

Perfect Relationships: Marriage

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 7:29–34; 1 Peter 3:7

Code: B130708

The following blog post was originally published in June, 2013. —ed.

The question of relationships in heaven is one of the major issues Christians wonder about. Will we recognize our loved ones? Will we remember our earthly relationships? What kind of relationships will we have? Will we have family love and fellowship in heaven? Will our relationships in heaven be anything like they are here?

The question I'm most often asked about heaven is, "*Will I be married to the same spouse in heaven?*" Most are saying, "I don't want to lose my relationship with my wife; I can't imagine going to heaven and not being married to her." (Others, however, may be secretly hoping for a different answer!)

Scripture speaks specifically to many of these questions. On the issue of marriage and family, for example, Paul said:

This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form [Greek word *schema*] of this world is passing away. (1 Corinthians 7:29–31)

The apostle lists several of the things that are passing away: marriage, weeping, earthly rejoicing, and ownership. All the *schema* of the world is passing away. *Schema* refers to fashion, manner of life, and a way of doing things.

Paul was saying we should take what this life brings, yet keep from being engulfed in it, because many of the distinctive features of ownership and partnership in this world are part of a *schema* that is temporary. Although the privileges of marriage are wonderful and its responsibilities enormous, don't allow your marriage to become an excuse for failure to serve God, to put treasure in heaven, or to set your affections on things above.

Paul is not questioning the legitimacy of these earthly blessings such as marriage, normal human emotions, and earthly ownership. But he is saying that we must never allow our emotions and possessions to control us so that we become entangled by this passing world.

Marriage and other business of this life can sometimes intrude on more important matters of eternal concern. Paul writes, "I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided" (1 Corinthians 7:32–34). So if you can remain single, do. Concentrate on the things of the Lord, because marriage is only a temporary provision.

If you're already married, however, this does not mean you should become indifferent to your marriage. Scripture elevates the importance of marriage and commands husbands and wives to seek to honor God through the marriage relationship. This passage simply underscores the temporal nature of marriage. While married couples are heirs together of the grace of *this* life (1 Peter 3:7), the institution of marriage is passing away. There are higher eternal values.

Jesus Himself expressly taught that marriage is an earthly union only. Matthew 22 records an incident when some Sadducees tried to trick Him. The Sadducees did not believe in the afterlife. They had a running dispute with the Pharisees about this very issue. The Pharisees taught that after the resurrection each person would have the same relationships he has here. They believed men would remain married to their earthly wives and retain their earthly families forever.

The Sadducees had undoubtedly heard Jesus speak of eternal life, and they no doubt assumed He shared the Pharisees' views on these questions. So they tried to trap Him with a theological braintwister that utterly perplexed the Pharisees. It was the most difficult theological conundrum the Sadducees could conceive—an absurd moral dilemma based on the Pharisees' view of the afterlife.

They said, "Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother'" (Matthew 22:24). That was indeed a Mosaic principle taught in Deuteronomy 25. It was known as the law of levirate marriage, designed to protect a family's line of inheritance.

The Sadducees presented a hypothetical scenario:

Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother. So too the second and third, down to the seventh. After them all, the woman died. In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her." (Matthew 22:25–28)

Jesus' reply was a sharp rebuke for their ignorance of the Scriptures: "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven" (Matthew 22:29–30).

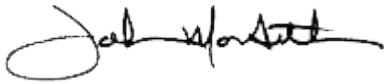
In other words, angels don't procreate. Neither will redeemed humans in heaven. All the reasons for marriage will be gone. Here on earth man needs a helper, woman needs a protector, and God has designed both to produce children. In heaven, glorified men will no longer require wives as helpers because they will be perfect. Women will no longer need husbands as protectors because they will be perfect. The population of heaven will be a fixed number. Thus marriage as an institution will be utterly unnecessary.

Some believe Jesus' reply to the Sadducees means we will all become genderless creatures in heaven. But that is not a necessary conclusion from what Jesus actually said. Nor does Scripture elsewhere picture the redeemed in heaven as without gender. Certainly the resurrected body of Christ does not appear to have been turned into an androgynous figure. When Mary saw Him after the resurrection, she supposed that He was the gardener—a man's occupation in that culture (John 20:15). Others recognized Him for who He was. Our gender is part of who we are. Nothing in

Scripture suggests that men will cease to be men or that women will cease to be women. But there will be no marrying or giving in marriage. Marriage as an institution will pass away.

But what are those of us who are happily married supposed to think of this? I love my wife. She's my best friend and my dearest companion in every area of life. If those are your thoughts about your spouse as well, don't despair! You will enjoy an eternal companionship in heaven that is more perfect than any earthly partnership. The difference is that you will have such a perfect relationship with every

other person in heaven as well. If having a deep relationship with your spouse here is so wonderful, imagine how glorious it will be to enjoy a perfect relationship with every human in the whole expanse of heaven—forever!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John MacArthur". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

(Adapted from [*The Glory of Heaven*](#); all Scripture references are taken from the ESV unless otherwise noted.)

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2024 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).