

## **“They Will Be Like Angels.” Paradise Without Marriage?**

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### **Abstract**

This article deals with Jesus’ statement that “in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” (Matt 22:30; Mark 12:25; cf. Luke 20:34-36) and a possible biblical rationale for the abolishment of this originally Edenic institution in the new paradise.

### **The Problem**

There is a word of Jesus that is, on the one hand, apparently very clear, but on the other it stimulates wide-ranging speculations about its meaning and sense. A possible, reasonable rationale is not found yet, not even suggested. This “apple of discord” in rather personal discussions, less in scientific investigations, is the statement that “in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” (Matt 22:30; Mark 12:25; cf. Luke 20:34-36).

The Scriptures testify of God’s high marriage ideal, employing this very intimate and personal relationship even to compare a Christian’s (or the church’s) relation to God.<sup>1</sup> This Edenic ideal of the most personal human relationship is strongly protected by other instructions of Jesus

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 6:16f.; Eph 5:31f.; note also the OT marriage metaphors between Yahweh and Israel (e.g. Isa 54; 62:4f.; Jer 31:31f.; Ezek 16:8).

and his apostles.<sup>2</sup> Jesus himself points back to paradise in order to confirm his strict view on divorce (cf. Matt 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-9), thus stressing the Edenic pattern as still being valid and demanded in this world. It is still God who cares about marriage and the faithfulness of both spouses. He still desires to see his blessed idea of an intimate human partnership come true. So why should it be abandoned in the future?

The concept expressed by Jesus was rather exceptional, only rarely known in ancient Jewish (post-canonical) literature.<sup>3</sup> It is apparent that this was no widespread opinion in Jesus' time and thus, consequently, important questions about its background, the concrete meaning, or a rationale for this statement remain. It does not present even a speculative hint at possible reasons for God's decision to abandon marriage.

Modern scholarly research about these verses is quite uniform and consists mainly of linguistic, stylistic, and synoptic investigations—rather seldom one finds a broader dealing with its conceptual content. If so, it usually tends to emphasize the “newness” or “difference” of the conditions in the new world and its close connection to the remarks of Paul in 1 Cor 7:29-35 (on Christian marriage); 15:35-54 (on resurrection), and Gal 3:28 (on the abolition of gender differences). Once it is accepted that Jesus indeed speaks about conditions of the life in the world to come (that means: after the resurrection of the righteous), it is usually also admitted that there will be a change concerning marriage, sexuality, and procreation—it will be abolished. It is

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. e.g. Matt 5:32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor 7; Eph 5:22-33; 1 Thess 4:3-4; Heb 13:4; and many more.

<sup>3</sup> See *Midr. Ps.* 146:4 (286a) and *b. Ber.* 17a (both explaining the abolition of sexual intercourse with the future presence of God in the Shekhina); further *Jalq.* 1:111 (without any explanation for the suspension of marriage and procreation). For a general discussion see Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 4th ed. ed., 6 vols. (München: Beck, 1965), 1:888-891. It remains unclear about which time these rabbinic texts speak. It is possible that the “future world” rather deals with the time of the Messiah, the Jews' return from the exile, or with the supposed conditions of the righteous souls right *before* the resurrection. The majority of ancient and medieval rabbis taught that there will be sexuality even in the new world. For a more general and broader investigation of the ancient Jewish perceptions on the pivotal Edenic marriage ideal (including Philo, Josephus, the Qumran scrolls, and post-canonical Jewish literature) see René Gehring, *The Biblical “One Flesh” Theology of Marriage as Constituted in Genesis 2:24* (Eugene, OR: Wipf&Stock, 2013), 164-187.

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conspicuous, however, that inquiries about the reason(s) for that great modification in the new life are missing.<sup>4</sup> The widest step is to recognize a connection between the final overcoming of death and the procreative (life-giving) aspects of marriage which might, then, not be needed anymore.<sup>5</sup>

For Seventh-day Adventists it is further meaningful what Ellen G. White said about this instance, particularly since her interpretation is very concrete and clear:

There are men today who express their belief that there will be marriages and births in the new earth, but those who believe the Scriptures cannot accept such doctrines. The doctrine that children will be born in the new earth is not a part of the "sure word of prophecy." The words of Christ are too plain to be misunderstood.

They should forever settle the question of marriages and births in the new earth. Neither those who shall be raised from the dead, nor those who shall be translated without seeing death, will marry or be given in marriage. They will be as the angels of God, members of the royal family.

I would say to those who hold views contrary to this plain declaration of Christ, upon such matters silence is eloquence. It is presumption to indulge in suppositions and theories regarding matters that God has not made known to us in His Word. We need not enter into speculation regarding our future state. [...] Christ withheld no truths essential to our salvation. Those things that are revealed are for us and our children, but we are not to allow our imagination to frame doctrines concerning things not revealed.

The Lord has made every provision for our happiness in the future life, but He has made no revelations regarding these plans, and we are not to speculate concerning them. Neither are we to measure the conditions of the future life by the conditions of this life.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The attempt of Gerhard Maier, *Matthäus-Evangelium*. Edition C- Bibelkommentar, vol. 2 (Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänssler, 1995), 223f. is not really helpful, since he overlooks the early hint at procreation even in Gen 1:28 by turning to Gen 4:1 as the first event of giving birth, thus claiming that Jesus held sexuality and procreation to be a part of the sinful post-Fall world, which will, consequently, be overcome in the resurrection.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. Adolf Pohl, *Das Evangelium des Markus*. Wuppertaler Studienbibel. Ergänzungsband (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 1986), 441.

<sup>6</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 3 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1958/1980), 1:172f. Cf. Ms 28 (1904); Ellen G. White, *Medical Ministry* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1932 / 1963 / 2002), 99f.; Ellen G. White, *The Faith*

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Every conceivable fanciful and deceptive doctrine will be presented by men who think that they have the truth. Some are now teaching that children will be born in the new earth. Is this present truth? Who has inspired these men to present such a theory? Did the Lord give anyone such views?—No; those things which are revealed are for us and our children, but upon subjects not revealed, and having nought to do with our salvation, silence is eloquence. These strange ideas should not even be mentioned, much less taught as essential truths.<sup>7</sup>

The meaning of Jesus' saying in Matt 22:30 (the same in Mark 12:25) and Luke 20:34-36 is unambiguous, just as Ellen White's comments. Where Scripture is silent, we should not be eloquent. So what we have is simply that there will not be marriage anymore in the new world. There are no hints at what the conditions regarding personal relationships in the new earth will be like.

Once this is accepted, a more interesting and significant question arises and at times results in various speculations: What might be the reason for this (widely puzzling) suspension of marriage in the world to come? Marriage was part of the sinless pre-Fall world (Gen 1:26f.; 2:24), the first paradise—why, then, should it no more be a part of “human” life in the newly established, sinless world that's soon to come, the second paradise? If the borders between sinless conditions (Eden) and sinful circumstances (this world) were once crossed with marriage untouched—then why not again between a sinful state (this world) and reestablished sinlessness (the new world)? When this world with its perilous seductions and negative results of sin (Satan's reign and its ultimate result: death) ends (1 Cor 15:26; Rev 20:10.14), leading into the world's (and heaven's) greatest wedding feast (Rev 21:3f.)—what at all does this have to do with human marriage? Why could that lead to an abolition of this great Edenic institution so closely linked to biblical anthropology and, by its comparative features, even to the plan of

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*I Live By* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1958/1973), 366; Ellen G. White, *Maranatha. The Lord is Coming* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1976), 369; Ellen G. White, *Heaven* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2003), 140.

<sup>7</sup> White, *Selected Messages*, 2:25f.; cf. Ellen G. White, “Present Truth,” *The Southern Watchman* (1904, April 5): § 2.

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redemption (cf. esp. Eph 5:22-32)? Could it be that marriage has much more to do with redemption than usually acknowledged and would thus be linked to the finalization of this divine plan amid the final, ultimate wedding feast at the beginning of the new era under the reestablished reign of Christ?

It seems that there are a few hints in the Scriptures, so we may try to get some answers on these questions. Starting with an investigation of the permanent, unalterable character of marriage in the New Testament, we will come to a fresh look at important "redemptive" features of marriage, concluding with a possible, Scripture-based rationale for Christ's statement against marriage in the new world. While we cannot (or should not) conjecture about the conditions of this future world, there are at least some hints in Scripture that allow to illuminate the reasons for the future change. And, in Ellen White's words, where Scripture speaks, we may be eloquent.

**Alterable or Permanent Pattern?**

This first section of the investigation intends to answer two basic questions: (1) Is the statement of Jesus linked to other NT texts dealing with possible modifications of marriage in the Christian era, within the time of the end, or the world to come? (2) Are there any real, substantial hints at all pointing to modifications of the original, Edenic marriage ideal?

At first, it is important to note, as aforementioned, that Jesus himself reconfirms the Edenic marriage ideal by citing Gen 1:27 and 2:24, while refusing any debate with the Pharisees about Moses' instruction in Deut 24:1-4—which was certainly foremost meant to check the spread of unholy divorce customs, which Jesus sums up by the expression *σκληροκαρδία*—"hardness of heart" in Matt 19:8 and Mark 10:5). He points backwards to the original, Edenic pattern: one man, one woman, becoming one flesh, henceforth being bound for life. While this ideal evidently still prevails, there are, nevertheless, some instances speaking about (suspected) changes.

**"Those who have wives should be as though they had none."** The main passage about a "new" attitude towards marriage is presented by Paul in 1 Cor 7:

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But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none; [...] and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away (1 Cor 7:29-31).

The context of the whole chapter clarifies that Paul intends to present instructions on attitudes, not on concrete behavior. Those who are married should, of course, still behave as if married (vv.1-16), everyone according to his own calling (vv.17-24), one should not divorce or suspend marital intercourse. Yet it seems that Paul still tries to prove his maxim of vv.1.8.40 (namely: that it is better to be unmarried) true even for those who are already married: While they should not give up marital life (especially concerning sexuality: vv.2-5), he apparently recognizes the necessity to explain the actual core of his reservations against marriage—after all it is against the meaningful divine statement, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him” (Gen 2:18). So Paul elaborates:

But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is seemly, and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord. (1 Cor 7:32-35)

It is obvious from numerous other instances in the letters of Paul that he is a very practical theologian, always considering the practical results of his teachings, speaking “with the voice of the deeply caring pastor.”<sup>8</sup> Especially in this most practical chapter on marriage and sexuality he is permanently concerned about the consequences the Corinthians may derive from his exposition (cf. vv.6-9.15f.26-28.35f.). He is afraid of marriages being dissolved for the purpose of better serving the Lord. The

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<sup>8</sup> Quotation from James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998), 698.

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result is the reduction of his practical counsels to remain unmarried by elucidating that his actual (single) concern is to secure "undistracted devotion to the Lord" (v.35). Marriage is not per se inferior to singleness—but it will be if this distraction is the result. Paul deals with priorities, not with general and absolute ideals.

Jesus seems to hint at the same general thrust by his "afterword" about marriage in Matt 19:12 ("There are eunuchs [i.e. presumably: unmarried] who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven."). But this has not to do with marriage itself, not even with some future modification to better fit the requirements of the perilous times immediately before Christ's return. We should consider that persecutions harassing Christians were already present in Paul's own times and that the NT Christian church was convinced they lived within the last time of this world's history. So there was no need of pointing to some future changes concerning the basic marriage pattern; all preparations to meet the returning Jesus would have to be performed right away during the times of the apostles. Yet, marriage was not abolished or somehow altered—just the greater distress waiting for those who would be married is emphasized.

**"Not Male and Female."** There are no further instances within the entire New Testament that could be understood as altering the principles or basic theology of marriage. But could it be that at least some modification concerning the different genders is already observable, hinting at some present or future change(s) of marriage? There is one text that is at times used to support such claims: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3:28)

Although this verse is not dealing with a future, heavenly setting, but with the realities of the Christian churches in Paul's days, and the liberation through faith in Christ, there might be a tiny hint pointing to the abrogation of gender and any other cause of discriminating between "social statuses" even in the world to come: "Once it is recognized that Galatians 3:28c is a citation of Genesis 1:27c the implication is that Paul [...] envisions that the creation ordinance which differentiates and separates humanity on the basis of sex has been negated in Christ."<sup>9</sup> Gal

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<sup>9</sup> Wayne Litke, "Beyond Creation: Galatians 3:28, Genesis and the Hermaphrodite Myth," *Studies in Religion* 24, no. 2 (1995): 178.

3:28c (“there is not male and female:” οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ) indeed echoes Gen 1:27c and might even be a quotation of the Greek Septuagint reading “male and female” (ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ).<sup>10</sup> To assume that Paul really intended to go beyond that creation ordinance, reasoned solely by the reoccurrence of this short phrase (ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ), however, is too vague to draw profound conclusions.

These three words further appear in context of another story: the Flood account (Gen 6:19f.; 7:2f. (twice in each verse); 7:9.16). Comparing the number of instances, the Flood story is clearly outnumbering the references to creation as given in Gen 1:27; 5:2; Matt 19:4; Mark 10:6 by eight to four. That makes the implied hint to Gen 1:27 even more unlikely. However, in either way the common feature of the texts is the implied power (even necessity) to procreate in order to fill an empty earth. It seems clear that Paul does not “transcend the Law itself and thereby even the order of creation”<sup>11</sup> by means of abrogating any social difference (see the complete verse Gal 3:28), even between man and woman. This is no contradiction to any creation ordinance, for hierarchy was not introduced until sin entered the world in Gen 3.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The LXX text according to Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Hanhart, *Septuaginta*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 2. Cf. for reasons supporting the assumption of a LXX quotation: Krister Stendahl, *The Bible and the Role of Women. A Case Study in Hermeneutics*, ed. John Reumann, trans. Emilie T. Sander. Biblical Series (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1966), 32; Litke, “Beyond Creation,” 174-176.

<sup>11</sup> Stendahl, *Role of Women*, 34.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Gen 2:18 with 3:16.20: Eve is named by (and thus subordinated to) Adam only after the Fall. On the subject of equality in Gen 2 see e.g.: Phyllis Trible, “Eve and Adam. Genesis 2-3 Reread,” *Andover Newton Quarterly* 13 (1972-1973): 251f.; republished in Kristen E. Kvam, Valerie H. Ziegler, and Linda S. Schearing, *Eve and Adam. Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 432; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15. Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, TX: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 68; Michael L. Rosenzweig, “A Helper Equal to Him,” *Judaism* 139 (1986): 277-280; Richard M. Davidson, “The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning: Genesis 1-2,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 26 (1988): 15; cf. Walter Brueggemann, “Of the Same Flesh and Bone (Gn 2:23a),” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (1970): 541f.; Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988), 85; Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality. Overtures to Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1978), 97-101; Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 2 vols. The New American Commentary, vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 213; Walter Kirchschräger, *Ehe und Ehescheidung im Neuen Testament. Überlegungen und Anfragen zur Praxis der Kirche*

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Thus, to the contrary, it rather is a restoration of the creation ideal even in the case of equality, and it is by no means a "conflict"<sup>13</sup> with any divinely commanded status.

The Christian church in this world, as the instrument to reflect God's divine image (Gen 1:26f.; cf. Eph 5:22-33), consequently, is the first institution to return to this creation ideal of basic gender equality, thus even more widely recreating the original character of Gen 2:24 and the intents of God for marriage in its twofold significance (literal: husband/wife; spiritual: Christ/church). The practical instructions concerning hierarchy given e.g. in Eph 5:21-33, Col 3:18, and 1 Pet 3:1 do not interfere with this perception, since Paul evidently deals with given (secular) conditions, applying them in a Christian way, without calling them perfect or unalterable. This is supported, for instance, by the instructive statements about slavery (which is also mentioned in Gal 3:28 as being void!), which, of course, is no ideal institution for humanity (see 1 Cor 7:21-23). Considering hierarchy as a necessary instrument to guarantee order in a sinful world,<sup>14</sup> Gal 3:28 may point to a time when this provisional and certainly imperfect "tool" will be extinct.<sup>15</sup>

These different aspects are an important background to explore the saying of Jesus. We find: (1) Marriage is basically not altered in the NT; (2) yet a new dimension about the perils for Christians is emphasized; and at least (3) an ambition to restore the Edenic status concerning

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(Wien: Herold, 1987), 43; William F. Luck, *Divorce and Remarriage. Recovering the Biblical View* (San Francisco et al.: Harper & Row, 1987), 26f. On the act of "naming" (in Gen 3:20) as exercising authority (and thus establishing hierarchy) cf. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 70; Angelo Tosato, "On Genesis 2:24," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52 (1990): 390f.390/fn.4; Jacque B. Doukhan, "The Literary Structure of the Genesis Creation Story" (Doctoral Dissertation, Andrews University, 1978), 44/fn.2; Herbert Marks, "Biblical Naming and Poetic Etymology," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114 (1995): passim; Jerome Gellman, "Gender and Sexuality in the Garden of Eden," *Theology & Sexuality* 12, no. 3 (2006): 331; Tribble, *Sexuality*, 97.99f.; John K. Tarwater, *Marriage as Covenant. Considering God's Design at Creation and the Contemporary Moral Consequences* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2006), 44.65.

<sup>13</sup> Thus Stendahl, *Role of Women*, 34.

<sup>14</sup> See on this idea Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Review and Herald: Washington, D.C., 1890/1958), 58f.

<sup>15</sup> For a connection of Gal 3:28 even with the passage of 1 Cor 7 (esp. vv.17-24) see further Gillian Beattie, *Women and Marriage in Paul and his Early Interpreters* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 30f.

gender equality is witnessed—although (as particularly Eph 5:22, Col 3:18 or 1 Pet 3:1 indicate) evidently not yet implemented in this world, but most likely coming true in the future world of Edenic restoration.

### Text, Translation, and First Hints

The Greek text in Matt 22:30 and Mark 12:25 is solid. Only the following variant readings are possible, but unlikely and without altering content and meaning:<sup>16</sup>

**Matt 22:30:** ἐν γὰρ τῇ ἀναστάσει οὔτε γαμοῦσιν οὔτε γαμίζονται (ἐκγαμίζονται / γαμίσκονται), ἀλλ' ὡς (οἱ) ἄγγελοι ((τοῦ) θεοῦ) ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ (τοῖς οὐρανοῖς) εἰσιν.

**Transl.:** For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage (...)<sup>17</sup>, but are like (the) angels (of (the) God) in heaven (/the heavens).

**Mark 12:25:** ὅταν γὰρ ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῶσιν οὔτε γαμοῦσιν οὔτε γαμίζονται, ἀλλ' εἰσιν ὡς ἄγγελοι ((οἱ) ἄγγελοι οἱ / ἄγγελοι θεοῦ οἱ) ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

**Transl.:** For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like (the) angels (of God)<sup>18</sup> in the heavens.

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<sup>16</sup> The variants are so small and insignificant that there is only one short note in Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament. A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 1994), 48, concerning Matt 22:30: “While the evidence for ἄγγελοι is limited in extent, it nevertheless includes the leading representatives of the Alexandrian and the Western types of text. The addition of τοῦ θεοῦ is a natural expansion, which, if present in the text originally, would not have been likely to be omitted.” Since there are no real textual challenges, the alternate readings above are only mentioned within round brackets, without any further discussion about the different traditions and probabilities. The common reading according to NA<sup>27</sup> is certainly to be preferred, the variants do not change the meaning.

<sup>17</sup> The variants express the same meaning as the usual reading of γαμίζονται: “They are given in marriage” (indicative present passive 3rd person plural from γαμίζω, ἐκγαμίζω, or γαμίσκω).

<sup>18</sup> The οἱ before ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς emphasizes their connection with “the heavens” and is almost untranslatable, to be read perhaps as: “[...] like *those* angels in the heavens [as different from others].”

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The more interesting text is presented in Luke 20:34-36, offering more information about Jesus’ remark:

**Luke 20:34-36:** καὶ (ἀποκριθεὶς) εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου (γεννῶνται καὶ γεννῶσιν) γαμοῦσιν καὶ γαμίσκονται (ἐκγαμίσκονται), οἱ δὲ καταξιοθέντες τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐκείνου τυχεῖν καὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως τῆς ἐκ νεκρῶν οὔτε γαμοῦσιν οὔτε γαμίζονται (γαμίσκονται)· οὐδὲ (οὔτε / οὐ) γὰρ ἀποθανεῖν ἔτι (μέλλουσιν) δύνανται, ἰσάγγελοι γὰρ εἰσιν καὶ υἱοὶ εἰσιν (τοῦ) θεοῦ (τῷ θεῷ) τῆς ἀναστάσεως υἱοὶ ὄντες.

**Transl.:** And (answering) Jesus said to them: The sons of this age (are begotten and beget,) marry and are given in marriage (...) <sup>19</sup>, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage (...) <sup>20</sup>; for they cannot even (...) <sup>21</sup> die anymore (/they will not die anymore), because they are like angels, and are sons of (the) God (/for God), being sons of the resurrection.

While there are no variants that would alter the meaning of Jesus’ saying, the insertion *γεννῶνται καὶ γεννῶσιν* is interesting, since it emphasizes not only the cessation of marriage, but also the end of procreation. However, it seems natural and should certainly be expected that procreation will cease once the institution of marriage is abolished. Further, “instead of saying flatly, ‘they cannot die anymore,’ several witnesses (chiefly Western) soften the statement by using *μέλλουσιν* (‘they will not die anymore’).” <sup>22</sup>

The central expression in Jesus’ saying is the Greek comparative adjective *ισάγγελοι* resp. the expression *ὡς ἄγγελοι*—“like angels.” Unfortunately Jesus does not clarify in detail what he means by this comparison, and the bible is rather silent about the angels’ nature. What we know from Scripture as rather general characteristics is their ability to change appearance, not being bound to matter, being able to appear

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<sup>19</sup> Just as in Matt 22:30 above, there is no difference between *γαμίσκονται* and *ἐκγαμίσκονται*.

<sup>20</sup> Again, just like the variants in Matt 22:30 above, there is no difference between *γαμίζονται* and *γαμίσκονται*.

<sup>21</sup> Again, the variant readings (οὔτε or οὐ instead of οὐδὲ) are just synonyms.

<sup>22</sup> Metzger, *The Greek NT*, 146.

and disappear suddenly, to fly, being superhumanly strong, fast, and intelligent. The only hints we further get about our bodies as “sons of the resurrection” (τῆς ἀναστάσεως υἱοὶ; Luke 20:36) point to a “powerful” (ἐν δυνάμει), “imperishable” (ἐν ἀφθαρσίᾳ), “spiritual” (πνευματικόν) body, being a “human from/ (out) of heaven” (ἄνθρωπος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ; see all 1 Cor 15:42-49). These “angelic” characteristics seem to be what Jesus focuses on; particularly the new state of imperishability, for he solely emphasizes the fact that “they cannot even (/will not) die anymore.”<sup>23</sup> Significantly, the fact that they “cannot/will not die anymore”<sup>24</sup> is the rationale of his entire argument, and thus necessarily represents the key to discover the theological connection to the cease of marriage in heaven resp. the new earth.

It should be noted that the death spoken of by Jesus and Paul, which the resurrected will not be able to suffer anymore, is the so-called “second death” (δεύτερος θάνατος; cf. Rev 20:6.14; 21:8), the death of the unrighteous. The first death actually was part of the experience of most of the redeemed and does, of course, not exist anymore now that the decisions for or against eternal life are past. While death in general is a result of sin (Rom 6:23), it is confined to the age of this earth’s sinful history. The first, temporary death can be overcome through faith in Jesus; the second death is irreversible, everlasting. The difference between the two “stages” of death is important to deeper perceive their theological connection to marriage: Only as long as the possibility to die the *second* death exists, marriage exists. The second death, on the other

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<sup>23</sup> It seems inadequate in this context to discuss further angelic attributes for two reasons: (1) we do not really know much more about those beings called angels; and (2) even if we did, it seems to go far beyond Jesus’ intent to transfer all their characteristics to the future state of humans. Jesus concretely refers to the aspects of marriage and everlasting life as the issues in view and says, “they will be *like* angels,” instead of “they will be angels.” Another aspect, although not stressed that much in Jesus’ saying above, certainly is the human quality to consist of male and female genders according to Gen 1:27 (“God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”). If that (gender difference) ceases, we are no more “human” in its original (Edenic) sense, but rather angelic.

<sup>24</sup> I prefer to interpret the phrase as “they *will not* die” in terms of knowing all future events, instead of “they *cannot* die,” which would convey a much stronger meaning and could be (mis-) understood as possessing everlasting life even independent of God, the source of life. 1 Tim 6:16 makes clear that there is but one person “who alone possesses immortality:” God himself.

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hand, is closely connected to Satan and his rebellion, which will finally and completely be eliminated in the "lake of fire"—the second death.<sup>25</sup> The point that now becomes clearer is: Marriage seems to be closely linked to the rebellion of Satan; when this is over, marriage is dispensable.

Once this conceptual basis is recognized, we find an instance in Scripture that again deals very concretely with this idea and which is able to further illuminate Jesus' rationale of abolishing marriage due to the fact that "they cannot even (/will not) die anymore." This instance is found in Gen 2:16-18:

The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die." Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."

This passage is usually not read as a unit, although it apparently contains a problem statement (vv.16f.) followed by a solution (v.18). Mostly the chapter is divided into two independent parts, breaking up just between these two verses: Gen 2:4b-17 and vv.18-25, the first dealing with man alone in paradise (the rather general "setting"), the second with the introduction of marriage.

It is important, however, to recognize that the report about Eden in Gen 2:4b-25 is already shaded by the results of Satan's rebellion, the divine statement in vv.16-18 representing a part of it. We find several allusions to problems connected with Satan's agenda, or to the imperfect circumstances the humans will experience once they become disloyal to God. The entire introduction of marriage, although presented in paradise, seems to be a threshold to the human's transgression, as the following section aims to demonstrate.

**Marriage in Paradise—Already Alluding to Defection?**

There are several interesting observations to be noticed in the narrator's focus on the personal creation story of man and woman in Gen 2:4b-25 as preparation to the changing conditions after the

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Rev 20:10.14f.; 21:4; 1 Cor 15:26; Isa 25:8.

transgression,<sup>26</sup> particularly the central passage about the constitution of marriage in vv.18-25 as a subtle introduction to the Fall of Man.<sup>27</sup>

**Post-Fall Elements.** In Gen 2:5 the narrator refers to (A) the “shrubs/plants of the field” (עֲשׂוֹב הַשָּׂדֶה / שִׁיחַ), he mentions (B) divinely caused “raining” (הִמְטִיר יְהוָה אֶל־הַיָּם), and knows the man in future (C) “cultivating the ground” (לְעַבֵּד אֶת־הָאֲדָמָה). Younker rightly points out that “the first point this new section [Gen 2:4ff.] makes is that there were four things that did *not yet* exist after God had completed the earth and the heavens [cf. Gen 2:1-3]—the shrub of the field, the plant of the field, the man to till the soil, and rain.”<sup>28</sup> A word and phrase study reveals that the peculiar terminology employed in this introductory verse to man’s and woman’s creation already points to (A) the curse of man’s working field and God’s working for his enslaved people (cf. Gen 3:17f.; Exod 9:22.25);<sup>29</sup> (B) the human’s unholy descendants and God’s divine working in judgment and deliverance (Gen 6:1-7; 7:4; 19:24;<sup>30</sup> Exod 9:18.23.33f.; 16:4), and (C) the expulsion of man from paradise (Gen 3:23).<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Similarly Duane A. Garrett, *Genesis 1 and the Primeval History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 189f.; Robert B. Lawton, “Genesis 2:24: Trite or Tragic?,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105 (1986): 98.

<sup>27</sup> Lawton even recognizes the center of reversal in Gen 2:24 casting “its shadow over the following narrative, helping to underline the tragedy of the Fall.” (Lawton, “Gen. 2:24,” 98.) However, this is not, of course, to be understood in a sense of God creating the woman as Satan’s instrument. This section only intends to direct attention and awareness to most interesting literary features which are linking Gen 2:18-25 with several aspects of the seduction story (Gen 3:1-7) and the ongoing narration. As is to be witnessed, there are not just negative implications, but positive ones, too.

<sup>28</sup> Randall W. Younker, *God’s Creation. Exploring the Genesis Story* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1999), 52; italics given.

<sup>29</sup> More on the peculiar terminology pointing to post Fall conditions see the footnote after next; cf. Younker, *God’s Creation*, 52-58.

<sup>30</sup> It is remarkable that the exact verb form of “raining” (הִמְטִיר –hiphil perfect 3rd person masculine singular) in connection with יְהוָה (“YHWH let rain”) only occurs in Gen 2:5 and Gen 19:24 (Yahweh rains fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah) thus strikingly pointing to the corruption of humankind as a result of sin (which, of course, is introduced in Gen 3). Furthermore, the first mentioning of rain (beside its “prediction” in Gen 2:5) occurs in context of the worldwide flood (Gen 7:4.12) and, thus, “rain makes its entrance into the world not as a water source for agriculture but as an agent of God’s judgment.” (Younker, *God’s Creation*, 56.)

<sup>31</sup> I am aware of the divine instruction to “cultivate” (with the same Hebrew verb עָבַד as in Gen 2:5 and 3:23) even before the Fall (see Gen 2:15). But the interesting difference

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Genesis 2:5b, therefore, is not saying that no man yet existed after God had made the earth and the heavens. Rather it is saying that no *sinful* man (i.e., one who must work the ground for food) yet existed. Such a man would not exist until after the Fall [...]. Genesis 2, thus, is setting the stage for what comes later in Genesis 3.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, even the “foreword” to the perfect creation of man in v.7 and finally woman in vv.18-25 bears the stamps of the worse conditions later to be experienced due to the Fall depicted in Gen 3.

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is the object to be cultivated: (a) In Gen 2:5 and 3:23 with exactly the same phrase (לְעֵבֶד אֶת־הָאֲדָמָה) and the same subject (the man) it is the “ground” (הָאֲדָמָה), while (b) in Gen 2:15 it is the “garden of Eden” (בְּגִן־עֵדֶן) as contrary to the soil of the non-Edenic earth (similarly Younker, *God’s Creation*, 54-56). The difference may seem to be small, but it is as significant as the “plants of the field” (עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה) pointing not to the “plants yielding seeds” (עֵשֶׂב מְזַרְעֵי זֶרַע) of Gen 1:11f.29f., but expressly to Gen 3:18 (the only other instance in the Hebrew bible where the expression עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה occurs!) and, consequently, to the new conditions of cultivating a cursed nature (this point is also made by Younker, *God’s Creation*, 53f.; Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis. Vol. 1. From Adam to Noah*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press/Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1961), 102). Note also the hints given by the phrase שִׁיחַ הַשָּׂדֶה (“shrub of the field”): “[...] a close reading of the text reveals that the botanical terms of Genesis 1:11, 12 and Genesis 2:5 do not have the identical meaning. The word *siah* [“shrub”] appears only three times in the Hebrew Bible—Genesis 2:5, 21:15, and Job 30:4, 7, while the full expression *siah ha-sadeh* [“shrub of the field”] is unique, appearing only in Genesis 2:5. The contexts of both Genesis 21:15 and Job 30:4, 7 make it clear that the *siah* is a plant adapted to dry or desert environments. [...] As such, it is most likely a spiny or thorny plant. [...] These plants, while essential to the fragile ecosystem of dry, desert regions, are generally classified as intrusive, obnoxious plants by farmers. They are not the type of plant that a farmer of the ancient Near East would deliberately cultivate in his garden, nor were these plants likely included among the species when God planted the garden east in Eden, filling it with ‘every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food’ (Gen 2:9). Thus, one of the plants that did *not yet* exist at the beginning of the narrative of Genesis 2:4b was the thorny xerophyte—the agriculturist’s bane.” (Younker, *God’s Creation*, 53 (italics given); cf. also Walter J. Veith, *The Genesis Conflict. Putting the Pieces Together* (Delta: Amazing Discoveries Foundation, 2002), 32f., adding the assumption that “since Genesis 3:19 states that these plants were used to make bread. . . the plants of the second Genesis narrative thus refer to post fall food crops and weeds.” Ibid, 33; cf. Younker, *God’s Creation*, 54.)

<sup>32</sup> Younker, *God’s Creation*, 55. Of course, Gen 2:5 also says that there was no man at all, but the emphasis is clearly on the *sinful state* which the man (who is not built before v.7) will finally, unfortunately, experience.

**“And YHWH God said.”** Omitting the obvious links to the Fall as given by the pericope about building Eden and the two important trees (vv.8-17) standing in the middle of the garden (Gen 2:9; 3:3), we are now turning to the central passage of Gen 2:18-25. There is another hint connecting particularly the creation story of the woman with the curses of sin. In v.18 it reads וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים (“and YHWH God said”). This is worthy of notice, for there are no other occurrences of this seemingly common expression in the entire Hebrew bible, except in the verses Gen 3:13f. and 22. That unobtrusively alludes to the fact that, instead of linking Gen 2:18 (and thereby the whole passage (vv.18-25) which is introduced here) with the “very good” working in Gen 1:26f.31, the author discreetly forges links to the final results of the woman’s creation as to be seen more clearly by the following table:

ויֹאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים	Referring to	Reason
Gen 2:18	God himself (cf.1:26)	To make (עָשָׂה) the woman
Gen 3:13	Woman	The woman made (עָשָׂה)
Gen 3:14	Serpent	The serpent made (עָשָׂה)
Gen 3:22	Man	To prevent becoming immortal

Each one of the few instances using the simple, very inconspicuous expression וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים refers to another protagonist of the Eden story and finally comprises them all. While the first mentioning is still pertaining to God’s perfect work of creation, the others describe the sinful counter-work initiated by the serpent, carried out by the woman, and almost immortalized by the man. While God is the one working to finalize and save his creation in the first and the last instances (Gen 2:18; 3:22), there is the woman along with the serpent tearing down God’s perfect work in the middle part (Gen 3:13f.). Already the initial intention, even the first thought or word of God concerning the building of man’s helper in Gen 2:18, is thus referring to the downward route towards the Fall of Man and his expulsion.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Of course, this observance is *not* to be understood as some chauvinistic, sexist attitude of the biblical writer or of me as the exegete. To the contrary, I will explain that it is just another implicit, indirect and seldom recognized feature that the origin of the Fall is not the creation of the woman (as possibly derived from exclusively considering Gen 3:2-6). Also, as Gen 1:27 affirms, both are collectively representing humankind and

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**The Helper.** Another contextual connection is illuminating here. Regarding the foregoing narration focusing on the tree of knowledge (cf. Gen 2:8-17), the last part of chapter 2, beginning with the crucial v.18, seems to be God's special dealing for the sake of man. He creates the woman not only as a "helper" in the everyday "business" of Adam cultivating the garden (v.15),<sup>34</sup> or for the purpose of procreation and ruling (Gen 1:28), but also as a helper in heeding the only prohibition God gave to man: keeping away from the tree of knowledge (vv.16f.). The close connection between the "problem statement" in vv.16f. and the "solution" in v.18 is sustained by the fact that the only time God is speaking about something not being good are exactly these verses 16-18. Additionally, it is noteworthy that the Hebrew *וְצִוָּ* ("to command/order") occurs for the first time in Gen 2:16, and the other instances in Edenic context (Gen 3:11.17) again refer to this single command.<sup>35</sup> In

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as such both are created perfect (Gen 1:31) but seduced to become fallen sinners (Gen 3:6). Although the woman is the first one to stretch out her hand to grasp the forbidden fruit, it is also the man with her (Gen 3:6) who eats. It is "to the Hebrew credit that they did not, at least in the literature contained in the Jewish canon of the Bible, interpret the stories of Genesis 2 and 3 (Eve's creation and her part in the first sin in Eden) as a justification for negative attitudes to women. Eve, strangely enough, does not function as any kind of female symbol in the Old Testament. [...] Hebrew women might well have held a secondary place to men in their society, but at least they were not, in the biblical period, considered to be God's unfortunate afterthought. In fact, recent attempts have been made, with some success, to show that the myth of Eve in Genesis 2 and 3 is in no way insulting to woman, but rather depicts her as an equal to Adam, the completion of creation." (Elizabeth A. Clark and Herbert W. Richardson, *Women and Religion. A Feminist Sourcebook of Christian Thought*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1977), 29f.)

<sup>34</sup> Thus Brueggemann, "Flesh and Bone," 540.

<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, the other appearances of Hebrew *וְצִוָּ* are concretely contrasting the failure of the first couple: while Eve and Adam were disobedient, Noah heeded what God "commanded" (Gen 6:22; 7:5.9.16). Also, both instances (Adam and Noah) instruct concerning food (and, regarding Noah, additionally to bring animals into the ark), and disobedience in both instances would result in death. Thus, the intensity of this verb's meaning becomes even more evident, while the significance of food is also stressed. Please note further that God aggravates especially the procurement and quality of food as a result of disobedience in Gen 3:14.17-19. Furthermore, in both instances God cares for the necessary "help:" the woman to save Adam (fashioned by God himself), and the ark to save Noah and his family (planned, instructed to be built, and finally closed by God himself). Also, in both instances the protagonists play an important role: while Adam "provides" one of his "ribs/sides," Noah was the one to build the ark and fill it as God

paradise, there apparently is no other “command” of that urgency, no other order worthy to be referred to by this strong expression. This emphasizes the particularity of the following instruction, including the divine understanding of the conditions for man being “not good”—to be perceived most likely in the same respect, namely: “not [yet?] good” regarding man’s obedience and faithfulness; he needs assistance—then it will be “very good.” It seems that God creates the “helper” especially in relationship to this command.

As we saw, the *וַיֵּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים* is in every instance closely connected with the tree of knowledge and what happened there. Hence, v.18 seems to be an intersection between the divinely commanded tasks of man (procreate, rule, cultivate the garden, keep away from the tree; Gen 1:28 and 2:8-17) and the “helper” in these tasks created and introduced in vv.18-25. Apparently this creational act in Gen 2:18-25, including “marriage” as established in Gen 2:24, should prevent man from losing his high standard of loyalty.<sup>36</sup> One might expect the author would have given literary connections rather pointing to the “very good” ideal of Gen 1:26f. if God’s purpose would have been successful. The fact that he connected it with Gen 3 and the worsening of life’s conditions instead, is meaningful and significantly tells about the sad failure of the “helper’s” mission. This slight link is very discreet, without giving any hints of male-female differentiation or special

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commanded. The suggested connection of the “helper” with God’s saving purposes thus seems to be quite strong.

<sup>36</sup> Please note that Paul in his instructions concerning practical marriage situations also knows a mutual obligation to foster one’s spouse’s holiness and salvation (1 Cor 7:14.16; cf. also Eph 5:23-29; similarly Peter in 1 Pet 3:1f.)! In this context of loyalty it is interesting to notice, as R. W. L. Moberly, “Did the Serpent get it right?,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 39 (1988): 4 observed, that the prohibition in Gen 2:17 is “expressed in the [same] emphatic form (אֵל rather than אַל) as in the Decalogue.” Also, “the emphatic verbal form used (‘You shall surely die’: מוֹת תָּמוּת) is similar to the standard idiom for the death penalty in a legal context [e.g. Exod 21:15-17, Lev. 20:9-16, cf. Gen 26:11, Exod 19:12. ...].” (Ibid.) Both covenants (marriage in Gen 2:24 and the one of Sinai) have manifold aspects in common, and here (Gen 2-3) the story seems to foreshadow the question or test about loyalty presented later to the people of Israel. (Similarly Moberly, “Serpent,” 4f.: “In the light of these detailed points one can see that the situation in 2: 15-17 is surely an exact depiction of the general Old Testament understanding of man, especially Hebrew man, in the world. Man is given the dignity of a responsible role to fulfil, and he is to fulfil it through obedience to God’s Torah, his laws given for the guidance of life.”)

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accusations against womanhood; each one of the protagonists (serpent, woman, man) is to be blamed for his/her individual responsibility. However, the final interrogation and the reaction of God leads to the conclusion that he primarily rebukes the woman for encouraging Adam to become a transgressor instead of supporting him to be loyal:

We might have expected God to reply to her now [in Gen 3:12f.], 'What! You *too* ate from the tree!?' God does not do so. *Nowhere in this story does God reprimand the woman for eating from the tree!* That is because her cardinal transgression, and what she was held accountable for, was not her eating the forbidden fruit, but her causing 'her man' to eat!<sup>37</sup>

It seems, the absence of God in the garden at the time the woman is tempted<sup>38</sup> has also contributed to the success of the serpent's intention. While God is certainly not to be blamed for his absence, it nevertheless seems that the woman was quite vulnerable particularly at this point of time—and the serpent naturally took advantage of this situation. God made a couple of two persons instead of leaving the man alone, for the purpose of strengthening him to withstand Satan when he would come to tempt him. Two humans would be stronger than one person alone: "And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart." (Ecc. 4:12.) The man alone would be almost helpless against this mighty foe; with a "complemental helper" (עֲזָרָה כְּנֶגְדוֹ; v.18) at his side he would be able to resist; and in the presence of God they would, as a three-stranded cord, be practically invulnerable. The woman's role is thus stressed as to her support in obedience and faithfulness to their divine creator.

God's redemptive purpose with the woman as man's "helper" is even more emphasized by the Hebrew term employed (עֲזָרָה). In the Old Testament עֲזָרָה alludes to the divine help of God as deliverer of Israel.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Gellman, "Gender and Sexuality," 328 (italics given).

<sup>38</sup> To be deduced from God's sudden arrival in Gen 3:8 "walking in the garden in the cool of the day," leading to a quick hiding of the man and his wife "among the trees of the garden."

<sup>39</sup> Cf. e.g., Gen 49:25; Exod 18:4; Deut 33:7; 2 Kgs 14:26; Job 29:12; Ps 30:11; 54:6; 72:12; 89:20; 107:12; Isa 31:3; 63:5; Jer 47:4; Dan11:34. See further Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 68; Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 214; Hamilton, *Genesis*, 176. Yet, "to help someone does not imply that the helper is stronger than the helped; simply that the

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Further, “the verb behind *‘ezer* is *‘azar*, which means ‘succor,’ ‘save from danger,’ ‘deliver from death.’ The woman in Gen 2 delivers or saves man from his solitude.”<sup>40</sup> And furthermore even his life by strengthening and encouraging him to secure his loyalty to God by staying away from the tree of knowledge.<sup>41</sup>

**Gen 3:1-7 reversing 2:18-25.** The last verse of Gen 2 is not just a final remark on the erotic atmosphere (unashamed nakedness, becoming “one flesh”) of the story about woman’s creation in vv.18-24. It also is a stepping stone to the next scene (Gen 3:1-7) in which the (unashamed) nakedness and innocence is lost and the humans become aware of their (now shameful) bareness (v.7). Contrasting Gen 2:18-25 with 3:1-7 it turns out that the very creation of woman is again linked with the sad event of the Fall—and even the first report about the innocence of marriage is foreshadowing the terrible results of the woman’s disloyalty.<sup>42</sup> But, as Tribble points out,

this turning point is not totally surprising. A forbidden tree; animals that do not fit; the withdrawal of God; the increasing power and freedom of

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latter’s strength is inadequate by itself.” (Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 68; similarly Claus Westermann, *Genesis. 1. Teilband. Genesis 1-11*, ed. Siegfried Herrmann and Hans Walther Wolff. *Biblischer Kommentar. Altes Testament* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins, 1974), 309. Cf. Josh 1:14; 10:4.6; 1 Chr 12:17.19.21.22.) The Hebrew עֵזֶר is simply a “relational term, describing a beneficial relationship, but in itself does not specify position or rank, either superiority or inferiority.” (Davidson, “Beginning,” 15; cf. Brueggemann, “Flesh and Bone,” 541f.; Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 85; Tribble, *Sexuality*, 97-101. For further interpretations of עֵזֶר see Kvam, Ziegler, and Scheering, *Eve and Adam*, 28. On the possible Semitic etymology of עֵזֶר supporting the mentioned view of an equal helper see David R. Freedman, “Woman, A Power Equal to Man,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 9, no. 1 (1983): 56-58.)

<sup>40</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 222.

<sup>41</sup> The part of the man’s body she is made of further strengthens this idea: Just as the “rib” (צִלְעָה; v.21) functions as a protection of the vital organs, so the woman is to protect the man’s life—and certainly vice versa. See for a deeper investigation of the overall topic and the relationship between man and woman in the creation: Gehring, “*One Flesh*” *Theology*, 10-32.

<sup>42</sup> Mathews makes the same point: “The final verse is transitional, linking the foregoing narrative of creation and marriage to the subsequent narrative of human sin and the consequences of that disobedience [ . . .].” (Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 224). Cf. Tosato, “On Genesis 2:24,” 390-395; Tribble, *Sexuality*, 105.

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human creatures—all these aspects [...] now become the occasion for disobedience.<sup>43</sup>

While Gen 2:18-25 richly depicts the innocent beauty of God’s image, male and female, the next narrative scene deals with the woman transferring her loyalty to Satan, thereby forsaking the command of God. The man follows her example and becomes disloyal, seduced by his wife. In his way of describing these conditions and events in Eden, Moses apparently contrasts the divine order of loyalty in marriage (Gen 2:18-25) deliberately to the marred results of the serpent’s intervention (Gen 3:1-7) by an interesting parallelism:<sup>44</sup>

<b>Gen 2:18-25</b>	<b>Gen 3:1-7</b>
(2:18) <i>External, superhuman initiative:</i> God speaks: something is missing/not good	(3:1) <i>External, superhuman initiative:</i> Satan speaks: something is (seemingly) missing/not good
(2:19-22) <i>Effort of persuasion:</i> God cares for man’s needs	(3:2-5) <i>Effort of persuasion:</i> Satan pretends to care for woman’s need
(2:23) <i>Reaching the goal:</i> The man delights in seeing the woman	(3:6) <i>Reaching the goal:</i> The woman delights in seeing the tree
(2:24) <i>Editorial note/explanation:</i> 1. Forsaking parents 2. Cleaving to new party (woman) 3. Consummation by physical act (sex)	(3:6b) <i>Editorial note/explanation:</i> 1. Forsaking God (the human’s father) 2. Cleaving to new party (fruit/serpent) 3. Consummation by physical act (eating)
(2:25) <i>Moral results:</i> Unashamed, innocent nakedness	(3:7b) <i>Moral results:</i> Shameful nakedness

Not by specific vocabulary, but by the specific steps that are taken, it becomes clearer, or at least a reasonable suggestion that the serpent

<sup>43</sup> Tribble, *Sexuality*, 105. She also recognizes links between Gen 2:18-24 and the comedown or betrayal of ideals in Gen 3:1-7 (see Tribble, *Sexuality*, 105-115.)

<sup>44</sup> Tosato, “On Genesis 2:24,” 392 recognizes a chiasmus of the elements Creation of Man (A) / Creation of Woman (B)–Fall of Woman (B’) / Fall of Man (A’). He takes this reversion even further concerning the overall context of Genesis 2 and 3, adding: “In fact, this second story [i.e., Gen 3] ends up, on the one hand, with the *’iššâ* who compulsorily returns to *’iš* [...] and, so to speak, is reabsorbed by him [...] (Gen 3:16, correlated to Gen 2:18-23), and, on the other hand, with *’ādām* who compulsorily returns to and is reabsorbed by the earth [...] (Gen 3:17-19, correlated to Gen 2:4b-8).” (Ibid; cf. also *ibid*, 401.)

succeeded in reversing the perfect work of God.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, Satan did well in reversing the intimate, personal relationship with God that was symbolized by the more personal name of God from Gen 2:4 onward.<sup>46</sup> Within the sad and treacherous discussion of Gen 3:1-6 Eve is led to refer to her personal creator by calling him just אֱלֹהִים (vv.1.3), omitting the more intimate name of the covenant God יְהוָה. The serpent encourages her by referring similarly to the more remote אֱלֹהִים (v.5).<sup>47</sup> Consequently,

the serpent and the woman discuss theology. They talk about God. Never referring to the deity by the sacred name Yahweh, but only using the general appellation God, they establish that distance which characterizes objectivity and invites disobedience.<sup>48</sup>

An important link between these passages is further given by wordplay in Gen 2:25 and Gen 3:1: Man and woman are עֲרוּמִים (from עָרוֹם – “naked”), the serpent is עָרוּם (“cunning/crafty”). Both parties are thereby seemingly contrasted as to their “naivety” and innocence, but simultaneously they are (perhaps just randomly) connected by using this paronomasia, even foreshadowing the similarity in character both parties will share at last after betraying the former loyalties.<sup>49</sup> It thus functions

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<sup>45</sup> Similarly Moberly, “Serpent,” 6 concerning the serpent’s speech.

<sup>46</sup> See Paul F. Scotchmer, “Lessons from Paradise on Work, Marriage, and Freedom. A Study of Genesis 2:4-3:24,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 28 (2004): 81; C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4. A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2006), 229.

<sup>47</sup> Scotchmer, “Lessons,” 83 concludes properly: “The conversation was subtle and urbane. For the woman it was intoxicating. Like a couple of sophisticates hobnobbing at a party, the woman and the serpent refer to God as *Elohim* (the Creator-God), rather than *Yahweh-Elohim* (the Covenant-God). In doing so, they intentionally objectify the Almighty, depicting their maker as someone remote and official, rather than close and personal. God is no longer Thou, but It. He is now the object of a new discipline, founded by the woman and the serpent: theology, the study of God.” Similarly Moberly, “Serpent,” 6.

<sup>48</sup> Tribble, *Sexuality*, 109.

<sup>49</sup> The interesting moral ambiguity of understanding עָרוּם in a positive way (“prudent/shrewd”) or in a rather negative way (“cunning/crafty”) is investigated by Moberly, “Serpent,” 25 concluding that “the depiction of the serpent [...] illustrates the disastrous consequences of a classic misuse (for reasons unstated) of a rather unusual and ambiguous God-given quality.”

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as a kind of introduction to the paralleling story of choosing a partner in personal leadership (God exchanged for the serpent) and forming alliances in both sections. Furthermore, this stylistic device seemingly hints to the “knowledge” the first human pair would gain when eating the forbidden fruit, as the serpent promised (Gen 3:5); they would become like their seducer: crafty (in its negative sense) instead of wise (לִשְׂרָר; v.6: a positive sense).

**Redemptive Characteristics and Purposes**

All through the Scriptures there is a close propinquity to be witnessed between the representation of the marriage ideal and the intimate relationship God desires to obtain with his people with respect to each individual believer. It seems marriage is a pattern for the relationship God offers every human—and the result of which is redemption. The following biblical passages shall emphasize particularly this fact and thus lead to a deeper recognition of marriage’s aim to assist in being faithful to God.

**Eph 5:21-33:** Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

This is the most significant and elaborate text on the closeness of marriage and faith. It tells us that the marital relation is comparable to

the human-divine relationship in at least the two important aspects (1) respect and (2) love. It is meaningful that it is the verse of Gen 2:24 which is used to substantiate this comparison with scriptural evidence. It hints at the fact that right from its beginning in Eden marriage was designed to represent the plan of redemption that is so closely linked to this intimate relationship as demonstrated in the text quoted above. Respect and love are the indispensable means to reach the overall goal of sanctification and blameless holiness. Marriage, at least according to its original (Edenic) ideal, should apparently confirm the spouses in the path of personal development towards sanctification “without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). While Christ’s love is expressed in purifying, glorifying, and sanctifying the church (vv.25-27), the husband is correspondingly to care for his wife, nourishing and cherishing her—certainly not merely in a physical sense, but also concerning the wife’s spiritual needs. The spouses apparently should assist each other on the “narrow way” (Matt 7:14) to salvation:

Dieses Schöpfungsverhältnis Adams und Evas, das in sich schon das Erlösungsverhältnis Christi und der Kirche grundlegend birgt und in sich darauf verweist, wird in jeder Ehe von Mann und Frau nach dem Willen Gottes aktualisiert. Damit wird in jeder irdischen Ehe als solcher-unabhängig etwa vom Bewußtsein der Ehepartner über diese Verhältnisse oder der Zustimmung anderer zu solcher Auslegung—nicht nur der Schöpfungswille Gottes vollzogen, sondern in seinem Vollzug auch jener in ihm verborgene Erlöserwille, nicht nur das Schöpfungsverhältnis Adam-Eva nachbildend entfaltet, sondern auch und eigentlich jenes in ihm vorgesehene Erlösungsverhältnis Christus-Kirche nachbildend durchgeführt.<sup>50</sup>

Significantly, in this passage of the letter to the Ephesians Paul does not dwell largely on his “masterpiece” of evidence as given in the figurative interpretation of Gen 2:24, but takes it for granted that the reader is well aware of the meaningful consequences that may be derived from the Edenic covenant pattern.

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<sup>50</sup> Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Epheser. Ein Kommentar* (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1962), 276. Please note also the possible connection of Eph 5:26 (“washing of water with the word”) with Christian baptism (ibid, 256-258).

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In order to explicate the quality of Christ's love the author presupposes the image of the church as the Bride of Christ (5:25-27). The Bride image seems to have been so familiar to his readers that he feels no need to state it directly, but the cumulative effect of his language leaves little doubt that this is his intention.<sup>51</sup>

This image is further alluded to in **1 Cor 6:16-19** (becoming "one spirit" with Christ just as husband and wife become "one flesh" through their intimate, sexual relationship) and, even more interesting in our context because it even hints at the corruption of marriage as it happened for the first time in Eden, **2 Cor 11:2f.**:

I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

As these brief verses illumine, marriage is obviously still closely connected to the events in Eden and its original (and highest) purpose of strengthening, supporting, and encouraging loyalty and obedience to God. Just as it happened in paradise, it could happen again that Satan "by his craftiness" might succeed in leading believers "astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ." It seems that Satan is remarkably successful in spoiling the prospective blessing of marriage – be it the relationship between husband and wife (literal level) or the one between Christ and his church (spiritual level). This unhappy fact is

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<sup>51</sup> Richard A. Batey, *New Testament Nuptial Imagery* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 65. Similarly Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Der Brief an die Epheser*, ed. Joachim Gnilka et al. Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Zürich/Einsiedeln/Köln: Benzinger, 1982/2003), 255-257; cf. Sang-Won Son, *Corporate Elements in Pauline Anthropology. A Study of the Selected Terms, Idioms, and Concepts in the Light of Paul's Usage and Background*. Analecta Biblica (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2001), 97f.: "Paul applies Gen 2:24 to the church as the bride of Christ and compares the unity between Christ and the church to that of 'one flesh' effected through marriage. The basic idea is twofold: (1) The church is the body of Christ, and (2) Christ is the head of that body. The 'head' in this passage denotes Christ as the bridegroom of the church." See also J. Paul Sampley, "And the Two shall Become One Flesh." *A Study of Traditions in Ephesians 5:21-33*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series (Cambridge, U.K.: University Press, 1971), 157 ("According to the author of Ephesians marriage is a reflection of the paradigm relationship that subsists between Christ and his church."); Beattie, *Women and Marriage*, 77.

further stressed by the OT marriage (or prostitution) image as frequently depicted by several prophets (cf. **Isa 54**; **Ezek 16**; **Hos. 1-2** and many more). Nevertheless, the initial goal remains, as other texts explain:

**1 Cor 7:13-16:** And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. *For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?* [Italics supplied.]

Just amid rather general, “earthly” instructions about the marital relationship, Paul suddenly refers to the most important “heavenly” aim: Assistance in the salvation of one’s spouse as the underlying principle of marriage. We must assume that he presupposes this idea as the most profound fundament and purpose of this relationship; otherwise his sudden leap to this topic is hardly understandable. The same aspect is briefly formulated in **1 Pet 3:1f.**, echoing the message of Eph 5:21-33: “In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, *they may be won* without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.” (Italics supplied.)

It really seems that the overall purpose of marriage, right from its beginning in paradise and reaching down until the end of this world, up to the completion of the plan of redemption, is to support one’s loyalty to God, and thus, one’s personal way to salvation.<sup>52</sup> So the most significant fulfillment of the Edenic purpose of marriage will come true at the end of this world’s history, with the great wedding feast between God and his people, thus finally accomplishing this relationship’s ultimate goal: salvation (Rev 21:1-4). Then it is time for a new era to begin—an era without the necessity of redemption or further protection

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<sup>52</sup> Thus it is even better comprehensible why the death of one’s spouse so suddenly enables one to marry someone else: The primary purpose of (the former) marriage is over, the dead spouse’s fate is settled. A new partnership is permissible, for there is no possibility any more to endanger the former relationship and its redemptive goal.

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against Satan, thus making the spiritual purpose of marriage void and therefore, possibly, the entire institution dispensable.

**Conclusions: Eternal or Temporary Ideal?  
"Heavenly" or "Earthly" Institution?**

We saw that marriage, although introduced in paradise while in a state of sinlessness, is nevertheless embedded in a context foreshadowing the Fall of man. It seems that Scripture even links this institution with the danger of Satan's rebellion. It was meant to encourage and support faithfulness towards God, particularly regarding the only express command that was given in Eden: "From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die." (Gen 2:17.) The woman should be a "complemental helper" (v.18), not just for the purpose of procreation and rulership (Gen 1:28), but primarily to help man reach the goal of fully representing the image of God (Gen 1:26f.) by remaining faithful and obedient towards him.<sup>53</sup> This does not mean, however, that marriage per se is linked with sin and death. While it seems to be divinely designed as an instrument of prevention and protection against Satan's rebellion, it would be wrong to assume that this is its only purpose. If there would never have been the Fall of man, we might have expected marriage and procreation to continue, as initially intended according to Gen 1:28. But through the changes due to the Fall and redemption of man, some conditions on the new earth will change forever.<sup>54</sup> Just as Jesus closely and indissolubly linked himself with humanity, so will redeemed humankind be linked with God in a new, deeper, much more

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<sup>53</sup> Please note that the command to shun the tree of knowledge was the first instruction given; only then—after building the woman and thus providing the necessary requirements to multiply—the blessing on procreation could have been given. And previous to that blessing, there was the idea to have humans as God's representative(s) as they rule over God's creation on earth. Gen 1-2 present the following priorities: (1) Primary goal: representing the image of God (Gen 1:26-27a); (2) Provision: not being alone, helping each other to remain faithful towards God (Gen 1:27b; 2:16-25); (3) Blessing: procreation (Gen 1:28).

<sup>54</sup> God will, e.g., finally live among his redeemed people on this earth, being the true "bridegroom" of his people (Rev 19:7; 20-21), with Jesus ever bearing the imprints of his crucifixion (John 20:25-27) as an eternal remembrance of what would not have been necessary if the Fall of man had not happened.

intimate relation, even leading to become “like angels”—at least in the above mentioned respects.

While the entire context of marriage in Gen 2 already connotes the Fall of the first couple and is thus connected to Satan’s rebellion, the main link to Jesus’ statement about the abolition of marriage in the new paradise is given by his rationale: “They cannot even (/will not) die anymore.” Just as Jesus’ remark thus links the end of marriage with the end of Satan’s rebellion by the second death, so the first biblical statement about death as a result of partaking in Satan’s rebellion in Gen 2:16f. is closely linked to the beginning or introduction of marriage in the immediately following verses (Gen 2:18-25).

The other evidence particularly from the New Testament epistles further strengthened the idea that the most profound fundament, the deepest principle, and the highest aim of marriage is both spouses’ mutual assistance in reaching this life’s most important goal: salvation. Marriage was apparently meant to be an instrument to secure one’s faithfulness towards God. Unfortunately it has been misused ever since and influenced many (formerly) devout men to transgress God’s commandments.<sup>55</sup> Instead of vividly representing and deeply intensifying the human’s relationship to God, it frequently became an instrument of temptation, transferring one’s life’s priorities and loyalty away from the Almighty to one’s perishable spouse.<sup>56</sup>

In response to the question formulated in the heading of this last chapter, we may generally assert that marriage is both: an eternal ideal *although* it is temporary, restricted to this sinful earth’s history. Yet, its underlying principle of reflecting the divine plan of redemption and the results, if a spouse was successful in winning his/her partner, will remain throughout eternity—although the human institution of marriage as we know it today will finally be abolished. The statement of Jesus is unambiguous. While there will be no marriage between humans in the world to come, we are nevertheless married: with Christ (Rev 21:2f.). The former, earthly principle (support in redemption) is suspended; but

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<sup>55</sup> Consider the “sons of God” in Gen 6:1-7; Samson & Delilah, David & Bathsheba, Solomon & his foreign wives, Ahab & Jezebel etc. (Of course, in most cases it rather was mere sexual desire than sincere love and true, personal intimacy/marriage.)

<sup>56</sup> Therefore Paul’s reservations in 1 Cor 7:32-35.

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the spiritual ideal still continues to exist: Intimate spiritual relationship with our redeemer, unmarred by sin, pain, crying, or death (Rev 21:4).

What we as humans experience during marital life is a representation of our way with Christ—albeit there is, of course, a huge difference: Jesus is perfect, we are not.

There may be times of painful distance and tragic backsliding on our part. But Christ keeps his covenant forever. Marriage is a display of that! That is the ultimate thing we can say about it. It puts the glory of Christ's covenant-keeping love on display. [...] It's about portraying something true about Jesus Christ and the way he relates to his people. It is about showing in real life the glory of the gospel.<sup>57</sup>

Once this gospel is fully exemplified by bringing the sad history of rebellion and sin to its ultimate end through the second, final death and the subsequent wedding between God and his people (Rev 20-21), the ultimate purpose of marriage will be reached. The divine covenant ideal it represents and the plan of redemption it symbolizes are then completely fulfilled and finished.<sup>58</sup> At this final, happy day these redemptive goals will belong to the past—and consequently marriage itself, too. The status of paradise formerly evaluated as being imperfect ("not good;" Gen 2:18), will then be appraised as perfect (Rev 21-22). The era of human mortality is over; the danger once emanating from the tree of knowledge (Gen 2:17) is gone. Now they know their God by a deep spiritual intimacy that is comparable only to the marital relation of becoming "one flesh" (Gen 2:24; cf. 1 Cor 13:12). They will not be tempted anymore to doubt God's character and motives as Eve did (Gen 3:6) and, therefore, "they cannot even (/will not) die anymore [...]."

Now the variant reading "will not" yields an interesting idea: In case this was the original reading, it alludes to the fact that, of course, immortal "man" is still able to sin by transgressing God's commandments; he still possesses a free will just as Adam and Eve in

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<sup>57</sup> John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage. A Parable of Permanence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009), 25f.

<sup>58</sup> Piper, *Momentary Marriage*, 52 puts it thus: "Marriage is a pointer toward the glory of Christ and the church. But in the resurrection the pointer vanishes into the perfection of that glory." Similarly Heinrich Greeven, "Zu den Aussagen des Neuen Testaments über die Ehe," *Zeitschrift für evangelische Ethik* 1 (1957): 125 who speaks about the marriage's "Christusbezogenheit" in the present (i.e., this world's) era.

the first paradise did. But now things have changed dramatically—“they will not *die* anymore,” because they will not *sin* anymore. There will not be the least doubt about God’s infinite love. The redeemed will know by experience that God’s commandments secure eternal wellbeing, prosperity, and happiness; thus there will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain; “the first things have passed away” (Rev 21:4).

Hence, at the end of this world, after the resurrection, the extermination of Satan’s rebellion, sin, and death, having completed the marriage ideal’s highest goal through the wedding between God and his people, human (earthly) marriage with its connection to Satan’s rebellion and the danger of death and mortality indeed seems dispensable.

This represents at least a first possible Scripture-based explanation of Jesus’ baffling statement in Matt 22:30, Mark 12:25, or Luke 20:34-36.

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