

The Deity and Humanity of Christ

A. Introduction – Is Jesus Divine or human?

1. The ultimate idea to which the Da Vinci code is driving is that Jesus was merely a human prophet, and that this was what virtually all Christians believed until the time of Constantine.
2. DVC teaches that Constantine needed Jesus to be a Divine figure in order to unite the empire, and so he forced this idea upon Christians.
3. Since Christian writings had not taught this before, the real Christian documents which portrayed a merely human Jesus were banished and destroyed, and replacement documents which portrayed a Divine Jesus were put into the Christian New Testament.
4. What did early Christians believe about the nature of Christ? Did they think he was Divine, human, or both?
5. What did the Gnostic writings that DVC claims were the original Christian documents teach about the nature of Christ?
6. Who is Jesus Christ? Who did He claim to be, and what is His true nature?

B. When Did Christians First Believe That Jesus Was Divine?

1. DVC – When Constantine forced this upon the church at the council of Nicea
 - a. “At this gathering,” Teabing said, “many aspects of Christianity were debated and voted upon – the date of Easter, the role of the bishops, the administration of sacraments, and, of course, the *divinity* of Jesus.” “I don’t follow. His divinity?” “My dear,” Teabing declared, “until *that* moment in history Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet... a great and powerful man, but a *man* nonetheless. A mortal.” “Not the Son of God?” “Right,” Teabing said. “Jesus’ establishment as ‘the Son of God’ was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicea.” “Hold on. You’re saying Jesus’ divinity was

the result of a *vote*?” “A relatively close vote at that,” Teabing added. (Page 233).

- b. This is really the key assertion towards which all else in DVC is directed. According to DVC, Jesus did not claim to be divine, and his followers originally did not think of Him this way. This was the invention of Constantine which was forced upon the church at the Council of Nicea.

2. Reality – Jesus claimed to be Divine, and this is what the Church had always believed, and this was not the question debated at Nicea.

- a. “Constantine did call the Council of Nicea, and one of the issues involved Jesus’ divinity. But this was not a council that met to decide whether or not Jesus was divine, as Teabing indicates. Quite the contrary, everyone at the Council – and in fact, just about every Christian everywhere – already agreed that Jesus was divine, the Son of God. The question being debated was how to understand Jesus’ divinity in light of the circumstance that he was also human...And there certainly was no vote to determine Jesus’ divinity; this was already a matter of common knowledge among Christians, and had been from the early years of the religion.” (Bart Ehrman, *Truth and Fiction in the Da Vinci Code*, page 14-15).
- b. “The view that Teabing lays out is wrong on all key points: Christians before Nicea already did accept Jesus as divine; The Gospels of the New Testament portray him as human as much as they portray as divine; the Gospels that did *not* get included in the New Testament portray him as divine as much, or more so, than they portray him as human.” (Bart Ehrman, *Truth and Fiction in the Da Vinci Code*, page 15).
- c. Early teaching on Jesus’ Divinity
 - 1. John 1:1-3 - ¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

2. Philippians 2:5-7 - ⁵ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.
3. Hebrews 1:1-3, 8 - ¹ In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.... ⁸ But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.
4. Mark 1:1 - ¹ The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
5. "There is one physician, both fleshly and spiritual, born and unborn, God come in the flesh, true life in death, from both Mary and God, first subject to suffering and then beyond suffering, Jesus Christ our Lord." (Ignatius, *Letter to the Ephesians*, 7:2, c. 110).
6. "On an appointed day they had been accustomed to meet before daybreak, and to recite a hymn antiphonally to Christ, as to a god..." (Pliny the Younger, Letter to Trajan, c. 112).
7. "Brothers we ought to think of Jesus Christ as we do of God, as 'Judge of the living and the dead.'" (2 Clement 1:1, c. 100)
8. "And furthermore, my brothers: if the Lord submitted to suffer for our souls, even though He is Lord of the whole world, to whom God said at the foundation of the world, "Let us make man according to our image and likeness...." (*Epistle of Barnabas*, 5.5, c. 100)

C. The real debate at Nicea

1. The real debate was over Arianism
2. The teachings of Arius
 - a. Arius taught that Jesus was divine, but was still created by the Father
 - b. Christ did not exist from all eternity – "there was a time when he was not."

- c. Christ was divine, but was inferior to the Father – not in role (economically is the technical term) but in being (ontologically is the technical term).
- d. This is the idea supported by Jehovah Witnesses today

3. The decision at Nicea

- a. The council affirmed the teaching of the New Testament that Jesus was divine and was not created – He was begotten – not made
- b. It was affirmed that Christ was eternal – there was never a time when He was not
- c. Christ was equal to the Father in being (ontologically) but subordinate to the Father in role (economically).
- d. This is the position of all Orthodox Christians.
- e. Note: Even on this issue the actual vote was not close as Teabing claims; approximately 300 bishops attended, and only two went against the decision; it was 300-2!

D. Did Christians not believe Jesus was human?

1. DVC – Christians denied that Jesus was human, and accepted only those writings which showed him as only Divine, while the other writings, which showed him as only human were banned and destroyed.
 - a. “The twist is this,” Teabing said, talking faster now. “Because Constantine upgraded Jesus’ status almost four centuries *after* Jesus’ death, thousands of documents already existed chronicling His life as *mortal* man. To rewrite the history books, Constantine knew he would need a bold stroke...Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ’s human traits and embellished those gospels that made Him godlike. The earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned.” (Page 234).
2. Reality – Christians always believed that Jesus was both human and divine, and all of the books of the New Testament testify to both His humanity and Deity, while the Gnostic writings often denied His

humanity. Furthermore, the writings of the New Testament were not altered in any way – what we have are the original ideas penned by the apostles and their companions. Finally, Constantine did not order the other writings to be banned or burned – he said nothing about them at all!

- a. The Gospels of the New Testament speak of Jesus in very human terms. In the Gospels He sleeps (Matthew 8:24), is hungry (Matthew 4:2), eats (Matthew 11:19), and cries (John 11:35). This is a very human Jesus!
- b. “[According to the Gnostic texts] the incarnation is really an apparition. This ‘more divine’ Jesus is the opposite of what *The Da Vinci Code* claims for these secret gospel texts; they do not have a more human Jesus but a more divine and removed Jesus.” (Darrell L. Bock, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code*, page 78).
- c. “As it turns out, though, rather than opposing them [orthodox Christians] for thinking that Jesus was divine, it opposes them for maintaining that Jesus was *human*. That is to say, this book [the *Apocalypse of Peter*] runs precisely counter to the claims of Leigh Teabing that the Gnostic Gospels portray a more human, less divine Jesus.” (Bart Ehrman, *Truth and Fiction in the Da Vinci Code*, page 56).
- d. Contrary to the claims of DVC, the original writings of the New Testament were not altered. The New Testament is the most well attested work of antiquity, and we have hundreds of manuscript fragments, quotes of church fathers, and allusions to New Testament texts which prove that the New Testament was not altered. What we have today is what was penned by the original authors! For more on this, see the seminar on “How Did I Get My Bible?” available at our church website www.bayridgechristianchurch.org, especially the section on transmission of the Bible texts.

- e. “The historical reality is that the Emperor Constantine had nothing to do with the formation of the canon of Scripture: he did not choose which books to include or exclude, and he did not order the destruction of the Gospels that were left out of the canon (there were no imperial book burnings). The formation of the New Testament canon was instead a long and drawn-out process that began centuries before Constantine and did not conclude until long after he was dead. So far as we know, based on our historical record, the emperor was not involved in the process.” (Bart Ehrman, *Truth and Fiction in the Da Vinci Code*, page 74.)

E. The Biblical teaching on Jesus Christ

1. Jesus is the Eternal Son of God, Who has always existed, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit.
2. Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, becoming fully human – the God-Man.
3. Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience to God and His Law, displaying perfect righteousness and fulfilling mankind’s obligation to obey God.
4. Jesus willingly suffered and died on the cross, bearing the righteous wrath of God for the sin of all mankind so that we could be free from punishment and receive the blessings of God.
5. Jesus was bodily raised from the dead, gave convincing proof of this fact, and ascended into heaven.
6. Those who look to Jesus Christ in faith are saved, not because of their own works, but because of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.
7. All other beliefs about Jesus Christ are false and lead one away from God and cause one to remain under God’s righteous wrath for sin.

F. Jesus Christ: Lord, Liar, or Lunatic

1. Jesus Christ clearly and repeatedly claimed to be God.

John 10:31-33 - ³¹ Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, ³² but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" ³³ "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."

John 5:18 - ¹⁸ For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Mark 14:61-64 - ⁶¹ But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" ⁶² "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." ⁶³ The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. ⁶⁴ "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" They all condemned him as worthy of death.

2. There are only three options available when someone seriously makes this claim:
 - a. He is a liar – he is saying he is God, but he knows that he is not. He is a wicked liar who is trying to deceive people for his own ends. Such human beings are the dregs of the earth.
 - b. He is a lunatic – he thinks he is God, but he has lost his mind. He can not tell reality from fantasy. Such human beings need to be cared for in an insane asylum, and greatly pitied for their mental delusions.
 - c. He is Lord of all – He says He is God, and He is right!

3. There are NO other options. The path chosen by *The Da Vinci Code* – Jesus is a great mortal prophet, but not God – is the path of intellectual dishonesty and suicide. There are no other options – because Jesus did not intend to give us any other options. We must decide – lunatic, liar, or Lord?

