

Series: Mark

Title: Marriage Counseling with Jesus

Text: Mark 12:25

Date: March 7, 2021

Verse 25

In verse 25, Jesus corrected the Sadducee's cherished beliefs by giving direct revelation from God about the subject at hand. He said, "For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels in heaven" (Mark 12:25). What did Jesus mean when He spoke of people being "like angels" in the afterlife? One should not take His words as teaching that Christians become angels when they die. The angelic realm is a completely different class of beings. Humankind is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) and the Bible reveals the distinction between humans and angels will remain in the afterlife (Revelation 4:4-6). It seems Jesus' words were intended to point to the asexual nature of angels. Because they did not have gender, they did not procreate. In the eternal state, humans will not be married, because there will no need to reproduce.

First-century Pharisees believed there would be marriage in the afterlife. In modern times, both Islam and Mormonism hold to a similar belief, though their teachings concerning the matter are different. Through His response, Jesus showed that He agreed with neither the Sadducees or Pharisees. God's truth cannot be relegated to the religious or political camps of humankind. It never takes sides; it takes over.

Jesus' teaching in our verse is difficult for many to accept. Those who are happily married shudder at the idea of being separated from their spouses for all of eternity? Did Jesus really mean to say there will be no marriage on the New Earth? Though our Lord's words may be hard to hear, it helps if we consider His intent. Throughout Mark's gospel, He aimed to demonstrate that one's relationship with the Lord should have greater priority than one's relationship with family. Remember His words back in chapter 3. Looking at His disciples, He said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:34-35). In Christ's kingdom, family matters always take a backset to kingdom matters. Jesus also emphasized this reality in Mark 10:29-30. It helps if we consider these things. Jesus' denial of marriage in the afterlife is more tolerable when we understand that His kingdom has greater weight than the family.

It is also easier to accept our Lord's teaching in verse 25 when we consider marriage according to His original intent. At the beginning of time, He created the covenant because the first man needed a companion and helper (Genesis 2:18).

According to the book of Revelation, when the Lord makes all things new (Revelation 21:5), marriage between man and woman will no longer be needed. This will be true for several reasons. First, since life in the afterlife will be unending, there will be no need for reproduction. No one will die, so the necessity of procreation will obsolete.¹ This idea was mentioned earlier in our discussion concerning angels. Second, humankind will no longer need the assistance and companionship marriage provides. In the New Heaven and the New Earth, all of the redeemed will enjoy unbridled intimacy with the Lord (Revelation 21:3-4). Third, marriage will not be needed because it's purpose of representing the gospel to a lost world will go away. According to Ephesians 5:24-33, a part of the Lord's intent in creating marriage was to provide a picture of His love for the church. The bride and groom metaphor was intended to display His sacrificial and unconditional love for His people. It was meant to convey the way in which we are to respect the Lord's leadership, respond to His love, and follow Him reverently. However, earthly marriage was also intended as a preview of the type of marriage that will exist in the eternal state. When Christ makes all things new, God's people will be His bride and He will be their groom (Revelation 19:6-10). For all of these aforementioned reasons, marriage between a man and woman will no longer be needed in the hereafter.

The Bible truths I have shared may still not fully satisfy the heart that longs for the companionship of marriage in the eternal state. I myself still struggle with the thought that I will one day not be married to my wife. Faith can help us in this regard. We must trust that the Lord will withhold no good thing from those who love Him (Psalm 84:11). We must have the confidence that pleasure and perfection of Paradise will outweigh any emptiness that could come from a lack of earthly marriage.

Jesus' pronouncement teaches us that, though marriage is great, something far greater than marriage awaits us in the New Heaven and New Earth. Jesus' teaching also reveals that, although marriage can be very difficult, and though many carry deep wounds because of failures in marriage, there is coming a day in which all of those things will be made right. Ultimately, marriage is not the thing to which we should look for ultimate fulfillment. Our hope comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth (Psalm 121:2).

Ultimately, Jesus' teaching reveals why so many marriages fail nowadays. Even amongst professing Christians, so many look to marriage to be the solvent for all their struggles, the solution for all of life's problems. Many look to a partner for fulfillment, when fulfillment can only come from God. If we learn to find our worth in Jesus, we will have more patience and acceptance toward our spouses. If

¹ Schnabel, 298.

we are looking to them for sufficiency and satisfaction, if we expect them to fill the holes in our hearts that only God can fill, our marriages will be doomed for frustration and failure. On the contrary, marriages can thrive when we have an eternal perspective! When we first allow Jesus to meet our needs, we will have a better frame of mind for our marriage covenant.