

The Da Vinci Code (DVC)

Telling truth from falsehood... and then telling the truth

Summary of the book with page references to the key bits

DVC is a conspiracy story. It takes a radical theory about Jesus and the early church and weaves it into a novel. The theory about Jesus is that:

- He never claimed to be divine, and his first followers never thought of him as more than a good teacher
- He married Mary Magdalene and had a child by her (she was pregnant at the time of the crucifixion and subsequently went to France)
- The earliest writings about Jesus were not the New Testament writings, but others that:
 - portray him as merely human, not divine
 - contain evidence that he was married to Mary Magdalene and that he intended her, rather than Peter, to lead the church when he was gone
- In the year 325, the Roman Emperor Constantine convened the early church at the Council of Nicea. Constantine wanted to unite his empire under Christianity, so to 'strengthen' Christianity and make it dominant, he influenced the council to 'upgrade' Jesus to being divine. The council:
 - declared Jesus as the divine Son of God for the first time
 - ordered the banning/destruction of all earlier writings about the real Jesus (ie, the merely human Jesus)
 - decided on the contents of the Christian Bible - in particular Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were written/embellished at this time to support the newly-decided belief in Jesus' divinity **(pp311-346)**
- Some of the earlier writings about Jesus survived and were kept along with the remains of Mary Magdalene. A group called the Priory of Sion (**pp156-9, 216-227**) has guarded these (and therefore the secret of Jesus' true, non-divine identity), with the help of the Knights Templar, ever since. Grand Masters of the Priory of Sion have included Leonardo Da Vinci, whose paintings (eg, *Mona Lisa* and *The Last Supper*) contain all sorts of clues about the secret.
- In our own day, a curator of the Louvre, Jacques Sauniere, is a Grand Master. A Roman Catholic organisation, Opus Dei, is trying to prevent the members of the Priory of Sion from ever publishing the secret of Jesus' true, non-divine identity. So Jacques is murdered by them. But he leaves clues for both his daughter (Sophie) and an expert in symbols and codes, Robert Langdon. The plot of the book is how Sophie and Robert gradually discover the secret that the Priory of Sion has been guarding...

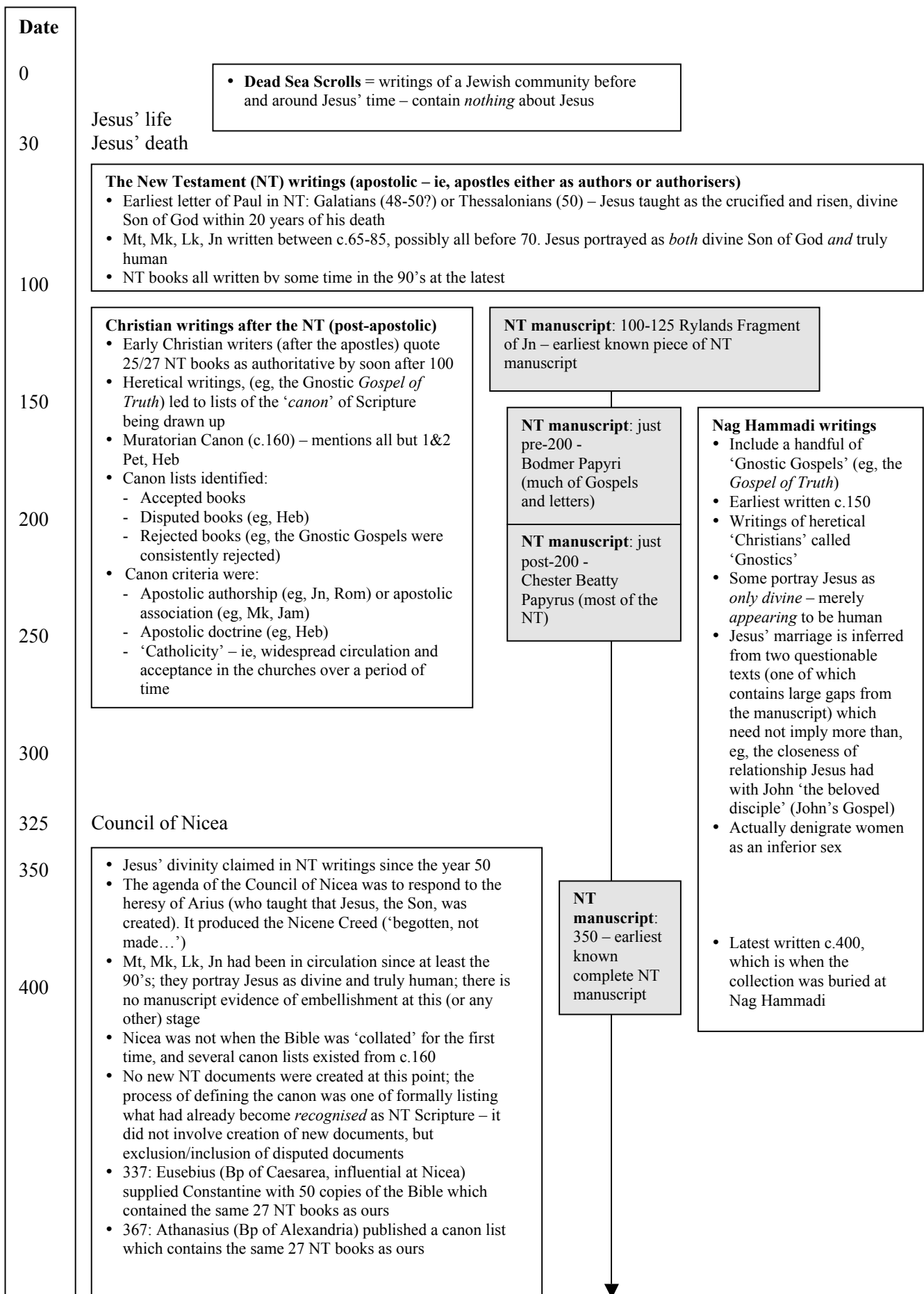
Useful reading

- > *The Da Vinci Code: a response*, Nicky Gumble, Alpha. Short tract. Good summary; good to give to a non-Christian inquirer.
- > David Holloway's *The Da Vinci Code, History, Films and Neo-Gnosticism* see www.christian.org.uk/davinci_code
- > *Da Vinci: a broken code*, Brian Edwards, Day One. Longer booklet. More detail, probably best for Christians 'boning up'.
- > *The books the church suppressed*, Michael Green, Monarch. On authorship, canon and manuscript transmission of the NT.
- > *Is it worth believing?* Greg Clarke, Matthias Media. The basic issues plus more on why *DVC* is plausible/attractive to people.
- > *The NT documents: are they reliable?*, F.F. Bruce, IVP. The classic on dating, authorship, manuscript transmission and canon.
- > *The Essence of Feminism*, Kirsten Birkett, Matthias Media. (Because *DVC* touches on feminism and alleges that the church has largely been negative in its stance towards women and sexuality)

1. What *DVC* claims about Jesus

Date	
0	
Jesus' life Jesus' death	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jesus claimed to be no more than human – a teacher/prophet
30	
	Early accounts of Jesus (<i>DVC</i> doesn't put an exact date on them)
100	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There were 80 (plus) 'Gospels' and 1000's of 'documents' about Jesus, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The Dead Sea Scrolls- The Nag Hammadi writings• All portray Jesus as merely human, not divine• Some contain proof that:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Jesus married Mary Magdalene- Jesus was a feminist and intended Mary Magdalene to lead the church
150	
200	
250	
300	
325	Council of Nicea
350	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jesus was <i>not</i> previously believed to be divine• Jesus' divinity was now <i>innovated</i>:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- as part of Constantine's agenda to unite the Roman Empire under Christianity- as part of male leaders' agenda to establish male hierarchy in the church• Mt, Mk, Lk, Jn were written (or at least embellished) to assert Jesus' divinity and downplay his humanity• Our current Bible was put together at this point to serve this agenda• The order was given to suppress/destroy the earlier accounts of Jesus
400	
	The Priory of Sion (& Knights Templar)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A secret society knew and guarded the truth that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and had a child by her• They know the location of Mary Magdalene's tomb, which contains some of the suppressed early documents which survived

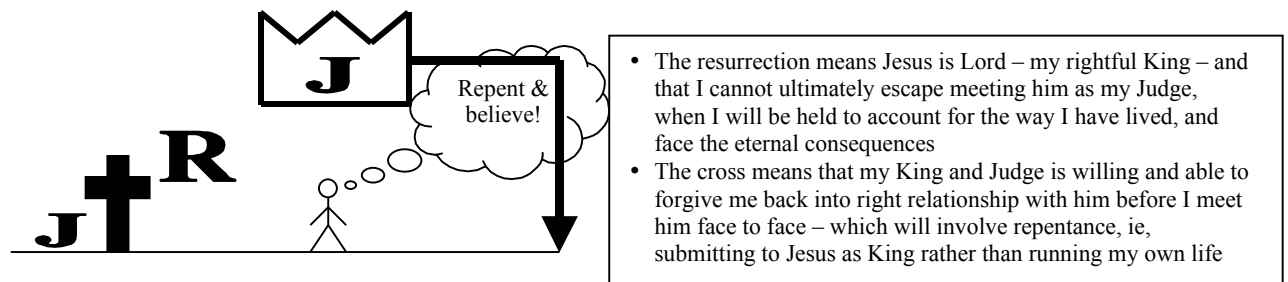
2. The truth of the matter



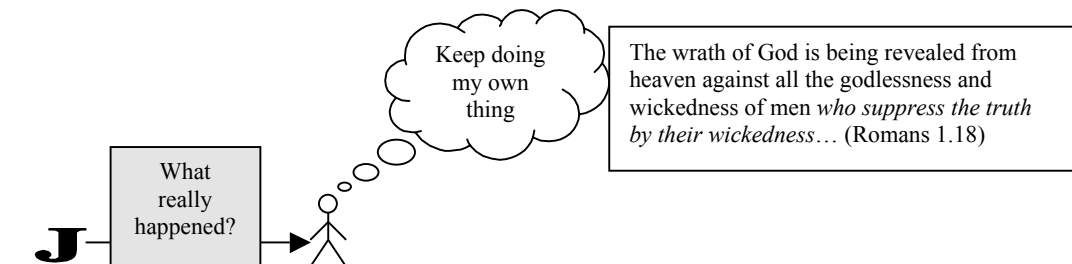
3. What's the agenda of DVC (or what's so attractive about it – consciously or subconsciously?)

- The NT message depends on *history* which demands *repentance* (submitting to Jesus as King rather than running my own life). Eg:

39 "We are witnesses of everything he [Jesus] did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, 40 but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. 41 He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. [= **witnessed events – what happened to Jesus**] 42 He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. 43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." [= **interpreted events – who Jesus is and the implications for us**] (The apostle Peter preaching in Acts 10.39-43)



- We can *avoid* the demand for *repentance* by:
 - Denying the *history* - or causing near-total scepticism about the *history* (which *DVC* does)
 - Denying the *apostolic interpretation* of the history



- DVC promotes Gnostic ideas (= pagan religion dressed in Christian clothes) and straight pagan ideas – eg, the idea that God can be experienced through sexual experience. No prizes for seeing why that's attractive... (There are other attractive agendas – eg, feminism, 'intellectual free-thinking', etc)

4. How can we make the most of the opportunity of DVC (book - and film out on 19th May)

- Prepare to *be asked* questions like, 'What did you think of it?'
 - Clarify, 'Which bit?' (eg, the allegation against historical reliability of the gospel? Or against the church for violence or for devaluing women?)
 - 'I thought it was utterly unbelievable compared to the NT.' 'It was totally one-sided.' 'It's frightening to think how people could come out of that thinking it was all true.' Etc
- Prepare to *ask* questions like, 'How much of that do you think had any truth in at all?... Why?' 'Have you ever read any of the NT to check it out?... Why not?!' 'What do you think his [Dan Brown's] agenda is?' 'Do you think Christianity's basically fact or made up – or a mixture?... Why?' 'Has it left you thinking you ought to look into it at all? Do you think it matters to?... Why not?!' 'If Dan Brown's right and Jesus never said he was God and never rose from the dead... why do you think people came to believe he was God – and die for it?
- Challenge (and enable!) people to *read one of the four Gospels* (eg, Mark) *themselves*