

## **The Case for the Divinity of Christ Matthew 16:13-17**

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**Intro:** The DaVinci Code is written so convincingly that 13% of Americans now believe that what it says is true. Apart from that are the multitudes of Christians who have read the book and been thrown into doubts about their faith.

Yet as one who has spent years studying not only the Bible but Church history, I am appalled out how inaccurate Brown's revision of history is.

### **Today's Issue as raised by the DaVinci Code:**

Leigh Teabing, the "Grail Expert" in the book is speaking to Sophie about the Council of Nicea held in 325 AD. (Page 233)

"At this gathering," Teabing said, "Many aspects of Christianity were debated and voted upon- the date of Easter, the role of 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 added. "Jesus' establishment as the 'Son of God' was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicea."

"Hold on, you are saying Jesus' divinity was the result of a vote?"

"A relatively close vote at that."

### **I. What happened at the Council of Nicea?**

This was the first major gathering of Christians because it was the first time Christians could gather in freedom. Many of the pastors who came bore scars from persecution.

The debate was not on whether or not Jesus was just a man but on whether or not Jesus was eternally the Son of God or some kind of lesser divine person.

The debate was not a close vote. It was 300 to 2 declaring that Jesus was eternally and fully divine.

## **II. Did the earliest Christian believe that Jesus was just a man?**

From the beginning, Christians have declared Jesus to be the divine Son of God.

- Ignatius in AD 105 declared that Jesus was God manifested in human form.
- Clement of Alexandria in AD 150 said, "It is fitting that you should think of Jesus Christ as of God."
- Justin Martyr in AD 160 said, "The Father of the universe has a Son and He is God."
- Irenaeus in AD 180 said, "He is God for the name Emmanuel indicates this."

An interesting outside proof that the earliest Christians considered Jesus to be divine occurs in a letter from Pliny the Governor of Bithynia to Caesar in AD 112. He was investigating this new fast growing group and basically concluded they were harmless people who did good deeds for others. He reported that they met before sunrise on Sundays and "sang an anthem to Christ as God."

Even the false Gnostic gospels do not portray Jesus as just a man. The Gospel of Thomas has a story of Jesus as a boy turning clay birds he had made into real birds by his divine power.

This is a revision of history beyond any credibility!

## **III. Does the New Testament teach that Jesus is Divine?**

In last week's message I showed you the evidence that the New Testament was written in the first century by eye witnesses who knew Jesus and is the most accurate and trustworthy account of the life of Jesus.

### **1. The whole purpose of the New Testament was to get a person to believe that Jesus is the Son of God.**

**John 20:31: "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."**

Mark's Gospel was the first Gospel to be put into writing. Mark wrote down Peter's memories. You can sense the evangelistic purpose from the way it begins and ends:

**Mark 1:1: "The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."**

At the end of the crucifixion story, Mark records that the hardened centurion in charge of the cries out, "**Surely this was the Son of God!**" (Mark 15:39)

This reminds me of the old Billy Graham movies where the main character always ended up at a Billy Graham crusade, walking down the aisle. Then Billy would come on the screen and ask the movie goers if they would like to join the character in accepting Christ.

It is as if Mark wants you to get on your knees and join the Centurion and confessing that Jesus is the Son of God.

**2. Here are samples of what NT writers have to say about who Jesus is:**

**Paul- Col. 1:9: "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form"**

*Peter calls Jesus, "Our God and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:1)*

James, the half brother of Jesus and head of the Jerusalem Church (James did not believe in Jesus until after the Resurrection) called himself a slave of the Lord Jesus and spoke of Jesus as **"our glorious Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1, 2:1).**

**John- 1 John 5:5: "Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."**

**3. Jesus allowed others to call him divine.**

**Matthew 16:16-17:** Jesus commends Peter for saying that he is more than a prophet, that he is the Son of God.

In **John 20:28**, after Thomas has seen the risen Jesus and been invited to touch the nail prints, he calls Jesus his "Lord and His God." No Jew would ever call a man God.

**4. Jesus did things only God could do:**

In **John 9**, he healed a man who had been born blind, something never before done in history up to that time.

In **John 11**, He raised Lazarus from the dead. He did this on two other occasions as well.

In **Mark 4** Jesus calmed a storm on the Sea of Galilee and left his disciples exclaiming, "Who is this that even the winds and the waves obey him."

**5. Jesus made claims that only God could make.**

In **Mark 2**, Jesus declared to the paralytic that his sins were forgiven. When the religious leaders accused him of blasphemy, rightly saying that only God could forgive sins, Jesus replied, "To let you know that I have authority to forgive sins I say to the man, 'Rise up and walk.'".

In **John 5:24-29**, Jesus claimed that He will be the one to raise all the dead. He will be the only judge that anyone stands before at the judgment day.

In **John 8:58**, Jesus made an outstanding statement. His enemies were bragging about being the sons of Abraham. Jesus declared, "Before Abraham was, I AM!" He used the name God gave for himself to Moses at the burning bush. He is declaring He is the God that came to Moses. Because they understood exactly what he was saying, they picked up stones to kill him.

#### **IV. Jesus claimed to be the divine Son of God. Why should we believe Him?**

##### **1. The Resurrection backs up His claim.**

**Romans 1:4** If you had any doubt about who Jesus was before the Resurrection, you should have none afterwards.

##### **2. The only logical conclusion that anyone can arrive at is that Jesus is the Divine Son of God.**

**C.S. Lewis from "Mere Christianity":**

*"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing people often say about Jesus: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic on the level with a man who says he is a poached egg, or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice: Either this man was and is the Son of God or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon, or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.*

***Jesus can only be a liar, a lunatic, or Lord.***

##### **3. The bottom line of why someone believes that Jesus is the Son of God is that God has convinced them in their heart of hearts.**

**Matthew 16:16-17:** "Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven."

Ultimately, it will not be any argument I give that convinces you that Jesus is the Son of God. God is the great 'Convincer.'

**V. What is the significance of the truth that Jesus is the Divine Son of God?**

**1. This means that God has revealed Himself to us.**

**John 14:9: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."**

C.S. Lewis says in "Mere Christianity" that God has invaded this planet!

\*Paul Harvey tells a story every Christmas about a non Christian man who stayed home while his wife went to a Christmas service. It was a cold snowy day. He watched as a bird kept trying to fly in through his window, out of the cold. He tried to shoo it away and shouted at it, but could not get through to the bird. He realized he would have to become a bird to communicate with the bird.

**2. Since Jesus is the Divine, the most important question you will ever face is "What will you do with Jesus?"**

Jesus said if you reject him you will be rejected by God. Jesus declared he will be the very God you stand before one day.

I have heard many say, "I believe in God just not in Jesus." Can you imagine what they will feel like when they try that line out on the judgment day?

**Jesus is the issue! John 3:16 is the Gospel!**