

Jesus' Final Exam: Question #3 Whose Wife Will She Be?
Mark 12:18-27

THE EXAMINATION OF THE LAMB

Wayne's Insight

One of the true joys I have in being a pastor and preaching week to week are those occasions when someone contacts me after a message and shares thoughts with me that the Holy Spirit has given them as they've processed that message. Last week I got an email from Wayne Kallestad. He and Kathi have been watching us online for quite some time. They were listening last Sunday and God gave him an insight that I think is just spot on.

Final Exam vs Divine Exam

I've been framing these last few sermons around the concept of a final exam. Starting in Mark 11 the gospel narrative moves to the last week of Jesus' life on earth, to the cross, and ultimately to the resurrection. I've asked you to think of these four challenges we encounter in chapters 11 and 12 as four final exam questions that cement in our minds that Jesus of Nazareth is, in fact, the Christ, the Son of God. The Spirit opened a further thought for Wayne that I had not thought of and am grateful for.

Here's what Wayne wrote: He directs us to "Exodus 12:3-6 where we read:

3 Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. 4 And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. 5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, 6 and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.

"The one thing that the congregation members had to do before offering their lamb was to ensure it was without blemish. The only way to do that was to examine it. I think that is what is going on here too, God was having them fulfill that requirement by examining Jesus without them even knowing they were doing that. Thus in hindsight, he was examined and found to be without blemish. This happened just prior to the Last Supper-the Garden-the Cross. Anyway, just my thoughts."

My Response to Wayne

I think, Wayne, those are not just your thoughts. I think those are God's thoughts. I think this is a much better framework than the picture of a mere final exam. God publicly reveals the blameless, sinless, divine character of His Son in advance of the sacrifice of Jesus' life on the cross as the Lamb of God! Praise the Lord!

The Ongoing Examination of the Lamb

The chief priests, the scribes, and the elders are still out to get Jesus. They continue to look for a

reason to kill Him and all the while God is at work demonstrating Jesus' eligibility to be the perfect sacrifice for sin for the whole world.

Enter the Sadducees and Their Narrow View of the Word

Background on Sadducees

This time the elders send the Sadducees. These folks denied the idea of a future, final resurrection. They tended to accept only the five books of Moses, the Torah, as the word of God. They held that only these five books were inspired Scripture. They interpreted the content of Torah as having nothing to say about any future resurrection. For them there is only death and the grave, and one's only hope of eternal life was through children and the continuing of one's family name among the covenant people.

Sadducees' Question

This helps us understand the nature of their possible but improbable question. They refer to an Old Testament law, a principle set forth in the Torah. You can find the reference in Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

Deuteronomy 25:5–10 ESV *“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 scenario they pose is unlikely but not impossible and it is prescribed in the Law. And they see this perpetuating the name of the dead man through the first son of a levirate marriage (which is what this arrangement is called) as the means for eternal life - “that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.”

Sadducees' Goal

They are asking Jesus, as have the others, to make a final choice between two possibilities. Is there an actual eternal life which we personally experience through resurrection or is our eternal life a matter of legacy and progeny? It's a “whose right, us or them?” question.

Jesus Passes the Exam with Grace

Jesus responds by telling them they are wrong and showing them how and why they are wrong. This is the grace and mercy of Jesus. He shows us the truth AND He shows us how to love and

embrace and implement God's truth on our lives. So many today are willing to command obedience to what they believe to be true but are unwilling to show us how their convictions are true. They demand conformance and obedience without patience or reason. That is not Jesus. Though our ultimate avenue for relationship with God is faith, Jesus builds our faith on understanding God's word.

Application

Let's be like Jesus in this matter. Rather than just throwing Bible verses at people to "prove them wrong," let's help people understand and know God's word, and through that understood word to come to faith in Jesus!

THE EXAMINATION OF THE WORD

The Word, the Power, and the Victory

Two Avenues of Truth

So, in His answer, Jesus offers the unbelieving Sadducees two avenues of truth for understanding the resurrection and heaven: the word of God and the power of God. Listen, the word of God reveals the power of God to accomplish the victory of God! **When we know the word we will experience by faith the power and gain the victory.**

Leading Question for Us

Jesus affirms the resurrection of the dead and the absence of marriage in heaven. So, let's begin with the word of God and come to understand what Jesus means so that we may come away with an informed faith and a godly perspective on this question. Let's ask, "**What does God's word reveal about marriage that helps us understand the resurrection and heaven?**" Tonight we'll focus on what Jesus reveals about the certainty of resurrection, but for now we'll focus on how God, through marriage, informs our understanding of eternity for those who are resurrected to eternal life.

Marriage in the Word

General Revelations

From the word of God we discover that 1) marriage is generally the normal intimate relationship provision of God for human beings in the world. 2) It is restricted by God to a lifelong relationship between one man and one woman. 3) God does not call everyone into marriage (Mat 19:12 "*For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.*"), but **everyone has the opportunity to observe the four divinely defined purposes of God that He displays through godly, Christ-centered marriages.**

Four Divinely Defined Purposes for Marriage as Revealed in the Word

1. **Personhood** (male and female created He them, in His image)
 - a. Gen 1:27 "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*"
 - b. Gen 1:28 "*And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the*

sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.””

2. **Pleasure** (context for companionship and sexual intimacy)
 - a. **Gen 2:24-25** *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”*
 - b. **Gen 4:1** *“Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.””*
3. **Procreation** (the ongoing determination of God to fill the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord through “godly offspring”)
 - a. **Hab 2:14** *“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”*
 - b. **Malachi 2:15** *“Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.”*
4. **Promise** (the arrival of the Messiah, the full revelation of the glory of God through the woman)
 - a. **Gen 3:15** *“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.””*
 - b. **Gen 12:1-3** *“Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.””*

By the time any of us, through the grace of God in Christ Jesus and through faith in Christ, reaches heaven, every single earthly function of marriage (which ONLY has an earthly function for us) will be fulfilled.

1. **Personhood** -
 - a. We will be perfect in Christ
 - i. **Colossians 1:27-28 (ESV)** ²⁷ *To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.* ²⁸ *Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.*
 - ii. **1 John 3:2 (ESV)** ² *Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*
 - b. - the image of God will be fully restored in us personally and corporately as the Body of Christ
2. **Pleasure**

- a. **Psalm 16:11 (ESV)** *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*
- 3. **Progeny**
 - a. The new heavens and the new earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD (no more need of anyone to teach them)
 - i. **Jeremiah 31:34 ESV** *And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."*
- 4. **Promise**
 - a. Christ will be the light: every intent of God in Christ will be finally, spiritually realized
 - b. **Revelation 22:3 ESV** *No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.*

Summary

All that marriage looks forward and points to will be infinitely, eternally realized to our everlasting joy. That is the word of God and its fulfilment is the power of God at work. The resurrection, accomplished in us as it was in Christ, is the power of God at work and will be our final entrance into the will of God revealed in the word of God.

Application Questions

So, a question for us may not be, will I know my spouse in heaven someday? The question might be do I encounter heaven in my marriage today? Do I experience the heavenly function of marriage in my earthly relationship? Do I provide the experience of God's design for marriage for my spouse? Do I actively pursue revealing the image of God in my relationship with my spouse? Do I retain my real and fantasy love interests for my spouse alone? Do my spouse and I act in the lives of our children to mold them into godly offspring through whom the knowledge of the glory of God is spread in their world? Does our marriage relationship point to Jesus as the one and only Savior sent from God in fulfilment of His promise to rescue us from slaver to sin, Satan, and self?

CONCLUSION

God's word reveals to us the Person of God, the Purpose of God, and the Power of God. The word tells us that marriage, as instituted by God, is a means for coming to know and love God. And living eternally with the One we know and love, Who knows us perfectly and loves us infinitely and unconditionally, is the point of our existence. Marriage points us to God's purpose for us, to know Him, to love Him, to be eternally loved by Him. Marriage prepares us to finally find satisfaction and contentment in the relationship with God for which we were created in the first place! Marriage is the shadow on earth of the substance in heaven.

INVITATION

How do we come to have this relationship with God that satisfies the heart need for love? Through faith in Jesus Christ! God sent His Son into the world not only to die for our sins and cancel the debt of guilt our sin burdens us with, but that through faith in Christ, through believing

in Him we may have eternal life.

Put your faith and trust in Christ, believe in Him, know that what God promises on account of Christ is true and can be yours by faith. Christ died to remove the obstacles to faith and life. He died to set you free from slavery to the fear of death. He has done all that God might require of any of us so that through simple faith we might have all God offers us.