably be true to say that they OFTEN incorporate such practices. Thus, I would be extremely careful about becoming involved with Tai Chi. Here are three important principles to help one in making a wise, informed decision about a Tai Chi exercise program:

1. What is the world-view of the instructor teaching the class? If the instructor embraces Eastern philosophical and religious ideas this will almost certainly come out in how the class is conducted. Ankerberg and Weldon write, "In large measure, the religious or nonreligious nature of martial arts instruction depends more on the instructor than on any other factor" (354). If the instructor embraces Eastern ideas, I would definitely avoid the class.

2. "It may also be prudent to observe an advanced class. This will help the prospective student determine whether Eastern philosophy is taught only as the practitioner progresses" (Erwin de Castro, et al., "Enter the Dragon?" Part 2, prepublication copy, *Christian Research Journal*, 1994; cited in Ankerberg & Weldon, 373). Again, if you notice Eastern ideas surfacing in advanced classes, I would avoid even beginning your training there.

3. Carefully seek God's guidance in prayer.

Like many of the issues we face in life, I doubt whether this one is completely black or white. However, I would carefully avoid involvement in any form of Tai Chi which incorporates

Eastern thought and practices. Since many programs likely do incorporate such things, I would be very cautious about becoming involved in this discipline. However, if you are able to find a completely non-religious program, taught by an instructor who does not hold any Eastern philosophical and religious ideas, and if you have carefully sought God's guidance in prayer and have a clean conscience about participating, then I doubt that the physical exercises are somehow wrong or sinful in themselves. That's my opinion, at any rate.

God bless you,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“What About Crossing Over's John Edward?”

I was watching TV and happened upon “Unsolved Mysteries.” It aired a segment on “Edgar Cayce.” I'm a Christian so this segment troubled me, prompting me to search on the internet for something on this man. I found several sites, but I zeroed in on yours. I was impressed and satisfied with what I read. [Webservant's note: See our article, [“The Worldview of Edgar Cayce”](#).]

I also found where several people had written in (most were furious with you), and one of them said that Cayce's ability was indeed a gift from God. I agree with you that the Bible is very specific about avoiding dabbling in these kinds of “gifts” (that word used in connection with the devil is almost comical), and I think that God wouldn't warn us like that if

those kinds of "gifts" weren't really out there. I said all that to say this...Cayce is just one person but not "one of a kind." John Edward of TV's "Crossing Over" is another, and it seems that the times are beginning to be absolutely FILLED with these people.

My problem is this, I have a sister that is very dear to me. She has gotten interested in John Edward and began wondering whether his ability was really from God. She went to her PASTOR (remember that word), and I was shocked at his reply to her. He said that he'd "put it this way...all gifts from God aren't listed in the Bible." I nearly fell over when she told me that. So now she believes that John Edward might be operating within God's will. How do I answer her and compete with the pastor she thinks so highly of?

Thank you for writing Probe Ministries. Although I do not know a great deal about John Edward, my own position would be much different than that of your sister's pastor. From what I understand, John Edward claims to have the ability to communicate with the dead. This, of course, is something expressly forbidden in Scripture. For instance, in an extended passage from Deuteronomy 18:9-15 we read:

When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you. You must be blameless before the LORD your God. The nations you will dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery or divination. But as for you, the LORD your God has not permitted you to do so. The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must

listen to him.

Notice that v. 11 specifically forbids consulting the dead. God also prohibits the Israelites from becoming mediums or spiritists, which is essentially what John Edward is. In v. 9, such things are referred to as “detestable ways.” And it was because of such detestable practices that the Lord would drive the Canaanites out of the land (v. 12). Although these nations consulted the dead, and practiced sorcery and divination (v. 14), the Lord did not want His people to do so. Instead, He promised to raise up a prophet in Israel to whom He expected the people to give heed. Although this refers generally to all the genuine Old Testament prophets, it ultimately has special reference to Jesus Christ (see, for example, Acts 3:19-26).

But why does God forbid communicating with the dead? Although we may not know for certain, I think there are some important clues in the Bible. In the first place, genuine communication with the dead may (as a general rule) simply be impossible. The story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16 may indicate this. Although some may point to Saul and the witch of Endor in 1 Samuel 28, it’s important to keep in mind that (1) this practice was prohibited and condemned by God (as already cited); (2) Saul had been rejected by God for his disobedience (e.g. 1 Sam. 28:6, etc). Indeed, this was just another act of Saul’s unfaithfulness to God. Thus, it is not an example for us to follow. And (3) some believe the spirit of Samuel may have been a demon masquerading as Samuel. Although that is not my view, I suppose it is at least possible. [Note: also see the Probe article [“What About the Witch of Endor Calling Up Samuel’s Spirit?”](#)] There is definitely clear New Testament evidence linking demonic activity to divination (Acts 16:16-18), for example. But even if it really was Samuel (which I believe) the text does not encourage us to communicate with the dead (and other texts expressly forbid it – see, for instance, Isaiah 8:19-20, etc.).

Thus, my overall opinion of John Edward (and those like him)

is this: to the extent that he is truly receiving information from the spirit world, I tend to think it is probably coming not from deceased human beings, but from demonic spirits. As always, their desire is to deceive the unsuspecting and lead them away from considering the biblical command to repent and trust Christ for salvation (see 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, etc.).

In light of all this, if your sister respects the Bible as the word of God, I would simply bypass the pastor whom she respects. Rather than directly disagreeing with him, gently point her to what God's word says. Remind her that even pastors can be wrong, but God never is. And His prohibitions are given with our welfare in mind.

Hope this helps,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“Why Don't Jews Believe in Jesus as Messiah?”

Do Jews still observe Old Testament practices like burnt offerings? If Jews believe in a coming savior, why does Christ not meet all of their criteria?

I am not aware of any Jews who currently practice the Old Testament sacrificial rituals. This is at least partly due to the fact that the temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. and has never been rebuilt to this day. If, at some point in the future, the temple IS rebuilt, then we may indeed see some of the orthodox Jews begin practicing the various Old Testament sacrificial rituals once again. But I seriously

doubt we would see anything of this kind prior to a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem.


Most Jews no longer believe in a coming Messiah. Of the three main branches within Judaism, only orthodox Jews tend to hold to this hope and they do not conceive of Messiah as divine; he is merely a human being. As for why Jesus does not meet their criteria, there could be many possible reasons offered. However, much of it is probably due both to (what I would consider) a misunderstanding of the Old Testament conception of Messiah, as well as simply to ignorance and misinformation about Jesus' credentials as the promised Messiah. As Louis Lapidus, a Messianic Jew and Christian pastor, points out in Lee Strobel's book *The Case for Christ*, most Jews have never bothered to actually investigate the evidence supporting Jesus' claims to be Messiah.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn

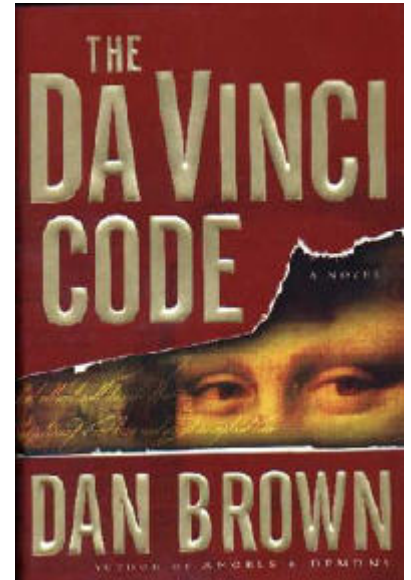
Probe Ministries

Redeeming The Da Vinci Code

This article is also available in [Spanish](#). 

Introduction to *The Da Vinci Code*

Dan Brown's novel, *The Da Vinci Code*,^{1} has generated a huge amount of interest from the reading public. About forty million copies have been sold worldwide.^{2} And Ron Howard and Sony Pictures have brought the story to theatres.^{3} To help answer some of the challenges which this novel poses to biblical Christianity, Probe has teamed up with EvanTell, an evangelism training ministry, to produce a DVD series called *Redeeming The Da Vinci Code*. The series aims to strengthen the faith of believers and equip them to share their faith with those who see the movie or have read the book.^{4} I hope this article will also encourage you to use this event to witness to the truth to friends or family who have read the book or seen the movie.



Why so much fuss about a novel? The story begins with the murder of the Louvre's curator. But this curator isn't just interested in art; he's also the Grand Master of a secret society called the Priory of Sion. The Priory guards a secret that, if revealed, would discredit biblical Christianity. Before dying, the curator attempts to pass on the secret to his granddaughter Sophie, a cryptographer, and Harvard professor Robert Langdon, by leaving a number of clues that he hopes will guide them to the truth.

So what's the secret? The location and identity of the Holy Grail. But in Brown's novel, the Grail is not the cup allegedly used by Christ at the Last Supper. It's rather Mary Magdalene, the wife of Jesus, who carried on the royal bloodline of Christ by giving birth to His child! The Priory guards the secret location of Mary's tomb and serves to protect the bloodline of Jesus that has continued to this day!

Does anyone take these ideas seriously? Yes; they do. This is partly due to the way the story is written. The first word one

encounters in *The Da Vinci Code*, in bold uppercase letters, is the word “FACT.” Shortly thereafter Brown writes, “All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate.”[\[5\]](#) And the average reader, with no special knowledge in these areas, will assume the statement is true. But it’s not, and many have documented some of Brown’s inaccuracies in these areas.[\[6\]](#)

Brown also has a way of making the novel’s theories about Jesus and the early church seem credible. The theories are espoused by the novel’s most educated characters: a British royal historian, Leigh Teabing, and a Harvard professor, Robert Langdon. When put in the mouths of these characters, one comes away with the impression that the theories are actually true. But are they?

In this article, I’ll argue that most of what the novel says about Jesus, the Bible, and the history of the early church is simply false. I’ll also say a bit about how this material can be used in evangelism.

Did Constantine Embellish Our Four Gospels?

Were the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, which were later to be officially recognized as part of the New Testament canon, intentionally embellished in the fourth century at the command of Emperor Constantine? This is what Leigh Teabing, the fictional historian in *The Da Vinci Code*, suggests. At one point he states, “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” (234). Is this true?

In a letter to the church historian Eusebius, Constantine did indeed order the preparation of “fifty copies of the sacred Scriptures.”[\[7\]](#) But nowhere in the letter does he command that

any of the Gospels be embellished in order to make Jesus appear more godlike. And even if he had, it would have been virtually impossible to get faithful Christians to accept such accounts.

Before the reign of Constantine, the church suffered great persecution under Emperor Diocletian. It's hard to believe that the same church that had withstood this persecution would jettison their cherished Gospels and embrace embellished accounts of Jesus' life! It's also virtually certain that had Constantine tried such a thing, we'd have lots of evidence for it in the writings of the church fathers. But we have none. Not one of them mentions an attempt by Constantine to alter any of our Gospels. And finally, to claim that the leaders of the fourth century church, many of whom had suffered persecution for their faith in Christ, would agree to join Constantine in a conspiracy of this kind is completely unrealistic.

One last point. We have copies of the four Gospels that are significantly earlier than Constantine and the Council of Nicaea (or Nicea). Although none of the copies are complete, we do have nearly complete copies of both Luke and John in a codex dated between A.D. 175 and 225—at least a hundred years before Nicaea. Another manuscript, dating from about A.D. 200 or earlier, contains most of John's Gospel. [\[8\]](#) But why is this important?

First, we can compare these pre-Nicene manuscripts with those that followed Nicaea to see if any embellishment occurred. None did. Second, the pre-Nicene versions of John's Gospel include some of the strongest declarations of Jesus' deity on record (e.g. 1:1-3; 8:58; 10:30-33). That is, the most explicit declarations of Jesus' deity in any of our Gospels are already found in manuscripts that pre-date Constantine by more than a hundred years!

If you have a non-Christian friend who believes these books

were embellished, you might gently refer them to this evidence. Then, encourage them to read the Gospels for themselves and find out who Jesus really is.

But what if they think these sources can't be trusted?

Can We Trust the Gospels?

Although there's no historical basis for the claim that Constantine embellished the New Testament Gospels to make Jesus appear more godlike, we must still ask whether the Gospels are reliable sources of information about Jesus. According to Teabing, the novel's fictional historian, "Almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false" (235). Is this true? The answer largely depends on the reliability of our earliest biographies of Jesus—the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Each of these Gospels was written in the first century A.D. Although they are technically anonymous, we have fairly strong evidence from second century writers such as Papias (c. A.D. 125) and Irenaeus (c. A.D. 180) for ascribing each Gospel to its traditional author. If their testimony is true (and we've little reason to doubt it), then Mark, the companion of Peter, wrote down the substance of Peter's preaching. And Luke, the companion of Paul, carefully researched the biography that bears his name. Finally, Matthew and John, two of Jesus' twelve disciples, wrote the books ascribed to them. If this is correct, then the events recorded in these Gospels "are based on either direct or indirect eyewitness testimony."[\[9\]](#)

But did the Gospel writers intend to reliably record the life and ministry of Jesus? Were they even interested in history, or did their theological agendas overshadow any desire they may have had to tell us what really happened? Craig Blomberg, a New Testament scholar, observes that the prologue to Luke's Gospel "reads very much like prefaces to other generally

trusted historical and biographical works of antiquity.” He further notes that since Matthew and Mark are similar to Luke in terms of genre, “it seems reasonable that Luke’s historical intent would closely mirror theirs.”^{10} Finally, John tells us that he wrote his Gospel so that people might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing they might have life in His name (20:31). While this statement admittedly reveals a theological agenda, Blomberg points out that “if you’re going to be convinced enough to believe, the theology has to flow from accurate history.”^{11}

Interestingly, the disciplines of history and archaeology are a great help in corroborating the general reliability of the Gospel writers. Where these authors mention people, places, and events that can be checked against other ancient sources, they are consistently shown to be quite reliable. We need to let our non-Christian friends know that we have good grounds for trusting the New Testament Gospels and believing what they say about Jesus.

But what if they ask about those Gospels that didn’t make it into the New Testament? Specifically, what if they ask about the Nag Hammadi documents?

The Nag Hammadi Documents

Since their discovery in 1945, there’s been much interest in the Nag Hammadi texts. What are these documents? When were they written, and by whom, and for what purpose? According to Teabing, the historian in *The Da Vinci Code*, the Nag Hammadi texts represent “the earliest Christian records” (245). These “unaltered gospels,” he claims, tell the real story about Jesus and early Christianity (248). The New Testament Gospels are allegedly a later, corrupted version of these events.

The only difficulty with Teabing’s theory is that it’s wrong. The Nag Hammadi documents are not “the earliest Christian

records.” Every book in the New Testament is earlier. The New Testament documents were all written in the first century A.D. By contrast, the dates for the Nag Hammadi texts range from the second to the third century A.D. As Darrell Bock observes in *Breaking The Da Vinci Code*, “The bulk of this material is a few generations removed from the foundations of the Christian faith, a vital point to remember when assessing the contents.”[{12}](#)

What do we know about the contents of these books? It is generally agreed that the Nag Hammadi texts are Gnostic documents. The key tenet of Gnosticism is that salvation comes through secret knowledge. As a result, the Gnostic Gospels, in striking contrast to their New Testament counterparts, place almost no value on the death and resurrection of Jesus. Indeed, Gnostic Christology had a tendency to separate the human Jesus from the divine Christ, seeing them as two distinct beings. It was not the divine Christ who suffered and died; it was merely the human Jesus—or perhaps even Simon of Cyrene.[{13}](#) It didn’t matter much to the Gnostics because in their view the death of Jesus was irrelevant for attaining salvation. What was truly important was not the death of the man Jesus but the secret knowledge brought by the divine Christ. According to the Gnostics, salvation came through a correct understanding of this secret knowledge.[{14}](#)

Clearly these doctrines are incompatible with the New Testament teaching about Christ and salvation (e.g. Rom. 3:21-26; 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 15:3-11; Tit. 2:11-14). Ironically, they’re also incompatible with Teabing’s view that the Nag Hammadi texts “speak of Christ’s ministry in very human terms” (234). The Nag Hammadi texts actually present Christ as a divine being, though quite differently from the New Testament perspective.[{15}](#)

Thus, the Nag Hammadi texts are both later than the New Testament writings and characterized by a worldview that is entirely alien to their theology. We must explain to our non-

Christian friends that the church fathers exercised great wisdom in rejecting these books from the New Testament.

But what if they ask us how it was decided what books to include?

The Formation of the New Testament Canon

In the early centuries of Christianity, many books were written about the teachings of Jesus and His apostles. Most of these books never made it into the New Testament. They include such titles as The Gospel of Philip, The Acts of John, and The Apocalypse of Peter. How did the early church decide what books to include in the New Testament and what to reject? When were these decisions made, and by whom? According to the Teabing, "The Bible, as we know it today, was collated by . . . Constantine the Great" (231). Is this true?

The early church had definite criteria that had to be met for a book to be included in the New Testament. As Bart Ehrman observes, a book had to be ancient, written close to the time of Jesus. It had to be written either by an apostle or a companion of an apostle. It had to be consistent with the orthodox understanding of the faith. And it had to be widely recognized and accepted by the church.[{16}](#) Books that didn't meet these criteria weren't included in the New Testament.

When were these decisions made? And who made them? There wasn't an ecumenical council in the early church that officially decreed that the twenty-seven books now in our New Testament were the right ones.[{17}](#) Rather, the canon gradually took shape as the church recognized and embraced those books that were inspired by God. The earliest collections of books "to circulate among the churches in the first half of the second century" were our four Gospels and the letters of Paul.[{18}](#) Not until the heretic Marcion published his expurgated version of the New Testament in about A.D. 144 did

church leaders seek to define the canon more specifically. [{19}](#)

Toward the end of the second century there was a growing consensus that the canon should include the four Gospels, Acts, the thirteen Pauline epistles, “epistles by other ‘apostolic men’ and the Revelation of John.” [{20}](#) The Muratorian Canon, which dates toward the end of the second century, recognized every New Testament book except Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, and 3 John. Similar though not identical books were recognized by Irenaeus in the late second century and Origen in the early third century. So while the earliest listing of all the books in our New Testament comes from Athanasius in A.D. 367, there was widespread agreement on most of these books (including the four Gospels) by the end of the second century. By sharing this information “with gentleness and respect” (1 Pet. 3:15), we can help our friends see that the New Testament canon did not result from a decision by Constantine.

Who Was Mary Magdalene? (Part 1)

Mary Magdalene, of course, is a major figure in *The Da Vinci Code*. Let’s take a look at Mary, beginning by addressing the unfortunate misconception that she was a prostitute. Where did this notion come from? And why do so many people believe it?

According to Leigh Teabing, the popular understanding of Mary Magdalene as a prostitute “is the legacy of a smear campaign . . . by the early Church.” In Teabing’s view, “The Church needed to defame Mary . . . to cover up her dangerous secret—her role as the Holy Grail” (244). Remember, in this novel the Holy Grail is not the cup used by Jesus at the Last Supper. Instead it’s Mary Magdalene, who’s alleged to have been both Jesus’ wife and the one who carried His royal bloodline in her womb.

How should we respond to this? Did the early church really

seek to slander Mary as a prostitute in order to cover up her intimate relationship with Jesus? The first recorded instance of Mary Magdalene being misidentified as a prostitute occurred in a sermon by Pope Gregory the Great in A.D. 591.[\[21\]](#) Most likely, this wasn't a deliberate attempt to slander Mary's character. Rather, Gregory probably misinterpreted some passages in the Gospels, resulting in his incorrectly identifying Mary as a prostitute.

For instance, he may have identified the unnamed sinful woman in Luke 7, who anointed Jesus' feet, with Mary of Bethany in John 12, who also anointed Jesus' feet shortly before His death. This would have been easy to do because, although there are differences, there are also many similarities between the two separate incidents. If Gregory thought the sinful woman of Luke 7 was the Mary of John 12, he may then have mistakenly linked this woman with Mary Magdalene. Interestingly, Luke mentions Mary Magdalene for the first time at the beginning of chapter 8, right after the story of Jesus' anointing in Luke 7. Since the unnamed woman in Luke 7 was likely guilty of some kind of sexual sin, if Gregory thought this woman was Mary Magdalene, then it wouldn't be too great a leap to infer she was a prostitute.

If you're discussing the novel with someone who is hostile toward the church, don't be afraid to admit that the church has sometimes made mistakes. We can agree that Gregory was mistaken when he misidentified Mary as a prostitute. But we must also observe that it's quite unlikely that this was part of a smear campaign by the early church. We must remind our friends that Christians make mistakes—and even sin—just like everyone else (Rom. 3:23). The difference is that we've recognized our need for a Savior from sin. And in this respect, we're actually following in the footsteps of Mary Magdalene (John 20:1-18)!

Who Was Mary Magdalene? (Part 2)

What do our earliest written sources reveal about the real Mary Magdalene? According to Teabing, Mary was the wife of Jesus, the mother of His child, and the one whom He intended to establish the church after His death (244-48). In support of these theories, Teabing appeals to two of the Gnostic Gospels: The Gospel of Philip and The Gospel of Mary [Magdalene]. Let's look first at The Gospel of Mary.

The section of this Gospel quoted in the novel presents an incredulous apostle Peter who simply can't believe that the risen Christ has secretly revealed information to Mary that He didn't reveal to His male disciples. Levi rebukes Peter: "If the Saviour made her worthy, who are you . . . to reject her? Surely the Saviour knows her very well. That is why he loved her more than us" (247).

What can we say about this passage? First, we must observe that nowhere in this Gospel are we told that Mary was Jesus' wife or the mother of His child. Second, many scholars think this text should probably be read symbolically, with Peter representing early Christian orthodoxy and Mary representing a form of Gnosticism. This Gospel is probably claiming that "Mary" (that is, the Gnostics) has received divine revelation, even if "Peter" (that is, the orthodox) can't believe it.^{22} Finally, even if this text should be read literally, we have little reason to think it's historically reliable. It was likely composed sometime in the late second century, about a hundred years after the canonical Gospels.^{23} So, contrary to what's implied in the novel, it certainly wasn't written by Mary Magdalene—or any of Jesus' other original followers.^{24}

If we want reliable information about Mary, we must turn to our earliest sources—the New Testament Gospels. These sources tell us that Mary was a follower of Jesus from the town of Magdala. After Jesus cast seven demons out of her, she (along with other women) helped support His ministry (Luke 8:1-3).

She witnessed Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, and was the first to see the risen Christ (Matt. 27:55-61; John 20:11-18). Jesus even entrusted her with proclaiming His resurrection to His male disciples (John 20:17-18). In this sense, Mary was an "apostle" to the apostles.[{25}](#) This is all the Gospels tell us about Mary.[{26}](#) We can agree with our non-Christian friends that she was a very important woman. But we must also remind them that there's nothing to suggest that she was Jesus' wife, or that He intended her to lead the church.

All this aside, someone who's read *The Da Vinci Code* might still have questions about The Gospel of Philip? Doesn't this text indicate that Mary and Jesus were married?

Was Jesus Married? (Part 1)

Undoubtedly, the strongest textual evidence that Jesus was married comes from The Gospel of Philip. So it's not surprising that Leigh Teabing, should appeal to this text. The section of this Gospel quoted in the novel reads as follows:

And the companion of the Saviour is Mary Magdalene. Christ loved her more than all the disciples and used to kiss her often on her mouth. The rest of the disciples were offended by it and expressed disapproval. They said to him, "Why do you love her more than all of us?" (246).

Now, notice that the first line refers to Mary as the companion of the Savior. In the novel, Teabing clinches his argument that Jesus and Mary were married by stating, "As any Aramaic scholar will tell you, the word companion, in those days, literally meant spouse" (246). This sounds pretty convincing. Was Jesus married after all?

When discussing this issue with a non-Christian friend, point out that we must proceed carefully here. The Gospel of Philip was originally written in Greek.[{27}](#) Therefore, what the term "companion" meant in Aramaic is entirely irrelevant. Even in

the Coptic translation found at Nag Hammadi, a Greek loan word (*koinonos*) lies behind the term translated “companion”. Darrell Bock observes that this is “not the typical . . . term for ‘wife’” in Greek.[{28}](#) Indeed, *koinonos* is most often used in the New Testament to refer to a “partner.” Luke uses the term to describe James and John as Peter’s business partners (Luke 5:10). So contrary to the claim of Teabing, the statement that Mary was Jesus’ companion does not at all prove that she was His wife.

But what about the following statement: “Christ loved her . . . and used to kiss her often on her mouth”?

First, this portion of the manuscript is damaged. We don’t actually know where Christ kissed Mary. There’s a hole in the manuscript at that place. Some believe that “she was kissed on her cheek or forehead since either term fits in the break.”[{29}](#) Second, even if the text said that Christ kissed Mary on her mouth, it wouldn’t necessarily mean that something sexual is in view. Most scholars agree that Gnostic texts contain a lot of symbolism. To read such texts literally, therefore, is to misread them. Finally, regardless of the author’s intention, this Gospel wasn’t written until the second half of the third century, over two hundred years after the time of Jesus.[{30}](#) So the reference to Jesus kissing Mary is almost certainly not historically reliable.

We must show our non-Christian friends that The Gospel of Philip offers insufficient evidence that Jesus was married. But what if they’ve bought into the novel’s contention that it would have been odd for Jesus to be single?

Was Jesus Married? (Part 2)

The two most educated characters in *The Da Vinci Code* claim that an unmarried Jesus is quite improbable. Leigh Teabing says, “Jesus as a married man makes infinitely more sense than

our standard biblical view of Jesus as a bachelor” (245). Robert Langdon, Harvard professor of Religious Symbolology, concurs:

Jesus was a Jew, and the social decorum during that time virtually forbid a Jewish man to be unmarried. According to Jewish custom, celibacy was condemned. . . . If Jesus were not married, at least one of the Bible’s Gospels would have mentioned it and offered some explanation for His unnatural state of bachelorhood (245).

Is this true? What if our non-Christian friends want a response to such claims?

In his excellent book *Breaking The Da Vinci Code*, Darrell Bock persuasively argues that an unmarried Jesus is not at all improbable.[{31}](#) Of course, it’s certainly true that most Jewish men of Jesus’ day did marry. It’s also true that marriage was often viewed as a fundamental human obligation, especially in light of God’s command to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Gen. 1:28). Nevertheless, by the first century there were recognized, and even lauded, exceptions to this general rule.

The first century Jewish writer, Philo of Alexandria, described the Essenes as those who “repudiate marriage . . . for no one of the Essenes ever marries a wife.”[{32}](#) Interestingly, the Essenes not only escaped condemnation for their celibacy, they were often admired. Philo also wrote, “This now is the enviable system of life of these Essenes, so that not only private individuals but even mighty kings, admiring the men, venerate their sect, and increase . . . the honors which they confer on them.”[{33}](#) Such citations clearly reveal that not all Jews of Jesus’ day considered marriage obligatory. And those who sought to avoid marriage for religious reasons were often admired rather than condemned.

It may be helpful to remind your friend that the Bible nowhere

condemns singleness. Indeed, it praises those who choose to remain single to devote themselves to the work of the Lord (e.g. 1 Cor. 7:25-38). Point your friend to Matthew 19:12, where Jesus explains that some people “have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven” (NIV). Notice His conclusion, “The one who can accept this should accept it.” It’s virtually certain that Jesus had accepted this. He had renounced marriage to fully devote Himself to the work of His heavenly Father. What’s more, since there was precedent in the first century for Jewish men to remain single for religious reasons, Jesus’ singleness would not have been condemned. Let your friend know that, contrary to the claims of *The Da Vinci Code*, it would have been completely acceptable for Jesus to be unmarried.

Did Jesus’ Earliest Followers Proclaim His Deity?

We’ve considered *The Da Vinci Code*’s claim that Jesus was married and found it wanting. Mark Roberts observed “that most proponents of the marriage of Jesus thesis have an agenda. They are trying to strip Jesus of his uniqueness, and especially his deity.”[\[34\]](#) This is certainly true of *The Da Vinci Code*. Not only does it call into question Jesus’ deity by alleging that He was married, it also maintains that His earliest followers never even believed He was divine! According to Teabing, the doctrine of Christ’s deity originally resulted from a vote at the Council of Nicaea. He further asserts, “until that moment in history, Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet . . . a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless” (233). Did Jesus’ earliest followers really believe that He was just a man? If our non-Christian friends have questions about this, let’s view it as a great opportunity to tell them who Jesus really is!

The Council of Nicaea met in A.D. 325. By then, Jesus' followers had been proclaiming His deity for nearly three centuries. Our earliest written sources about the life of Jesus are found in the New Testament. These first century documents repeatedly affirm the deity of Christ. For instance, in his letter to the Colossians, the apostle Paul declared, "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (2:9; see also Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:5-11; Tit. 2:13). And John wrote, "In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was God . . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" (1:1, 14).

There are also affirmations of Jesus' deity in the writings of the pre-Nicene church fathers. In the early second century, Ignatius of Antioch wrote of "our God, Jesus the Christ."[{35}](#) Similar affirmations can be found throughout these writings. There's even non-Christian testimony from the second century that Christians believed in Christ's divinity. Pliny the Younger wrote to Emperor Trajan, around A.D. 112, that the early Christians "were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day . . . when they sang . . . a hymn to Christ, as to a god."[{36}](#)

If we humbly share this information with our non-Christian friends, we can help them see that Christians believed in Christ's deity long before the Council of Nicaea. We might even be able to explain why Christians were so convinced of His deity that they were willing to die rather than deny it. If so, we can invite our friends to believe in Jesus for themselves. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

If you want your church to be equipped to take advantage of such opportunities, consider our new study series, *Redeeming The Da Vinci Code*, available at Probe.org.

Notes

1. Read more about it at http://www.filmrot.com/articles/filmrot_news/004089.php (January 15, 2004).
2. Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 1.
3. For example, see Sandra Miesel, "Dismantling the Da Vinci Code," at <http://www.crisismagazine.com/september2003/feature1.htm> and James Patrick Holding, "Not InDavincible: A Review and Critique of The Da Vinci Code," at <http://www.answers.org/issues/davincicode.html>.
4. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Reprint. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1952), 1:549, cited in Norman Geisler and William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible: Revised and Expanded* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 282.
5. For more information see Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, 390.
6. Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1998), 25.
7. Ibid., 39-40.
8. Ibid., 40.
9. Darrell Bock, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code* (n.p.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2004), 52 (pre-publication manuscript copy).
10. Ibid., 62-63. See also *The Coptic Apocalypse of Peter and The Second Treatise of the Great Seth* in Bart Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures: Books That Did Not Make It Into The New Testament*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 78-86.
11. For example, *The Coptic Gospel of Thomas* (saying 1), in Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, 20.
12. Bock, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code*, 63.
13. Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: Christian Scriptures and the Battles Over Authentication* (Chantilly, Virginia: The Teaching Company: Course Guidebook, part 2, 2002), 37.

14. Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, 341.
15. F.F. Bruce, "Canon," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, eds. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 95.
16. Ibid., 95-96.
17. Ibid., 96.
18. Darrell Bock, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code* (n.p. Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2004), 25-26 (pre-publication manuscript copy). I have relied heavily on Dr. Bock's analysis in this section.
19. Ibid., 116-17.
20. Bart Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures: Books That Did Not Make It Into The New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 35.
21. Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003). On page 247 we read, "Sophie had not known a gospel existed in Magdalene's words."
22. An "apostle" can simply refer to "one sent" as an envoy or messenger. Mary was an "apostle" in this sense, since she was sent by Jesus to tell the disciples of His resurrection.
23. For more information see Bock, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code*, 16-18.
24. Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, 19.
25. Bock, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code*, 22.
26. Ibid., 21.
27. Ibid., 20.
28. In this section I have relied heavily on chapter 3 of Dr. Bock's book, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code*, pp. 40-49 (pre-publication copy).
29. Philo, *Hypothetica*, 11.14-17, cited in Bock, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code*, 43.
30. Ibid., 44.
31. Mark D. Roberts, "Was Jesus Married? A Careful Look at the Real Evidence," at <http://www.markdroberts.com/htmlfiles/resources/jesusmarr>

[ied.htm](#), January, 2004.

32. Ignatius of Antioch, "Ephesians," 18:2, cited in Jack N. Sparks, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers*, trans. Robert M. Grant (New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1978), 83.
33. Pliny, Letters, transl. by William Melmoth, rev. by W.M.L. Hutchinson (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1935), vol. II, X:96, cited in Habermas, *The Historical Jesus*, 199.

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“Why Do Christians Go to Church on Sunday Instead of the Sabbath?”

Why do most Christians go to church on Sunday, the first day of the week, instead of the sabbath, the seventh day of the week?

Christians typically go to church on Sunday, rather than Saturday, because Jesus was raised from the dead on a Sunday morning. The resurrection is extremely important for Christians. Indeed, it's so important that, if it didn't occur, Christianity would be false! In 1 Corinthians 15:17 Paul writes, "...if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins."

But why is such great significance attached to Jesus' bodily resurrection? Although many reasons could be given, let me mention just two:

1. In the resurrection, God the Father vindicated the person and work of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who had been

crucified not for His own sin, but for ours (2 Cor. 5:21). Thus, in Romans 1:4 we read that Jesus “was declared the Son of God with power by (or “as a result of”) the resurrection from the dead.” But don’t Christians believe that Jesus was already the Son of God before His resurrection? Yes; this passage teaches that the resurrection was God’s powerful confirmation that Jesus’ message about Himself was true. After all, anyone can CLAIM to be the Son of God, but only God can confirm the truth of such a claim by raising the person from the dead!

2. In Romans 4:25 we read that Christ “was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.” To “justify” someone means to declare them “righteous,” or not-guilty. This passage indicates the sufficiency of Christ’s death for all believers. In other words, believers can be confident of their justification by God on the basis of Christ’s resurrection. If the Father had not been fully satisfied with Christ’s death for our sins, He would not have raised Him from the dead. The resurrection is thus God’s confirmation of the complete sufficiency of Christ’s death for all who believe!

It is thus because of the tremendous importance of Christ’s resurrection for the Christian faith that Christians worship on Sunday, the day that God raised Jesus from the dead.

I hope you find this information helpful. May God bless you as you search the Scriptures!

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries