

Will There Be Sex In Heaven

Mark 12:18-27

Introduction: 1) There is a playful saying that teachers of the Bible will often cite: “If you want to build a big crowd then teach on “sex” or “the end times.” And, if you want to build a really big crowd then teach on “sex in the end times!””

2) Interestingly, that very issue was raised by a group of religious leaders who did not even believe in the end times, who rejected outright any doctrine of life after death. They are known in the Bible as the Sadducees.

3) The question of life after death has always fascinated humans, especially the religious. Every religion has some perspective on the issue though they vary widely in what they believe. Recent surveys point out the 80% of Americans believe in some form of life after death, with another 9% saying it may be true but that they were not sure.

4) Christianity has always had a strong doctrine concerning life after death, even if we had to admit to a good bit of mystery on the precise details. There is nothing surprising about this, after all we build our understanding of the future, end times and eternity from the teachings of Jesus, an empty tomb, and a resurrected and living Savior. The Bible tells us a lot but it does not tell us everything.

5) In this passage we will see how Jesus countered the troubling riddle of the Sadducees and demolished their theology and doctrine of annihilation. In the process, we will allow additional scriptures and theological reflection to help us craft a healthy perspective on what we can expect for the future. For those who know and trust Christ for salvation one thing is certain: it is all good!

I. The hypothetical problem from skeptics

12:18-23

- The parade of opponents that began in 11:27 continues. The chief priests, scribes and elders took their shot in 11:27-12:12 and went down in flames. The Pharisees and Herodians were the second wave of enemies to take Him on in 12:13-17 and He shut their mouths. Now the Sadducees come with a trick question they had probably used dozens of times to frustrate the Pharisees. They will now try it out on Jesus.
- This is the only time in Mark that Jesus has an exclusive encounter with the Sadducees (12:18). Who were they?
 - A small sect of the priestly families.
 - Wealthy aristocrats with significant political/temple influences. They dominated the Sanhedrin (cf. Acts 5:17).
 - Sympathetic to Hellenism, the Herods and Rome.
 - Considered only the books of Moses (Pentateuch) as authoritative. In a sense this made them theological conservatives.
 - Had a strong doctrine of human free will.
 - Did not believe in angels and demons (Acts 23:8).
 - Where not looking for a Messiah-King from David's line.
 - Did not believe in the immortality of the soul.
 - Did not believe in a future bodily resurrection. Josephus said, "The doctrine of the Sadducees is this: souls die with bodies." (*Antiquities*, 18:1, 4).
 - With the total destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70, their center of power, and political influence came to an end and they vanished from history.
- Verse 18 highlights the fact that they do not believe in the resurrection of the body. Verses 19-23 records their trick question.

- It was grounded in the issue of “levirate (Latin for “brother-in-law”) marriage” mentioned in Genesis 38:8-10 and Ruth, and explained in Deuteronomy 25:5-10 which says, “If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband’s brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her. And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. And if the man does not wish to take his brother’s wife, then his brother’s wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, ‘My husband’s brother refuses to perpetuate his brother’s name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband’s brother to me.’ Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him, and if he persists, saying, ‘I do not wish to take her,’ then his brother’s wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face. And she shall answer and say, ‘So shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother’s house.’ And the name of his house shall be called in Israel, ‘The house of him who had his sandal pulled off.’” The gist of the issue is therefore this: God made a provision for a family to be raised up in name and property rights for a husband who dies with no male heir. You have to love the way the Bible describes this!
- The Sadducees took this teaching and created what we call a *reductio ad absurdum* argument, an argument that reduces things to the absurd or the ridiculous. A man marries a woman and he dies. Fortunately (or “unfortunately”) he has 7 brothers who can step in and fulfill the levirate obligation. Tragically, she married each one and each one, all 7, died without bearing a child. Now, since the Pharisees and most

rabbis believe the world to come is basically an improved and better one like this world, which therefore would include things like marriage, to whom then will she be married? Assuming monogamy which is a given, which one will have her in marriage with its privileges “in the resurrection” (v. 23), in the world to come?

- Such a scenario is clearly unthinkable and it shows the foolishness of believing in a future resurrection. Look at all the problems it could potentially cause. No, God is too smart for that and the books of Moses which are the undisputed Word of God make no mention of a future resurrection.
- Interestingly Jesus has already spoken of his own resurrection 3 times (8:31; 9:31; 10:34). The Sadducees think they have him, but they are headed toward a big disappointment.

II. The perfect plan for heaven 12:24-25

- Theological error must be confronted quickly and clearly. That is exactly what Jesus does with the skeptical and synical Sadducees. You are wrong He says (v. 24) and for 2 very specific reasons:
 - 1) You do not know the Scriptures (see vs. 26).
 - 2) You do not know the power of God.
- Jesus accepts neither their assumption (dishonest as it was) about the world to come or the logic of their argument. He tells them plainly that they are wrong, in error, the Greek word *planan*, from which we get our English word “planet.” It means “to wander off course, to go astray.” Jesus accuses the theological elite of His day of error in their area of expertise! “What they claim to know best, the Torah, they actually know least.” And, do not miss this, because they misunderstand and misinterpret the Bible they also

misunderstand God! The two always hang together. Your God is too small and impotent to be the God of the Bible!

- Jesus begins correcting them in v. 25 (read). The world of resurrection, the world to come, is different than the world we live in. There is continuity to be sure. I will be I and you will be you, but we will exist and live for all of eternity in an entirely new dimension and reality. In Rev. 21:1 it is called a “new heaven and a new earth.” Why? “For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.”

Here in v. 25 Jesus addresses a very specific aspect of personal eschatology and in the process addresses the Sadducees question. He simple notes:

- 1) There will be a resurrection.
- 2) There will be no marriage relationship as we know it in this life.
- 3) In some sense we will become like the angels.

In the context being like the angels would seem to indicate that we will no longer procreate and we will never die. Therefore marriage will not be necessary, at least for that purpose.

- So, the billion dollar question, “will there be sex in heaven?” Here is what I think we can biblically and safely say:
 - 1) We will exist as glorified bodies in heaven.
 - 2) We will maintain our present and unique identity in heaven.
 - 3) There will be, in one sense, sex in heaven because sex identifies us as male and female in terms of gender.
 - 4) Whatever physical, sensual and sexual pleasure we enjoy in this life will be greatly transcended and magnified beyond our imagination in the life to come.

The great Puritan preacher, pastor and missionary Jonathan Edwards (1703-58) says it so well, “[In heaven] the glorified spiritual bodies of the saints shall be filled with pleasures of the most exquisite kind that such refined bodies are capable of. . . . The sweetness and pleasure that shall be in the mind, shall put the spirits of the body into such a motion as shall cause a sweet sensation throughout the body, infinitely excelling any sensual pleasure here” (*Jonathan Edwards, Miscellany* 233: Yale Works, 13:351).

Putting this in Danny Akin vernacular, “No one will be disappointed in any way when they get to heaven!” Not one will be deprived of one thing that is necessary for maximum and optional joy, happiness and complete satisfaction. In heaven, our relationship with Jesus, as well as all of our brothers and sisters, will be so intense and so filled with love and affection, all earthly marital bliss, no matter how wonderful, will seem shallow and small in comparison.

Transition: Heaven is indeed God’s perfect plan for His children who have come to Him thru His Son Jesus.

III. The divine power to do what God promises 12:26-27

- Jesus seals the deal in this confrontation by beating down the Sadducees on their own turf, the books of Moses. The doctrine of resurrection finds Old Testament support in places like Job 19:25-27; Psalm 16:9-11; and Daniel 12:2. Jesus however, in grace, meets the Sadducees where they are and takes them to the “burning bush” story found in Exodus 3:6 (v. 26). He cites that section of Scripture in this way because there were no chapter and verse divisions in his day. There God speaks to Moses in 1) the present tense and 2) in covenantal language saying, “I am the God of Abraham, and the God is Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” I am the living God of living men. Though they died physically

they are yet alive spiritually right now! It is not “I was there God” but “I am their God.” Further, being their God implies covenant, and it is inconceivable the eternal God does not maintain an eternal covenant with His people which is exactly what we find in the covenant God made first with Abraham (Gen 12) and later with David (2 Sam. 7).

- I love how Tim Keller puts it, “Notice that Jesus does not hang the hope of life after death (like the Greeks did) on the idea of an immortal part of us. Rather, He rest in the commitment of God to us (“I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”). This is a very powerful argument for life after death. We have a God who cannot, at our death, scrap that which is precious to Him!” (Mark notes, 161).
- Thus the matter ends and it ends quite matter of factly: 1) He is not God of the dead, but of the living, 2) You are quite wrong. Debate over. Let’s all go home. Jesus has silenced His critics once again.

Conclusion: We would expect a great God to prepare a great heaven! We will not be disappointed. The Bible does not tell us everything we want to know, but it certainly tells us more than enough to thrill our souls and make us long for that glorious destiny. I close by raising and answering 2 questions.

First, what will heaven be like? 17 observations:

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| 1) Heaven is being prepared by Christ himself. | John 14:3 |
| 2) Heaven is only for those who have been born again. | John 3:3 |
| 3) Heaven is described as a glorious city. | Revelation 21:11, 18 |
| 4) Heaven will shine with and be lighted by God’s glory. | Revelation 21:11, 23; 22:5 |
| 5) Heaven’s gates will never be shut. | Revelation 21:25 |
| 6) Heaven has the river of the Water of Life to insure everlasting life. | Rev. 22:1 |

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| 7) Heaven has the Tree of Life to insure abundant life. | Revelation 22:2; 22:19 |
| 8) Heaven has the throne of God at its center. | Revelation 4:2; 22:1-2 |
| 9) Heaven is a place of holiness. | Revelation 21:27 |
| 10) Heaven is beautiful. | Psalms 50:2 |
| 11) Heaven is a place of unity. | Ephesians 1:10 |
| 12) Heaven is a place of perfection. | 1 Corinthians 13:10 |
| 13) Heaven is joyful. | Psalms 16:11 |
| 14) Heaven is a place for all eternity. | John 3:15; Psalms 23:6 |
| 15) Heaven has no night. | Revelation 21:25; 22:5 |
| 16) Heaven is filled with singing. | Is. 44:23; Rev. 14:3; 15:1-3 |
| 17) Heaven is a place of wonderful service.
(Summarized in <i>Mark</i> , LABC, 347). | Revelation 7:15; 22:3 |

Second, what will our bodies be like? 9 observations:

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| 1) They will be recognizable. | 1 Corinthians 13:12 |
| 2) They will be like Christ's body (glorified). | 1 John 3:2 |
| 3) They will be unlimited by space. | Luke 24:31; John 20:19, 26 |
| 4) They will be eternal. | 2 Corinthians 5:1-5 |
| 5) They will be glorious. | Romans 8:18; 1 Cor. 15:43 |
| 6) They will not have pain. | Revelation 21:4 |
| 7) They will not die. | 1 Cor. 15:26; Rev. 21:4 |
| 8) They will not hunger or thirst. | Revelation 7:16 |
| 9) They will not sin.
(Summarized in <i>Mark</i> , LABC, 351). | Revelation 21:27 |

Now you know why we can sing with Eliza Hewitt (1851-1920) that wonderful refrain, “When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, we’ll sing and shout the victory.” So you see, the issue is really not, “will there be sex in heaven.” No, the real issue is, “will you be in heaven?” It will be wonderful beyond words. Won’t you join us?!