

Discerning Fact from Fiction in *The Da Vinci Code*:

Code:

Part 2

Was Jesus Married to Mary Magdalene?

In the previous article, we exposed the fictitious idea that the Nag Hammadi texts and the Dead Sea Scrolls contain secret gospels that reveal the true nature and life of Jesus Christ. The second assertion from *The Da Vinci Code* is that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and that the leadership of the church was given to her directly from Jesus.

Here are some excerpts from *The Da Vinci Code*.

“The greatest cover-up in human history. Not only was Jesus Christ married, but He was a father. My dear, Mary Magdalene was the Holy Vessel. She was the chalice that bore the royal bloodline of Jesus Christ. She was the womb that bore the lineage, and the vine from which the sacred fruit sprang forth” (p. 249).

“Mary was recast as a whore in order to erase the evidence of her powerful family ties. ... The legend of the Holy Grail is a legend about royal blood line. When Grail legend speaks of the chalice that held the blood of Christ it speaks in fact, of Mary Magdalene - the female womb that carried Jesus’ royal bloodline” (p. 249).

“...this was the secret the Vatican had tried to bury in the fourth century. The threat Mary Magdalene posed to the men of the early Church was potentially ruinous. Not only was she the woman to whom Jesus had assigned the task of founding the Church, but she also had physical proof that the Church’s newly proclaimed deity had spawned a mortal bloodline. The church in order to defend itself against the Magdalene’s power, perpetuated her image as a whore and buried the evidence of Christ’s marriage to her, thereby defusing any potential claims that Christ had a surviving bloodline and was a mortal prophet” (p. 254).

In the novel, Mary is the wife of Jesus and the mother of His children. Mary’s “true” identity is a secret the church wanted to cover up to protect the divinity of Jesus. She also is directly associated with the Holy Grail. The premise is that the legend of the Holy Grail really points to the holy bloodline of Jesus and Mary Magdalene coming into France. Proof is to be seen in Leonardo da Vinci’s painting of *The Last Supper*. The evidence is the V shape to the left side of Jesus as one looks at the painting (p. 244). This is the symbol of the feminine, and a feminine-looking figure on the left side of the V next to Jesus is alleged to be Mary Magdalene. In determining whether these assertions are fact or fiction, we will first examine the facts of Mary found in the Bible and in writings outside the New Testament to see if they indicate that there was a special familial relationship between her and Jesus. In his book *Breaking the Da Vinci Code*, New Testament scholar Darrell Bock does an excellent job expounding on Mary and her role in the writings of the New Testament, the Church Fathers, and the Gnostic works.

Mary Magdalene

In the New Testament there are four groups of passages that refer to Mary Magdalene. The first is Luke 8:1-3 which tells us that she was part of a group of women who ministered to Jesus and his disciples and that she was a disciple who was delivered from demonic possession by Jesus.

The second group of passages tells us that she was at the cross with the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee (Matthew 27: 55-56, Mark 15:40, and John 19:25). Matthew, Mark, and John repeat the fact that these women ministered to Jesus and His disciples. No special attention is given to Mary. The gospel writers also point out the connections several of the women had to

recognized male characters. If there had been a connection between Mary and Jesus, it is very likely the writers would have indicated such a relationship.

The third group of texts reveals that she was at the Burial of Jesus along with Mary the mother of James the younger, Joseph and Salome (Matthew 27:61, Mark 15:40). Finally, she was present at the Resurrection (Matthew 28:1, Mark 16:1, and John 20:11-18). Mary is a prominent figure in one passage of scripture, John 20:11-18. This is the only place in the New Testament that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were alone together. In this passage she clings to Jesus and He tells her to let go. Public displays of affection between non-related individuals were not common in Jewish culture. However, her reaction is understandable given the excitement of the moment. There is no sexual intimacy implied in this scene and the story concludes with her leaving the scene in great joy and excitement.

These eleven passages describe all that we know about Mary Magdalene in the Bible. She was a disciple who traveled and supported Jesus along with a group of other women. The other women in the group were connected to prominent males, but Mary was not connected to anyone. She was a witness to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

One of the mistakes passed down is that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute. Here Brown makes a statement that is close to being correct. Mary was not a prostitute, but this was not a deliberate attempt by the church to deceive people, it was most likely a mistake that was overlooked. The first mention of Mary as a prostitute comes from a sermon delivered by Pope Gregory the Great in 591 AD.¹ In all likelihood, the notion of prostitution resulted from confusion concerning passages in the gospel of Luke. Here is how the error likely occurred:

In Luke 7:36, an unnamed sinful woman anointed Jesus at the house of Simon the leper (Luke 7:36-50). The text does not label this woman as a prostitute, but we can conclude that her sin involves sexual immorality. The next text is Luke 8:1-3, where Mary Magdalene is named. Her exorcism is mentioned but there is no mention of her anointing Jesus. Luke does not connect Mary to the sinful woman from the previous passage. However, people made the error of assuming Mary Magdalene was the sinful woman in Luke chapter 7.

Mary Outside the New Testament

The Church Fathers' references to Mary Magdalene are consistent with what we find in the New Testament. She was a faithful disciple who was present at Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. She does not play a prominent role in their works. If she were the wife of Jesus, we would expect to find much more written about her by the early Church.

The Gnostic texts from which Brown draws his hypothesis says surprisingly little about Mary Magdalene. There are only two passages that could possibly point to a special relationship between Jesus and Mary, but even these are questionable. The passage that presents the strongest potential of a secret marriage is the *Gospel of Philip* 63:32-64:10.

“As for the Wisdom who is called ‘the barren,’ she is the mother of the angels. And the *companion* of the [Savior] Mary Magdalene. [He] loved her more than all the disciples [...]. They said to him ‘Why do you love her more than all of us?’ The Savior answered and said to them, ‘Why do I not love you like her? When a blind man and one who sees are both together in darkness, they are no different from one another. When the light comes, then he who sees will see the light, and he who is blind will remain in darkness.’”

There are several problems with the above text. First, scholars believe that it was composed in the second half of the third century, a full two hundred years after the time of Jesus.² Second, the manuscript is missing words, as indicated by the brackets.³ Scholars remain uncertain what words actually belong in the brackets. Therefore, we are not sure if the text really does read that Mary was the “companion of the **savior**...” Third, the reference to a “kiss on the mouth” probably does not refer to something sexual. Since

¹ Darrel Bock, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code*, (Nashville, TN.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2004), 28.

² Hank Hanegraaff and Paul Maier, *The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction?*, (Wheaton, IL.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004), 19.

³ Bock, 21.

the book is filled with spiritual imagery, it should most likely be interpreted as the passing on of secret knowledge. New Testament scholar Dr. Darrell Bock writes,

“So uncertainty applies to the text from *Philip* 63. We do not know the exact relationship or to whom Mary Magdalene was being related at the start of this passage, although it is likely she is said to be Jesus’ companion. We also do not know where she was kissed, although it might have been on the mouth. If a kiss on the mouth is described, something unusual is indicated. The kiss does point to a level of intimacy between Jesus and Mary, but it probably represents a spiritual closeness as spiritual counterparts in the birth of creation that is associated with wisdom. It is far less likely that something sexual is in view or that their marital status is being addressed. It probably is symbolic of the passing on of secret knowledge.”⁴

Finally, the key term “companion” in *Philip* 63:34 is a Greek loan word found in this Coptic language text. The transliterated Greek word is *koinonos*, which is translated “companion.” The term can mean “wife” or simply “sister” in a spiritual sense. The common Greek word for wife is some form of *gyne*-. Since this passage is filled with spiritual imagery, the most likely nuance of “companion” is a sister in the spiritual sense.⁵ So this passage does not provide proof that Jesus was married to Mary.

Another passage that implies a special relationship between Jesus and Mary comes from the second-century *The Gospel of Mary* 17:10-18:21. In it Peter was challenging the role of Mary as the recipient of a special revelation from Jesus. The text is reads,

“But Andrew answered and said to the brethren, “Say what you (wish to) say about what she has said. I at least do not believe that the Savior said this. For certainly these teachings are strange ideas.” Peter answered and spoke concerning these same things. He questioned them about the Savior: “Did He really speak with a woman without our knowledge and not openly? Are we to turn about and all listen to her? Did He prefer her to us?” Then Mary wept and said to Peter, “My brother Peter, what do you think? Do you think that I have thought this up myself in my heart, or that I am lying about the Savior?” Levi answered and said to Peter, “Peter, you have always been hot tempered. Now I see you contending against the woman like the adversaries. But if the Savior made her worthy, who are you indeed to reject her? Surely the Savior knows her very well. That is why He loved her more than us. Rather let us be ashamed and put on the perfect Man, and separate as He commanded us and preach the gospel, not laying down any other rule or other law beyond what the Savior said.”

In this passage Peter was upset because Mary received special revelation from Jesus that was not shared with them. Mary was hurt by Peter’s outburst and Levi (probably to be equated with Matthew) came to her defense saying that the Lord loved her more than the rest of the disciples. However, even from this passage, we cannot conclude Mary was Jesus’ wife. In this passage Mary does not appeal to her special relationship to Jesus as his wife when doing so would have silenced Peter. She simply claims to be the recipient of a special revelation from Jesus. Nothing in the text indicates that she was married to Jesus or that the mantle of leadership had been given to her. Once again the late date of this writing makes it unlikely an eye witness wrote it.⁶

Another significant observation is the role Mary the mother of Jesus plays in the Roman Catholic Church. It seems strange that the mother of Jesus would receive an exalted status but Mary Magdalene, Jesus’ wife, receives very little attention. If Mary Magdalene was Jesus’ wife, we would expect her to have been exalted to a very prominent position, most likely above that of Jesus’ mother. However, in the numerous volumes from the early church fathers, Mary Magdalene is hardly mentioned. Furthermore, numerous volumes would have been written regarding the nature of Jesus’ offspring. Debates about what part of the divine nature of Christ they received would have been debated and volumes written on this issue. The texts outside the Bible do not present a strong case that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene.

Historian Dr. Paul Maier writes, “. . .there is no spark - not a scintilla of evidence - anywhere in historical sources. Even where one might expect to find such claims in the bizarre, second century,

⁴ Ibid., 22-23.

⁵ Ibid., 23-24.

⁶ James Garlow and Peter Jones, *Cracking Da Vinci’s Code*, (Colorado Springs, CO.: Victor 2004), 163.

apocryphal gospels - which the Jesus Seminar and other radical voices are trying so desperately to rehabilitate - there is no reference that Jesus ever got married.”⁷

Was It Un-Jewish to be Unmarried?

The Da Vinci Code, presents further arguments as proof that Jesus was most likely married. First, it was un-Jewish to be unmarried. Second, Jesus was a rabbi and would have followed Jewish custom and married.⁸ Once again these do not prove to be strong arguments.

There were Jews who chose to be celibate as a sign of total devotion to God. An example is the Essenes who lived a celibate and monastic life in the desert. Paul taught that there was an advantage to being single in First Corinthians 7. In First Corinthians 9:5 Paul writes about his right to have a wife as did the other Apostles specifically naming Peter. A stronger appeal would have been to point to Jesus, which Paul would certainly have if Jesus were married. Jesus also taught this in Matthew 19:10-12 when he commended those who chose to be eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom. It is most likely that he also modeled what he taught. The celibacy of Roman Catholic Priests is founded on this principle from Jesus.

The argument that Jesus was a rabbi and followed the custom of marriage is a weak argument. Technically, Jesus was not a rabbi according to the religious establishment of His time. The apostles called Him rabbi in Matthew and Mark because He was their teacher, but He did not hold an official Jewish office of rabbi. Luke used the term *teacher* rather than *rabbi* when referring to Jesus. The Jews often questioned Jesus because of His claim of authority over the law and his conduct within the Temple even though he did not occupy an official position within Judaism. Jesus was not a rabbi and the Jewish leaders did not recognize him as one who had an official role in their religious establishment.

Furthermore, many who held prophetic offices were single. Examples include Jeremiah, Elijah, and John the Baptist. Jesus was recognized as a prophet similar to these men so, it would not be out of line for Jesus to be single as these men were.

Although it is highly unlikely that Jesus was married, even if he had been married it would not have had the devastating effect on Jesus' claim of divinity that the conspiracy view alleges. Had Jesus been married, there was no need to cover it up. The whole rationale for covering up any supposed relationship has no basis in theology. Had Jesus been married, theoretically He still could have been and done all He did.⁹

Conclusion

Here are the facts we can conclude from our study. First, Mary Magdalene was a faithful disciple a witness to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Second, she was not a prostitute. Third, there is no compelling evidence from the Bible, the Church Fathers, or the Gnostic Gospels that would indicate she was married to Jesus. Therefore, we may safely conclude that the marriage of Jesus and Mary Magdalene is fiction, not fact.

⁷ Hank Hanegraaff and Paul Maier, 18.

⁸ Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 245.

⁹ Bock, 33-34.