

Marriage and the Coming Kingdom

Does the idea of marriage, sex, and children being in heaven bring you any hope/comfort? Is that something you would want to look forward to in eternity? I've seen some single people, those in unequally yoked marriages, divorced, childless, etc. (aka people who I would think would really want to experience those things in the next life because they couldn't in this life) are against the idea of marriage in heaven. I'm curious what you think. I know the mainstream belief is that God does away with that stuff (Matt. 22:30) but I find the common interpretation of that verse and the logic used to explain why God does away with it to be inaccurate and believe there WILL be those things in eternity, just in a perfected and sinless state.

1. The Sadducees' question is not about mutual affection and companionship of a husband/wife, but a trick question about how to fulfill a legal contract/command to produce an heir and perpetuate family lines (Duet. 25, Levirate law). Whose wife will she be, so that a male heir may be raised up in the next, since they all have died in this age without male heir? They weren't asking "is there marriage in the resurrection" because they didn't believe the resurrection was even real. They just used it as an example to try to discredit Jesus and disprove the resurrection. Their argument was: God's law is eternal → the law requires the woman to marry multiple men but also forbids marriage to multiple men while all are still living. Not marrying any of them would mean disobeying the law. → A resurrection would force this woman to sin thus the resurrection can't be true. They could have asked about Jacob or any of the patriarchs who had multiple spouses but they didn't because men having multiple wives was technically allowed under the law.
2. Jesus says that won't be a problem because we will be like the angels. Luke 20:36 clarifies that the specific comparison to us being like the angels is that we do not die like the angels. It ties into the general discussion of the afterlife because immortality assumes existence. Nonentities can't be immortal and the Sadducees also denied angels being real (Acts 23:8) so this is likely Jesus taking another swipe at them. The audience must have appreciated the irony of Jesus choosing to use angels as an example here. No death = no need to marry to produce heirs, worry about inheritance rights, etc. Our new immortality makes this law null and void. But marriage was never predicated on death. It was created first and foremost for companionship (it's not good that man should be alone) and existed before death. What does not dying have to do with a man and woman becoming one? Levirate law however is based entirely on death. So romantic love, marriage and procreation for reasons unrelated to Levirate law are separate issues and not addressed here. Angels were never given marriage as far as we know, but God created marriage as an original, good feature of humanity. Even though angels don't marry, that doesn't automatically mean that humans won't marry because we don't die like them. Based on other scripture and everyday knowledge there are obviously many other reasons for marriage, sex, and children, besides just being some utilitarian act of propagating the species and replacing grandpa when he dies. God didn't create marriage just to fill slots on a roster. Also if not dying is enough to get rid of everything associated with marriage then it implies that marriage is primarily a result of the fall. Besides not dying Jesus gave no other reason for why there's "no marriage in heaven".
3. Jesus never said there's no marriage or married people in heaven, but specifically said there's no marrying (gameo) and giving in marriage (gamiskontai, only women are given). Two present verbs used to describe the act/process of getting married, not necessarily the state of being married. This + the fuller context of the situation further implies that Jesus is answering only in terms of the Sadducees limited question about a type of arranged marriage with legal terms and conditions that are not applicable in Heaven.
4. Jesus never did answer who she would marry but why would he? It was a trick question and he didn't take the bait. God has the wisdom and power (Luke 20:29) to sort out these complicated situations but explaining this would miss the point of the conversation. Jesus' goal here was to prove the Sadducees wrong and show that the resurrection (the main subject of the conversation and the error that gave rise to their original question) is true.

Jesus wouldn't take this opportunity to teach on the specifics of marriage in heaven because the Sadducees wouldn't believe any of it if they didn't think the resurrection was real and they wouldn't even listen since they showed up just to heckle Jesus. Its like trying to explain evidence that God is real to an angry atheist who's yelling and insulting you and is clearly not interested in having an actual discussion

So we see that the only verse that directly addresses the topic of marriage in heaven is not actually saying there's no marriage. That's 95% of the evidence for no marriage in heaven out the window. As of now I don't know any other passage that explicitly states there's no marriage and procreation after the resurrection. We do know for sure that there are verses about childbirth in the Millennium and many assume this is only for the mortal survivors of the day of the Lord. However if Matthew 22:30 isn't saying what we think it does then we can't exclude resurrected saints from marriage and children. Why would sinful mortal people be blessed with a privilege and gift (made even better by living on a near perfect Earth with healthier bodies; better than any of us in this age could have) that resurrected saints won't have? Why would our glorified minds/bodies be less capable than our old bodies since we no longer have the ability to have children and give/experience eros type love? Why would God create us with a good desire for those things and then take back those desires for no reason? Erase it from our minds like a forced lobotomy essentially. Given what the Bible already says about marriage, sex, children, eternity, etc. if we really think through the implications of what it would mean for God to erase human sexuality it raises a lot of logical contradictions. Arguments like "no death = no need for procreation", "being with God will be so great we won't care about those things anymore", etc. are easily argued against. Its more logical to assume marriage, sex, and procreation will continue on into eternity but in a transformed, glorified, and sinless state then to assume God will abolish all that. Why is marriage and sex the only aspect of creation God won't redeem when he comes back? Has Satan corrupted them beyond the point of redemption?

The real reasons in my opinion people think there will be no sex in heaven is the church's gnostic/anti-sex teaching that sex is too "carnal" (aka not spiritual enough)/dirty/sinful to be in heaven, ascetic tendencies that equate seeking pleasure in heaven as idolatry, personal biases about marriage and sex based on our past, and not wanting to sound like a Muslim or Mormon, amongst other reasons. I'm confused on how any Christian with a healthy view of marriage/sex/children, who understands all the passions/joys associated with those things, who knows that God speaks highly of them, who knows how much Satan wants to corrupt them, and the potential of what sinless marriage/sex/childbirth can be, can see God doing away with those things in the restored creation as something good to look forward to. If it really is that good then we should be telling people about it more. Tell couples during premarital counseling, mention it at marriage conferences, tell a widow, single people/childless couples, divorced, unequally yoked marriages, disabled/disfigured people, etc. to take comfort in this idea. The idea that some of the greatest relationships and passions we can know in this life aren't good enough to be in the next life seriously hinders people from having hope in and looking forward to the coming Kingdom.

Heaven is the ideal, goal state of humanity. What we strive for. No marriage in heaven implies that marriage is really not needed for human joy/fulfillment (even though God said in the beginning it's not good for Adam to be alone and created marriage to fix that problem...). It implies that it's just a temporary band-aid fix because we sin and die. It's just a means to an end and has no real intrinsic significance since God sees fit to remove it. It implies that the world is ultimately better off without marriage, sex, and children and that just doesn't sit right with me.