

ΤΩ ΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

“In the Nick of Time”

Occasional Essays
and Other Stuff
for Christian
Students

Presented by the
President of

Central Baptist
Theological
Seminary of
Minneapolis

American Christianity needs leaders. American Christianity needs *Christian* leaders. Christian leaders explain the Scriptures, bringing them to bear upon life's urgent questions. Christian leaders exemplify the life of faith, finding their ultimate satisfaction in God alone. They unite intellectual discipline with ordinate affection, turning their entire being toward the love of God. These essays are dedicated to the task of inviting today's Christian students to become tomorrow's Christian leaders.

—Kevin T. Bauder

“...Be instant in season,
out of season;
reprove, rebuke, exhort
with all longsuffering
and doctrine.”

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The Da Vinci Code

Part Eight

“Could Jesus Marry?”

Kevin T. Bauder

Author Dan Brown uses *The Da Vinci Code* to present a theory that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and that the two of them had children together. The premise of *The Da Vinci Code* is that this theory, if true, would overthrow the New Testament view of Jesus. According to Brown, the Christian church has carefully suppressed the evidence for Jesus' marriage and children.

As we have already seen, no ancient evidence supports the theory of a married Jesus. Brown says that all of his descriptions of ancient documents are accurate, but wherever his claims can be tested, they are found to be mistaken. Frankly, Brown's claims leave responsible scholars of all stripes shaking their heads in disbelief.

Suppose Brown's claims were true, however. Suppose the evidence showed convincingly that Jesus really was married and that He really did have children. Would this claim damage the Christian view of Jesus? Granted that Jesus did not marry; the question remains, *could* He?

In order to answer that question, we took a detour through the New Testament teachings about Jesus. There we discovered that the Jesus of the New Testament is both fully human and

fully divine, but that He is only one person. The properties of both natures (human and divine) are evident in the person, each according to its respective nature. Most theologians would agree, however, that the properties of each nature do not become evident in the other nature.

This helps Christians to understand some of the paradoxes of Jesus' personality. He was eternal according to His divine nature, yet His human nature came into existence. He was all-powerful according to His divine nature, yet He could be weary according to His human nature. He was all-wise according to His divine nature, but He could grow in wisdom according to his human nature.

How does this help to answer the questions about a married Jesus having children? Three factors are particularly relevant.

First, getting married and begetting children are human activities. Since Jesus was truly and completely human, He was certainly capable of marrying and, for that matter, of having children. This may seem surprising to those who have not thought much about the humanity of Jesus. If we think about Jesus' incarnation, however, we will also be surprised that He could be wrapped in swaddling clothes. We will be surprised that He would have to eat and sleep. Devout Christians have always stood astonished before these facts, but they have always admitted them. We ought to be surprised that Jesus Christ would be able to marry and to beget children. Our surprise, however, should not turn into denial. Jesus' full masculinity is a necessary consequence of His complete human nature.

Second, the Bible teaches that marriage, sexual relations, and having children are good and pure activities. Marriage was instituted by God Himself, before sin was in the world. Part of His original design in creation was for human beings to "be fruitful and multiply," and humans have never multiplied by sprouting in cabbage patches. Sex was part of God's perfect plan for humanity. In the beginning God made humans as male and female. In spite of all the wrong things that can be done with human sexuality, Hebrews 13:4 bluntly declares that marriage is honorable and the bed (a metaphor for sexual relations within marriage) is undefiled. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul teaches that husbands and wives owe sexual intimacy to one another. According to the Bible, human sexuality is holy and good within the marriage covenant. If Jesus had chosen to marry and to have children, He would have been doing nothing sinful *per se*. A Jesus who married and fathered children would have been morally permissible.

What would Jesus' children have been like? Would they have been half-gods? Would they have possessed miraculous powers? Would they have been sinless, or would they have needed a Savior?

A third factor helps to answer these questions. Jesus is a theanthropic person. In other words, He has a complete human nature and a complete divine nature, united into a single personality. Each nature displays its attributes in the person, but not in the other nature.

Getting married and begetting children are human activities. If Jesus had married, He would have been a husband according to His human nature. If He had begotten children, He would have been a father according to His human nature. Since the properties of the divine nature do not display themselves in the human nature, Jesus' children would not have received anything from His divine nature. They could, perhaps, be called "children of God" in the same sense that Mary can be called "mother of God," but their nature and constitution would be purely and simply human. They would not have been miraculous beings. Since they would have been born from a

purely human mother, and since they would not have received Jesus' divine nature, they would have been sinners, standing in need of salvation.

Some might find it odd to suggest that Jesus' children (if He had begotten any) would need Him to be their Savior. Is that really any more unusual, however, than the fact that His mother, Mary, needed Him to be her Savior? Yet the Bible explicitly states that she acknowledged her need of a Savior (Luke 1:47).

The conclusion seems to be inescapable. As a genuinely human being, Jesus could have married. Nothing about His deity would have made a marriage unthinkable. No moral precept would have prohibited it. A married Jesus would not be incompatible with biblical Christianity in any way.

Neither would Jesus as a parent. As a true human, Jesus could have fathered children. Parenthood would not have contradicted His deity. No moral precept would have prohibited His fatherhood. His children would have been ordinary human beings, sinners like all others, standing in need of a Savior. A Jesus who begat children would not contradict biblical Christianity in any way.

If proof could be produced tomorrow that Jesus had married and fathered children, Christians would not have to alter their view of Jesus in any important way. Such a Jesus could still possess a complete divine nature. Such a Jesus could also possess a complete human nature. Such a Jesus would still be a single person. Christianity would not change.

The realization that Jesus *could* have married and fathered children destroys the heart of Dan Brown's theory. The whole premise of *The Da Vinci Code* is that Christianity has been trying to cover up the marriage of Jesus since the time of Constantine. This cover-up was necessary (according to Brown) because a married Jesus would completely overturn New Testament Christianity. The Christian church could never afford to admit that Jesus was married or had children.

Wrong.

The only reason that Christians have never believed in a married Jesus is because they have never had a reason to do so. No one has ever presented convincing evidence that Jesus married or had children. If solid evidence could be presented that Jesus married, most Christians would recognize it. They see no reason, however, to make concessions to unsupported speculations and groundless hypotheses.

Could Jesus have married? Certainly. *Did* Jesus marry? Not a shred of plausible evidence exists to show that He did. Brown's theory fails on both counts.

This conclusion, however, raises another question that really needs to be answered. Jesus could have married, but He did not. If marriage is good, then why would Jesus choose to remain unmarried? That is the question to which we shall turn next. ✖

This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, president of Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.

Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts
Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153)
Tr. Ray Palmer (1808-1887)

Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts,
Thou Fount of life, Thou Light of men,
From the best bliss that earth imparts
We turn unfilled to Thee again.

Thy truth unchanged hath ever stood;
Thou savest those that on Thee call:
To them that seek Thee Thou art good,
To them that find Thee, all in all.

We taste Thee, O Thou living Bread,
And long to feast upon Thee still;
We drink of Thee, the Fountain-head,
And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.

Our restless spirits yearn for Thee,
Where'er our changeful lot is cast, –
Glad when Thy gracious smile we see,
Blest when our faith can hold Thee fast.

O Jesus, ever with us stay;
Make all our moments calm and bright;
Chase the dark night of sin away;
Shed o'er the world Thy holy light. ✠

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