

# ΤΩ ΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

## “In the Nick of Time”

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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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May 5, 2006

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### *The Da Vinci Code*

#### Part Nine

#### “The Mission of Jesus”

Kevin T. Bauder

Dan Brown, author of *The Da Vinci Code*, assumes that Jesus was married. He also assumes that a married Jesus is incompatible with a biblical view of Christ. We have seen that no credible evidence exists to show that Jesus ever married. We have also seen that the Jesus of the Bible *could* have married if He had wished. Brown's case is so thin that it has to be measured in angstroms.

A question remains to be answered, however. If Jesus could have married, why would He choose to remain single? A biblical understanding of Jesus provides an answer to this question.

The Jesus of the Bible was not simply a great teacher, a moral leader, or a religious example. In Jesus Christ, deity and humanity are united in one person. This joining of two natures is absolutely essential to the mission of Jesus. In His own words, that mission was “to give his life a ransom for many” (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45). He was announced as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

The apostle Paul explains the meaning of the Christian gospel by stating that “Christ died for our sins,” and that “he rose again the third day” (1 Cor 15:1-4). Jesus' death and resurrection are

news—they are events that occurred in space and time. Those events mean something, and Paul summarizes their meaning in the phrase “for our sins.”

The death of Jesus was “for our sins.” This implies that we were guilty of sin. People today have trouble taking sin seriously. To most people, the whole concept of sin is rather like a joke. God, however, takes sin very seriously. To understand why, we must grasp that God is in His very nature a moral Lawgiver and Judge.

The whole point of a lawgiver and judge is to require justice. That is exactly what God does. At best, we are not wise enough to discover all justice for ourselves. Therefore, God reveals a moral law that embodies perfect justice. Because injustice demands retribution, God as Judge stands athwart the human race, dispensing retribution for every violation of justice. This is bad news for humanity because every human being is guilty of grave injustice.

We are sometimes puzzled that God seems to make such a big thing of sin. We need to remember, however, that courts do not allow criminals to determine the gravity of their crimes. One of the effects of doing injustice is that it erodes the moral sense and robs sinners of their ability to understand how bad their deeds really are. Criminals do not get to decide their own sentences. That is why we choose judges who are not criminals to judge those who are.

We are the criminals. We are the sinners. We are the ones who have violated justice and broken God’s law. It is not for us to say how serious our sins are. It is for God to determine that. He has expressed Himself clearly: “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). God condemns us for our sins. He has to, or He Himself would become unjust.

A just judge cannot treat the guilty as if they were innocent. We know this intuitively. We recoil from judges who take bribes or who release the guilty over technicalities. We *expect* judges to judge. We *want* judges to judge. To *judge* means to assign suitable retribution for the violation of justice. Judges who will not do this become guilty of injustice themselves. They place themselves on the side and in the position of criminals.

If God is just, then He *must* judge our sins. He cannot do otherwise. If He were to neglect justice, He could no longer be the Lawgiver and Judge. He would, in effect, be willing Himself out of existence.

God condemns us for our sins—the Bible makes this clear. Nevertheless, God loves us—the Bible also makes this clear. In His justice, He has to condemn us, but in His love, He wishes to save us. The problem for God is to find a way to rescue us from guilt and to deliver us from condemnation while still upholding justice.

This is where Jesus Christ becomes central to God’s purpose. God loved us and wished to provide a substitute who could bear the penalty of our sins for us. Such a substitute had to be perfectly sinless. He had to be a human in order to bear human sin. He also had to be an infinite being who could bear the massive guilt of the entire human race. Such a being could be no less than a theanthropic person, a God-man.

By His own testimony, that is why Jesus Christ was born on earth. In the manger of Bethlehem, God became a human in order that He might bear human sin. Throughout His life and ministry, Jesus successfully resisted every inducement to sin. He always did the right thing. He was perfectly just.

Jesus Christ did not die on the cross by accident. In His death, He took our place and died our death. He paid the price for our sins. The apostle Peter writes that Jesus carried “our sins in his

own body on the tree [the cross]" (1 Pet 2:24). Paul adds that God "made him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness [justice] of God in him" (2 Cor 5:21). In other words, God charged the guilt of our sin against Jesus Christ, and Jesus accepted it freely. He paid for our sins by permitting God to condemn Him instead of condemning us.

If our sins are as bad as the Bible says, then Jesus' love for us must have been truly enormous. He already knew us when He suffered on the cross and cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46). We were in His mind. He knew that His pain was for us and that His death would provide salvation for us. He freely gave Himself up to God's condemnation in order that He might cleanse us and purify us (Eph 5:25-27).

Once Jesus had suffered the condemnation for our sins, He arose from the dead. Sin and death were now defeated enemies. When He came out of the grave, He displayed Himself to His disciples in full and radiant life. After He had encouraged them, He ascended into heaven, where He acts as High Priest and Advocate for those He has saved. He is preparing a place for them and will some day come to receive them again.

Jesus has provided the forgiveness of our sins, and He offers that forgiveness to us as a free gift. If we will repent of (change our minds about) our injustice and if we will trust Him, He will cleanse us of our sins and give us eternal life. Whoever calls upon His name will be saved (Rom 10:13).

Once we understand Jesus' purpose and mission, we are able to perceive why He did not marry. The reason is not that He was unable to marry, or that marriage is somehow less spiritual than celibacy. The reason is that His life was directed toward the cross. From the moment of His birth, His mission was to present Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. Marriage simply did not fit that purpose.

The worst part of *The Da Vinci Code* is that it misses the whole point of Jesus' life and death. Dan Brown is so caught up in theories about conspiracies and cover-ups that he offers no explanation for why we should be interested in Jesus at all. Frankly, the Jesus of *The Da Vinci Code* is a pretty bland figure. If Brown did not surround Him with intrigue, He would be simply boring.

The Jesus of the New Testament is anything but boring. He is a magnificent person in whom justice and mercy meet and make peace. He is full of power and compassion. He accomplishes His purpose in the most magnificent display of holy love that the universe has ever witnessed. The Jesus of the New Testament should attract more than mere interest. He merits our love. He has earned our trust. He deserves our worship. ✕

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.

# O Jesus, King Most Wonderful

Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153)

Tr. Edward Caswall (1814-1878)

O Jesus, King most wonderful,  
Thou Conqueror renowned,  
Thou Sweetness most ineffable,  
In whom all joys are found!

When once Thou visitest the heart,  
Then truth begins to shine,  
Then earthly vanities depart,  
Then kindles love divine.

O Jesus, Light of all below!  
Thou Fount of life and fire!  
Surpassing all the joys we know,  
And all we can desire, –

May every heart confess Thy Name,  
And ever Thee adore,  
And, seeking Thee, itself inflame  
To seek Thee more and more.

Thee may our tongues for ever bless,  
Thee may we love alone,  
And ever in our lives express  
The image of Thine own. ✠

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