

**HEAVEN: MARRIAGE, FAMILY, GENDER, SEX**  
Luke 20:27-38, Doctrine and Covenants 132:19-20  
By Raymond White

Is there marriage in heaven, gender in heaven, sex in heaven, or not? And if so, what would any of that mean regarding the Mormon church?

I'll be listing talking point scriptures that I believe pertain to this subject and offer interpretations of my own. You may interpret them differently and that's fine. You may think I'm wrong and that's fine. You believe what you want, of course.

I am not writing for or by permission of the Mormon church or any church. The exegesis I offer here is entirely my own and if you are critical of what I have to say, then you are criticizing me alone and not any church.

**[1] INTRODUCTION**

I will give you an opinion that I've long held, and that is this: The two most important documents ever written are: first, the Gospel of John; and, second, Doctrine and Covenants 132.

Here is my reasoning: If I have the Gospel of John and nothing else, I'd know enough to have eternal life, which is the highest value. But if I also have D&C 132, then I'd also know enough to have eternal love, in the filial sense, which is value added.

Eternal life is of course the primary goal of all Christians, God's highest and best gift. But eternal love, again in the filial sense, is the value added goal that makes eternal life not just wonderful but also beautiful. After all, just how do you expect to spend eternity? In heaven praising God is the standard Christian answer. I have no quarrel with that except to ask, what exactly does that mean? I think praising God means to be like God and do what he does. After all, imitation is the highest form of flattery (Charles Colton). And there is this: **Romans 8:16** ...we are the children of God. :17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God ... So it is no heresy to believe that we will one day do what God does. What else would God expect of his heirs?

Jesus said (**Mark 12:30-31**) that all God's commandments and all our duty revolve around two things: love God and love our neighbor. But who is our neighbor? Jesus answered that with the story of the Good Samaritan. Our neighbors then are the people we actually come in contact with, not the ethereal people around the world beyond reach. While we might empathize with people around the world, that empathy costs us nothing because they are out of reach. Jesus is more interested in us loving our neighbors because we can actually reach our neighbors and can actually help at some personal cost to ourselves, as did the Good Samaritan.

So, who are our neighbors that Jesus says we should love? Anyone within reach.

Who then are our *closest* neighbors? To whom should we be giving our greatest good and our best kindness? It is no stretch to say that at the top of that list of neighbors we should love is our families; namely, our spouse and our children. If we cannot love them first and best then love means nothing. **Ephesians 5:26** instructs husbands to love their wives. **Titus 2:4** instructs wives to love their husbands. Family is at the heart of all human relationships. This is not new.

Life and love — those are the two things we want, and, it should be obvious, that we want them forever, without end. Cicero wrote, “Nothing that ends is long.” He's right.

The idea of eternal life is of course familiar to everyone. Even non-believers understand it and want it, they just won't embrace it. But the notion of eternal love — still in the filial sense,

I won't say that again — is strictly Mormon thinking and is not well known outside Mormon circles. It is simply this: Marriage, the husband/wife relationship, is, or can be eternal. Not 'till death do us part, but forever, on-going, without end. And the parent/child relationship can also be eternal. The idea of eternal family, husband/wife and parent/child, is uniquely Mormon.

Where do Mormons get this notion of eternal marriage from?

## [2] THE DOCTRINE

The entire notion of eternal marriage comes from a single verse in Mormon scripture. It is a long verse, the longest in all scripture. But don't rush through it. Take your time and read **:19** carefully. Then also read the following verse, **:20**, which adds the foundation of how and why.

***D&C 132:19** And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; and it shall be said unto them — Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths — then shall it be written in the Lamb's Book of Life, that he shall commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, and if ye abide in my covenant, and commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fullness and a continuation of seed forever and ever. **:20** Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.*

Now that's a mouthful. As I said, **:19** is the longest verse in all scripture, but it deserves to be. It says a lot! To sum it up: When a man and a woman are married, if that marriage is performed by a proper God anointed authority, that marriage is forever. In other words, not even death can dissolve it. In other words, my wife and I will be as married in heaven as we are here.

A corollary is that our children will be still our children, and we will still be our parent's children in unbroken lines from Adam and Eve down to, as it says, "a continuation of seed forever and ever." That's a big family. And that's what I want. Don't you? Whether you believe it or not, isn't that what you want? Filial love continuing forever, unhindered by death?

This is core Mormon thinking known to all Mormons.

## [3] MY SUPPOSITION

Here is my question: Is this Mormon notion of marriage in heaven Biblical or is it strictly a Mormon invention and not Biblical at all? I claim that it is very Biblical — you just have to know where to look. What does the Bible say about eternal marriage? A lot. And that is the

purpose of this writing, to document what the Bible has to say about marriage in heaven, gender in heaven, sex in heaven, all of that sort of thing.

I will start by intertwining two ideas. The question “Is there marriage in heaven?” is little different than the companion questions “is there sex in heaven?” or “is there gender in heaven?” or “do other-world beings (angels, spirits, resurrected person, demons, whatever) have gender?” Those are all synonym questions. For if other-world beings have gender, then clearly they have gender for a purpose, and that purpose can only be sex and reproduction. And if that be the case, then surely there is marriage in heaven because marriage is what God demands of sexual unions.

So, to answer the question “is there marriage in heaven?” I claim that I need only answer the question: “Do other-world beings have gender?” If the answer to that question is yes, then it necessarily follows that there is marriage in heaven — unless one is willing to believe that there could be gender without procreation which is nonsense, or sex in heaven without marriage which doesn’t seem God-like. So, barring those two possibilities I suggest to you that gender in heaven necessarily implies marriage in heaven. So the task that I have undertaken is to locate Bible verses which state or suggest or hint or give clues that other-world beings do indeed have gender.

There is no question that the Mormon church still affirms these ideas as foundational to their church’s purpose. These ideas were unequivocally restated in their “The Family, A Proclamation to the World” (September 23, 1995). It says, **:3** *Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose. :4* *In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped God...* It is impossible to imagine words more unequivocal than those. Mormons still boldly declare what they believe.

Perhaps I’ve offended you with such frank talk. If so, I’m sorry. Wait a minute, no I’m not. If you are offended by frank discussions of sex and marriage, you are too easily offended and should be a nun or a monk. Get over it, and let’s talk about what we need to talk about, can we? So get rid of the blush and let’s have a conversation about sex, etc. Okay? So let’s proceed.

#### [4] OBJECTION

I will start at the end — that is, at the challenging verse, that verse which seems to argue against my supposition. I have to deal with that verse first because if I don’t, you may reflexively think that everything else I say is wrong. So let’s begin there, and tackle the hard verse first.

What did Jesus say, and not say, about marriage in heaven? The critical text is **Luke 20:27-38** and also its companion verses **Matthew 22:30** and **Mark 12:25**. These verses all begin with a question that the Sadducees brought to Jesus.

**Luke 20:27** *Then came to him [Jesus] certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection: and they asked him, :28* *Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man’s brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. :29* *There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. :30* *And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. :31* *And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died. :32* *Last of all the woman died also. :33* *Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? For seven had her to wife.*

These were Sadducees posing this question. Sadducees didn't believe in resurrection and they framed the question to make resurrection sound ludicrous. They were not just arguing against Jesus, they were arguing against the Pharisees and all Jews who believed in resurrection. In their minds, if there is resurrection there must necessarily be gender in the resurrection.

That is not bad reasoning. After all, bodies have gender, so when bodies are resurrected wouldn't they necessarily have gender? So their argument is: since marriage in the resurrection is ludicrous (because you can't figure out who is married to who, and that's their point) therefore resurrection is also ludicrous. That was their logic, and right or wrong, it at least made sense.

Here is the answer that Jesus gave. To see the truth we must examine the three variants (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) side by side. Here are the three texts. We must read them carefully.

<p><b>Matthew 22</b>  <b>:29</b> <i>Jesus...said... ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.</i></p> <p><b>:30</b> <i>For in the resurrection</i></p> <p><i>they neither marry, nor are given in marriage,</i></p> <p><i>but are as the angels of God in heaven.</i></p> <p><b>:31</b> <i>But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, :32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.</i></p>	<p><b>Mark 12</b>  <b>:24</b> <i>And Jesus ... said ... Do ye not therefore err because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?</i></p> <p><b>:25</b> <i>For when they shall rise from the dead,</i></p> <p><i>they neither marry, nor are given in marriage;</i></p> <p><i>but are as the angels which are in heaven.</i></p> <p><b>:26</b> <i>And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush, God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? :27 He is not the God of the dead but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.</i></p>	<p><b>Luke 20</b></p> <p><b>:34</b> <i>And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage.:35 But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead,</i></p> <p><i>neither marry, nor are given in marriage:</i></p> <p><b>:36</b> <i>Neither can they die any more: for they are equal to the angels, and are children of God.</i></p> <p><b>:37</b> <i>Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. :38 For he is not the God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.</i></p>
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Matthew and Mark agree together, but Luke says something completely different, so different in fact that it is impossible for the two variants to both be correct. Either Luke reports Jesus' words correctly or Matthew and Mark do, but not both because they completely disagree.

Matthew and Mark say that in the resurrection they do not *marry* because they are like angels. Luke says nothing of the sort. Luke says that some who expect the resurrection (those “accounted worthy”) do not marry, period! *And* they do not *die* because they are like angels. That’s a big, big difference.

Pulling it apart, here is what we see:

Matthew says that in the resurrection they don’t marry because they are like angels.

Mark agrees: when they rise from the dead they don’t marry because they are like angels.

But Luke does not say that. He says those who want to be worthy of the next life and the resurrection, don’t marry, *period!* In other words, they are celibate, here and now in this life. And then Luke adds as a separate sentence: *they don’t die* because they are like angels.

These differences are huge. Nowhere does Luke say, as Matthew and Mark do, that in the resurrection they do not marry. Luke gives us two separate sentences joined with a conjunction *neither*. Matthew and Mark combine those two into a single sentence by deleting and altering critical words forcing the text to say something entirely different.

So, which is most likely correct? If Matthew and Mark are correct, then Luke put words into Jesus’ mouth that Jesus never said and Luke is an unmitigated liar. But if Luke is correct, then Matthew and Mark are guilty *only* of deleting and changing words to alter the meaning.

The second seems the lesser mistake. A scribe who omits words can at least defend himself by saying that the words he reports were actually said, never mind that the omissions change the meaning entirely. Newspaper people do that a lot, quote only the words they want and omit others to get a false impression then defend themselves with, “But that *is* what he said.” Literally, yes, but out of context to distort the meaning. Well, Matthew and Mark distort the meaning with a material deletion; namely, Luke’s words “Neither can they die anymore” are conspicuously absent from Matthew and Mark thus creating an entirely different meaning.

Therefore, it seems far more likely that Luke is correct, because if Luke is a liar, he is a verbose liar, contriving lots of monologue for Jesus. I don’t believe that. Luke’s words are too large to have been invented. A copyist might delete or change words, but to add words such as these seems impossible. Luke (and his copyists) did not invent these words, therefore Jesus actually spoke them.

And that means that Matthew and Mark (and their copyists) were savage editors who omitted and changed critical words, and by doing so changed Jesus’ meaning entirely. And thus Matthew and Mark are critically flawed and it is Luke we must follow for our doctrinal exegesis.

Again: Matthew and Mark are saying that resurrected people do not get married because they are like angels. That certainly runs afoul of Mormon thinking and it runs afoul of Luke who says that resurrection wanna-be’s don’t marry, *and* they don’t die because they are like angels.

Why might Matthew and Mark prefer their reading? Perhaps their thinking was, well, angels are immortal, so why would angels need to reproduce since they’re not going to die? Likewise, resurrected beings are not going to die (again) so they don’t need to reproduce. If that was their thinking, that’s flawed thinking because Luke’s text also says, “and are children of God.” And if anybody is immortal, it is certainly God, and he has children. So any notion that immortality precludes having children is simply not true because God has children.

Now let’s fill in the rest of Luke from the beginning. I’ll paraphrase. “Yes, Sadducees, most people get married, of course. And some folks, those accounted worthy of the next world and the resurrection, don’t get married. But either way, married or celibate, they all resurrect, so what’s your point?” Jesus deflects their long winded who-is-married-to-who argument, dismisses

it, then launches into his scriptural argument *for resurrection*. To their who-is-married-to-who argument, Jesus is saying, so what? Resurrection is a reality however scrambled the problems may be, and then he makes his case. That's *his* point.

Here are the critical facts. Let's line them up.

*First:* Jesus does not say *who* accounts them worthy. Maybe God accounts them worthy, or maybe they account themselves worthy. The text allows either. In other words, some folks think that their celibacy makes them worthy of the resurrection. So, which is true? If the first is true, God accounts them worthy, then that comes with a major problem; namely, *only* celibates are worthy of the resurrection because that is literally what Jesus would be saying. Therefore, that has to be nonsense. Therefore, the second is true: Jesus is speaking of people who imagine that their celibacy makes them worthy of the resurrection.

*Second:* Luke's words "shall be" is future tense. Jesus is not talking about resurrected beings but people who are anticipating resurrection, resurrection wanna-be's, God-seeking Jews who are looking *forward* to resurrection. Matthew and Mark reference the actual resurrection ("in the resurrection"), but Luke does not, saying instead "they which *shall be* accounted worthy." Therefore, mortal celibates are in view, not angels and resurrected beings.

*Third:* The idea that God accounts them worthy fails for another reason; namely, do people need to be "accounted worthy" to resurrect? Resurrection is for everyone, good and bad. No one is "worthy" of resurrection (**Acts 24:15**, **Revelation 20:13**) except in the uninformed theology of these pre-Christian believers. Jesus is not saying get worthy for heaven by being celibate, he is talking about people who believe that.

*Forth:* Luke's Jesus did not say "they don't marry *in the resurrection*." He said "they don't marry" *period!* In other words, he is not talking about genderless angels and resurrected people, he's talking about celibates, here and now, people who do not marry *here* because they think that makes them worthy for "that world and the resurrection."

*Fifth and finally:* Matthew and Mark's logical argument ("they don't marry in heaven because they are like angels") falls apart because that is not what Jesus said. He said what Luke says he said; namely, "they *don't die* because they are like angels."

The *forth* point is the crux of the whole matter. Luke nowhere discusses *marriage in heaven*. Those two, marriage and heaven, are separate subjects in separate sentences. Luke's Jesus is saying that resurrection wanna-be's [1] don't marry (are celibate), *and* [2] won't die again because they are like angels. Those two thoughts get blended into a single thought in Matthew and Mark by inexcusable deletions forcing Jesus to say that in the resurrection they don't marry because they are like angels. That, we now see, is something Jesus never said.

It is a side issue but an important one to ask: Does celibacy work? Does celibacy impress God? No, it does not. But wasn't Jesus advocating celibacy? No, he was not. He was discussing people who believe that. This is not the only time Jesus talked about celibacy, he discussed it also in **Matthew 19:20**...*there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake*. And there too, he is simply discussing people who believe that, who "make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." He was not advocating celibacy.

But is it true or not true that celibacy makes people righteous? That can't possibly be true if for no other reason than God's first commandment was (to paraphrase **Genesis 1:22**): "Adam, get the girl pregnant!" Also there is, **Genesis 2:18** *And the LORD God said, It is not good that man should be alone*. And finally, if celibacy is the hallmark of righteousness, then to be

righteous the human race would have long ago become extinct. It is impossible to imagine the creator God wanting that for us — extinction by celibacy, that is.

Is this important? Certainly it is, particularly if Jesus means that *only* celibates are “accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection.” It can be read that way. but that’s not necessarily how it must be read. It depends on who accounts them worthy, God or themselves, and the text doesn’t say. But if we take the most restricting meaning, that only celibates are worthy, then that excludes Peter who was married. And that would be an awful theological mess, to have to believe that only celibates resurrect. Far better is to allow the “accounted worthy” to simply mean Jewish God-seekers who think celibacy makes them worthy of resurrection. And that reading allows us, actually requires us, to understand that Jesus was not talking about celibate angels or resurrected beings but about celibate believing Jews.

Now back to Matthew and Mark. They do say “in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage.” But that reading is the result of: [1] deleting Luke’s words “neither can they die any more”; and, [2] altering Luke’s words “they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead” to Matthew’s words “in the resurrection” and Mark’s words “when they shall rise from the dead” which Luke’s Jesus never said. Those words are Matthew and Mark’s interpretations (bad interpretations) of Luke’s words.

These changes are not trivial. They change Luke’s correct thought (“they don’t marry but are celibate,” and “they won’t die anymore because they are like angels”) into Matthew and Mark’s incorrect thought (“they don’t marry in heaven because they are like angels”). See the mischief that deleting a few words can do? What Jesus actually said is what Luke says he said.

Do you see the difference? Matthew and Mark say that resurrected beings are *unmarried* because they are like angels. Luke says that resurrected beings *can’t die* because they are like angels, and that’s all the difference in the world. Luke is right, Matthew and Mark are wrong.

The Luke text makes sense and is not a challenge to the Mormon notion of marriage in heaven. Even Sadducees who rejected the resurrected understood the obvious, that resurrection implies gender. That embarrassing fact has long evaded the attention of all Christians except Mormons who embrace it. Jesus never said angels are genderless or that resurrected beings don’t get married. Jesus said what Luke says he said, and with that text Mormons have no quarrel.

## [5] OBJECTION TWO

There is a second Biblical objection to the notion of marriage in heaven.

*1 Corinthians 7:1* Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

What is the problem here? If it is better “not to touch a woman” then that certainly would challenge the Mormon view that marriage is the moral high ground, something to seek in heaven.

How might Mormons respond? Like this: Paul did not say, “It is good for a man not to touch a woman,” *they* said that, the people of Corinth. The words “It is good for a man not to touch a woman” is their question, not Paul’s answer. Paul is saying something like, “You asked me if it is better for a man not to touch a woman, and now I’m answering.”

It simply cannot be that celibacy is a general Christian doctrine, for these reasons:

*Genesis 1:28 ...and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply...*

*Genesis 2:18 And the LORD God said, It is not good that man should be alone.*

*1 Corinthians 11:11 Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man in the Lord.*

*1 Timothy 4:2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy... :3 Forbidding to marry...*

*Hebrews 13:4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled...*

So, even though celibacy is something that sort of caught on in the Christian church — (for instance, the pseudopigraphical book “Paul and Theckla” where Paul teaches the young engaged girl Theckla to be a celibate) — it was not something that the apostles taught.

The reason celibacy caught on in the early church was because when the ten Roman persecutions ended (the last and worst being Diocletian, 303-311 A.D.) with Constantine’s victory, Christians wondered: “Well, *now* how do we prove our devotion to God, now that the Romans are no longer killing us?” And the answer was monk-ism first introduced by Saint Anthony around 305 A.D. If we can’t die for God any more, some reasoned, then we should live for God by abstaining from good things — including sex.

Well, Anthony was wrong. Jesus did say we should be willing to give up everything for him, but what he meant was: if the world comes after you to take it all away from you, you should be willing to sacrifice it all for him. He did not mean you should throw away all good things just for the appearance of devotion, particularly your wife and children.

A side note, but an important one —

*Luke 14:26 If a man come to me and hate not his ... wife and children ... he cannot be my disciple.*

*Romans 9:13 ... Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*

“Hate” is a strong word, and a poor translation. To us, hate means to despise. But the Greek word does not mean that, it only means to prefer less. God preferred Jacob over Esau. God did not “hate” Esau in the modern sense of the word. We must prefer Jesus over all other things including our families. For instance, Jesus never asked Peter to abandon his wife — they were, in fact, crucified together according to Eusebius.

Should we “hate” our wives and children in the modern sense of the word? Never. That is not what Jesus asks of us. But he does demand that we love him even more.

Now, back to Paul. This chapter is unsettling. But not just to me, it was unsettling to Paul.

*1 Corinthians 7:6 But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. :7 For I would that all men were even as I myself... :8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. :9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn. :25 Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment ... :26 I suppose therefore that this is*

*good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. :27 Art thou bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife. :28 ... if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you. :38 So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better. :40 But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.*

What is this, Paul? You're saying this "by permission and not of commandment"? God's not telling you to say it, you just think you should? Or "I suppose"? Paul! You are spilling out far reaching notions of marriage that influence everyone's thinking, and you only "suppose"? Or you "*think* you have the spirit of God" to say such things? Is Paul a spirit filled apostle or not? Apparently not when he wrote this chapter. His own hesitation and self-doubt casts a shadow over the text, especially since he closes the epistle four chapters later with —

*1 Corinthians 11:11 Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man in the Lord.*

— which directly contradicts **7:38** ...*he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.* That Paul contradicts himself in the same letter cannot be unimportant.

Paul is clearly at odds with himself. And while he is debasing marriage, he does so with apprehension. He is unsure and he says so.

What could cause such apprehension, such wishy-washy-ness? Why would he say such things as "well, I'm not sure but in some situations, maybe it is better to stay single"?

Does Paul's wishy-washy-ness mean that he was not writing by the spirit? Maybe, or maybe not. It could just as well mean that the spirit wanted Paul to be wishy-washy. The truth is not always this or that, sometimes the truth is the ambiguity — (Think quantum physics. A Physics teacher once said to me, "The cloud is the truth.") Maybe every obscure thing Paul wrote in this chapter is the revealed truth. We need only to understand it for what it actually says and not for what we want it to say. What it actually says is that Paul is unsure. Now *that*, we can believe. He is having trouble deciding if marriage is always the better choice, and maybe that indecision is the revelation. Sometimes, in some situations, it appears to him that it is better to stay single. That is not an argument against marriage or marriage in heaven, it's just a fact of life.

There are two things that shed light on this text, or cloak it in greater obscurity.

*First*, is the Present Distress.

*1 Corinthians 7:26 ...the present distress.*

What is the present distress? Probably intense persecution. The threat of violent death and torture about to ensnare those he loves is enough to cause Paul (and any leader for that matter) to wonder, what is the best advice I can give about marriage? And if such hideous persecutions are heading our way (eaten by lions, burned at the stake, crucified, etc.), would it be better perhaps to remain single? And the answer might reasonably be yes, but not without trepidations.

That's what I think was at the heart of Paul's misgivings. What Paul is really saying — (and it is evidenced by **:28** ...*but I spare you*) — is this: "Yes, everyone should be married. But

because of the particular problems right now, I'm giving you permission to not get married. And I think it's okay for me to do that." That is hardly an argument against marriage.

And then there's the fact that Paul really believed that Jesus was returning soon. With that world view, it would be easy to understand Paul thinking about marriage: *why bother?*

*Second*, is Paul's yokefellow. This idea was suggested to me sometime in the 1970s by Doctor Wilfred Grieg, a B.Y.U. professor.

*Philippians 4:2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. :3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women...*

This is an innocuous enough sounding verse that seems to say nothing really important. Except that there is one small detail: just who is Paul's "yokefellow"? Throughout this epistle and most others, Paul gives advice to his many friends and addresses them directly by name. In this text, his friends are Euodias and Syntyche, and "yokefellow," some unnamed female that Paul addresses only by a pet name. And he expects her to know that she is his addressee by that pet name alone.

In modern English, we have such pet names as "dearest" or "darling" or "sweetheart," terms of very close affection. Such pet names not only identify the addressee without ambiguity but also document the relationship. Such a pet name allows the subject to know exactly who she is without a proper name, and that because of the familiarity of their relationship. Without such a close relationship, an addressee could not possibly know that the word "sweetheart" targets her specifically. In fact, without such a relationship, a pet name would be presumptuous, insulting, possibly even threatening.

I long ago abandoned the old letter writing custom of opening with "Dear (someone)" because it felt so weirdly presumptuous, unless of course the letter really was to someone who was indeed dear to me — and not male because that felt creepy. But pet names, properly used, are intended to be a bit presumptuous, in a loving way. That's the point. Pet names rightly presume on a relationship, and that's why they are so sweet.

Here's the deal. This word "yokefellow" is a common pet name in classical Greek. And in every instance, this pet name means one thing and one thing only. It means "wife."

Do you think that Paul was single? Not here. Paul was married. Maybe not when he wrote 1 Corinthians, but he was when he wrote Philippians. So at the very least, Paul did not take his own advice to stay single. Or maybe he was already married when he wrote 1 Corinthians. In that case, "I would that all men were even as I myself" means something very different than we currently imagine. Could he possibly mean "I wish all men were single"? What? Like Shakers? How did that work out? How many Shakers are there today? In round numbers? Zero! Zero is a pretty round number. Celibacy is a formula for extinction, a poor strategy for a fledgling religion that intends to overwhelm the world.

I really wish we had the epistle that the Corinthians sent to Paul that prompted Paul's reply. If Paul was married, that would cast even more doubt over the meaning of 1 Corinthians 7.

Why is this important? Because if 1 Corinthians 7 forces us to conclude that celibacy is the moral high ground, then the Mormon notion of celestial marriage suffers a major blow. But if Paul was married, that forces us to reconsider the real meaning of 1 Corinthians 7. I believe he wrote it under the duress of eminent persecution, and at that moment he would have said pretty much anything to protect his people, including something like, "Well, maybe you should hold off

on marriage for awhile.” But in a safer time, I think Paul would never have written that or anything like that.

Before I leave this annoying chapter, *1 Corinthians 7*, now that I have challenged most of it, let me say some things positive about it.

The Mormon church is so gung-ho on family and marriage (and it should be), it often happens that there are members who do not have such an ideal family situation who sadly wonder, “Where’s my place in all this?” That question will often be met with, “If you are faithful you will not be deprived of the full blessings in eternity. God will make a way for you.”

Well, I suppose. But for many sisters who are single, it sure feels like being deprived.

This chapter, *1 Corinthians 7*, offers encouragement to just such people. For example —

*1 Corinthians 7:12 But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. :13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. :14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean but now are they holy.*

There are many good Mormon men and women who agonize over their missed temple blessings because they married non-Mormons. And they might even sometimes fantasize, “Should I divorce my spouse and find someone I can share temple blessings with?”

While much of what Paul says in this chapter is disquieting to temple believing Mormons, this text, *7:12-14*, is comforting to people who don’t have those final temple blessings. Paul is saying in effect, “Don’t worry about it, and certainly don’t get divorced. Because in some way, beyond our understanding, your faithfulness actually covers your spouse.”

In other words, there seems to be a divine nepotism at work here. It almost sounds like you can drag your unbelieving spouse into heaven kicking and screaming. And that’s probably not far from the truth when you consider baptism for the dead and the sealing ordinance. And if the believing spouse pre-deceases the unbelieving, well, there are the kids who will do temple work for them because they love their unbelieving parent as well as their believing parent.

You see? What Paul says here makes perfect sense. One believing spouse can sanctify a whole generation of children, and the unbelieving spouse lucks out and gets in on it because he or she just happened to pick the right partner in life, and was wise enough to be a faithful partner and a good parent.

So, take hope, you Mormons who are married to non-believers. Paul gives you a lot here to hope for. Really, you’re okay.

For my second example —

*1 Corinthians 7:15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.*

There are of course divorced Mormons who wonder, “Did I lose everything because I am divorced?” Not if you are the innocent spouse. Paul is pretty clear, “A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases.” What is bondage? Bondage means forbidden to remarry. Paul

frees us from that terror, that one might be innocently deserted but forbidden to remarry, and thus stuck in a life of unwanted celibacy. Paul frees us from that possibility.

But do be careful. Jesus is pretty stern in *Matthew 19*. But that's for another article.

And finally, for my third example —

*1 Corinthians 7:32 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord. :33 But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. :34 There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit; but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.*

What about people who just have no opportunity to get married for whatever reason? And what about widows? This text speaks to both.

Paul is, I believe, overstating his point, claiming that the single life is actually better than the married life. But he is well-intended, “I would have you without carefulness.” In other words, he is not trying to stress us, he is trying to *un*-stress us. Again, he is saying, don't worry about it.

Here's his point: As good as marriage is, being single has its advantages too.

Now right away, I feel all Mormons ready to jump down my throat. “NO, NO, NO! There are NO advantages to being single but only advantages to being married. Being married is always, always, always better than being single.”

Well, tell that to a person who faces a life of unwanted singleness, or for that matter, widows. The insistence that singleness has no advantages ever is a slap in the face to them.

Here's my point, and I think Paul's too.

Of course marriage is wonderful. The Bible says that all over the place. The problem is that it is so wonderful that it is at times distracting.

There are other things — (always less important than marriage of course, David O. McKay did say “No other success can compensate for failure in the home”) — that single people can do and achieve that they could not do if they were married; like, for instance, serving a mission to cannibals. Now I might do that, risk my life for dangerous, unbelieving people, but not my wife's life and not my life so long as I am married. She needs me, and I'm not anxious to leave her for *any* reason, not even a really good cause. But if one day I find myself grievously widowed, I might undertake to risk my life for a good cause, like proselytizing cannibals. Jesuits did that, and sometimes they got eaten. But that's why there are a billion Catholics today, and that's a good thing.

Same with career. Back in the 1980's I suspected that I should quit my secure job at Bank of America and go to work for Microsoft. But not with a wife and three small children. I just couldn't take the risk. I loved them too much to change jobs on a whim. And not changing jobs, in retrospect, was probably a financial blunder. A lot of folks at Microsoft made a lot of money.

I understand that marriage is better than the single life. I'm just saying what I think Paul is saying, that single people have certain opportunities to serve that married people don't have. Does that mean I would trade my married life for the single life? Absolutely not. My married life is just too good. But for people who are forced to live a single life, for heaven's sake, why not let them have this? A single person can go on missions that married people can't. A single person

can go to the temple every day. A single person can be wholly devoted to genealogical work, or feed starving people in soup kitchens, or become a doctor to cure leprosy, or whatever.

The point is, how about some balance?

Are you married? Wonderful. So am I. I'm glad for both of us. But why hog all the blessings? Mormons need to try harder to let single people know that they matter too. And in some situations, they may matter more. Thank you, Paul, for giving single people a break.

## [6] IMMORTAL LOVERS

Okay, now to my subject in earnest. What does the Bible actually say about gender or non-gender of other-world beings? We'll start with Adam and Eve, the immortal lovers.

***Genesis 1:27** So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. **:28** And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply...**:31** And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good... **2:17** But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. **3:6** And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.*

These are the first stories of the Bible — the story of the creation of our first parents and the story of their fall. Three points here:

*First:* God said, “Adam, get the girl pregnant,” and, “that would be a *very* good thing, trust me.” No doubt Adam said, “Amen,” or some other exclamation of appreciation. So tell me if you can, where is there sin in sex? God ordered it and blessed it. Sex was in fact his first commandment, so, why would anyone call that sin? Why would anyone want to?

*Second:* Here is an important detail — Adam and Eve were married, they were not shack up honeys: **2:25** *And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.* **3:6** *she...gave also unto her husband...* So Adam and Eve were husband and wife.

Why does that matter? Because it means that the problem with sex is not the sex but that *it ends!* Just like life. The problem with life, as with love, is that it ends. That's why shacking up, and one night stands, and prostitution, and divorce *are* sinful, not because of the sex but because the conjugal union ends. It's been said that when a man hires a prostitute, he's not paying her for sex, he's paying her to go home after sex. That's the sin. But if instead, they stay together for a lifetime, (i.e. marriage), there is no sin. Or if there was sin, it is gone. (**Deuteronomy 22:28-29**).

And living together won't do. Why? Because without a documented promise (marriage) there is the *intent* to leave. The only way to say, and mean, “I won't leave you” is to document it publically. That's marriage. That's what's in the “piece of paper.” Many argue, “But it's just a piece of paper.” I argue back, yeah, well, so is a grant deed “just a piece of paper.” But try moving into your dream house without it and see how long you last before being arrested.

Here's my point: The marriage certificate, like a grant deed, publically documents your agreement, so that the world is witness to your assertion that you love a person, and intend to love that person forever. Of course you can change your mind and stop, but not without breaking your public commitment. That's what divorce is.

“Just a piece of paper”? Hardly. It is the proof of your committed intent to love forever.

Marriage is the opposite of sin. Marriage is our public declaration that the conjugal relationship (i.e. sex and children) will not end except over our dead bodies. In other words, fate may eventually pry us apart but not with our permission. Death is the enemy. It ends all good things. And sex, love, and children are very good things indeed. Why? Because God said so.

By the way, what is the biblical penalty for sex outside marriage? Is it death? The penalty for many deviant sexual acts (incest, rape, etc.) is death. But what if consenting unmarried partners have sex and it's none of those? What is the penalty? The penalty is not death, it is (surprise!) marriage! — and marriage without the possibility of divorce.

Here's the text.

***Deuteronomy 22:28** If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; **:29** Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days.*

My point is that it is not the sex that is the sin, it is the end that is the sin. When an unmarried couple has sex, is that sin? Yes. Why? Because it is calculated to end. But the sin is removed when they repent and get married. As long as they are expecting to end their union, that is sin. That is what shack-ups and one-night-stands do. But when they change their mind and cement their union with marriage, the sin disappears. Repentance works.

There is this one caution though: beware of presumptuous sin (***Numbers 15:30***); that is, sinning with the intention of repenting later. That kind of premeditated repentance doesn't work.

So, what is the sin? It is the end of the conjugal union and not the conjugal union itself.

*Third:* This is the important point which I am finally now getting to. Adam and Eve were immortal beings. Well, they were not *innately* immortal; they were immortal because they had continual access to the tree of life, but that's beside the point. The point is: they were immortal. But then death became the new reality when they violated the warning “don't eat that fruit.”

Here's the devil in the details: Which came first? (No, not the chicken or the egg) The sex or the fall? The sex came first (***1:28***), then the fall (***3:6***). So, what is the only conclusion we can possibly come to? These married immortal beings were having sex!

Does that offend you? Then read some other book, the Bible is too risqué for you. I don't care if you're offended, I only care that you know what the book says.

Now, try this Q&A:

“What did Jesus Christ do?”

“He did the atonement.”

“Well okay. So, what does the atonement do?”

“It undoes the fall.”

“You mean it undoes death?”

“Yes.”

“And sin?”

“Yes.”

“And restores everything to what it was before the fall, before death and sin?”

“Ah, yes, but where are we going with this?”

“And what was life like before the fall?”  
 “Adam and Eve were immortal.”  
 “Yes, and?”  
 “And what?”  
 “And what were Adam and Eve doing before the fall?”  
 “They were naming the animals.”  
 “And?”  
 “I don’t know. Stuff.”  
 “What stuff? What did God tell them to do?”  
 “Have dominion?”  
 “You’re evading the question. You just don’t want to say it.”  
 “(Sigh!) Maybe they were trying to multiply because that’s what God said to do.”  
 “There’s a word for that. They were...”  
 “Do you really want me to say it?”  
 “Yes, I want you to say it.”  
 “I guess they were a married couple having sex.”  
 “Yes! Eureka! You said it. Adam and Eve were an immortal married couple having sex.”

Then the fall ruined marriage and sex by ending it with death, that pesky ‘until death do you part.’ And if the atonement restores anything at all, it certainly restores that: marriage without end, because that’s what Adam and Eve had before the fall.

Do you still want to believe that in heaven there is no gender, no sex, no marriage, and no children? Why? The Bible doesn’t teach that, so why would anyone choose to believe that?

#### [7] MALE ANGELS AND FEMALE ANGELS

*Genesis 6:1* And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, :2 That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. :4 ...the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them...

There are two opinions on this text: [1] These sons of God were angelic beings, and [2] they were not. Most Christians believe they were not, but the facts indicate otherwise, that they were indeed angelic beings of some sort. A few fringe Christians accept this annoying Biblical fact, like Jehovah’s Witnesses and some Evangelical types and perhaps few others. Those fringe Christians are being honest with the text, uncomfortable as it is.

Why must this text indicate angelic beings? *First*: Because the title “sons of God” in every other occurrence in the Bible refers to, and only to, angelic beings — *Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7; Psalms 29:1, 89:7; Daniel 3:25*. *Second*: Because the New Testament seems to take that meaning — *Jude 6-7; 1 Peter 3:19-20; 2 Peter 2:4-6*. And *third*: If the sons of God are not angelic beings (they are just descendants of Seth, or rich and powerful men), then *Genesis 6:5-7* become inexplicable. Why would God bring on the flood just because some mortal men mated with mortal women from a different tribe? Is God that much of a racist? Intermarriage is not much of a sin to warrant destroying the world, do you think? Something really unusual

happened, something extraordinarily evil. This text indicates that angelic beings mated with mortal women, and that really angered God.

Why do most Christians not believe that? Because it is theologically thorny; it doesn't square well with our notions of resurrection and other things. But mostly it doesn't square well with **Luke 20:34-38** as Christians commonly understand it. Christians are determined to believe that Jesus taught that angels do not have gender. But I've dismissed that false reading of **Luke 20** and that leaves **Genesis 6:1-2** free to mean what it says.

Mormons should be delighted with this exegesis because it proves them right — that angelic beings have gender. But no. The official Mormon doctrine is that these sons of God are the descendants of Seth who mated outside their family, as though God prefers inbreeding.

There is a Mormon verse that figures into this:

***Moses 8:21** ...Behold, we are the sons of God; have we not taken unto ourselves the daughters of men? And are we not eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage? And our wives bear unto us children, and the same are mighty men ...*

But it's not at all clear what that verse means. Noah is preaching to some people who will soon die in the flood. Who they were, the text doesn't say other than that they are "sons of God" who have fathered children.

That is interesting because, so what? Why would the fact of them being fathers even be a talking point with Noah? Most men are fathers. So what? Why should that impress Noah? Maybe because they were not merely men but something else. They were "sons of God." And they make special note that they have fathered children, a claim that they are therefore just as human as anyone else. In other words, "we belong here too."

But Mormons will never accept that idea because it would open a Pandora's Box on lots of other Mormon theology.

Understand, I am not trying to prove or disprove Mormon doctrine. I'm just documenting what the Bible says, and **Genesis 6** says that there were male angelic beings who could and did impregnate mortal women. If that scrambles up your theology, well, so be it.

How peculiar it is, when you think of it (when I think of it anyway), that those few Christians who believe that **Genesis 6** means what it says will not accept eternal marriage. While the one Christian church that believes in eternal marriage rejects the one interpretation of **Genesis 6** that proves them right. How odd. Well, I think it's odd.

Now, two male angels.

***Genesis 18:16** And the men [God's two angels] rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way. **19:5** And they [the men of Sodom] called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them.*

"That we may know them" means "so that we may have sex with them." The men of Sodom saw these two beautiful male angels and wanted to have homosexual sex with them. There is no other interpretation, nobody argues against this meaning. These angels were male and conjugally capable.

Now, the man that Joshua met.

*Joshua 5:13* And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? :14 And he said, nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come, And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servants? :15 And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.

Before Joshua engaged the battle for Jericho he encountered an angel, or God. Some say this was God, others think not, but whichever, *he* was a divine being and *he* was *a man*; that is, *he* was *male*.

Some people, in order to have it both ways, say that angels are sexless when they are spirits, but are sexual when they appear as mortals. That's a stretch. The Bible says nothing of the sort. Where do people get that dribble?

Now, an obvious question: Are there female angels? Answer: Yes.

*Zechariah 5:9* Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. :10 Then said I to the angel that talked with me ... :11 And he said unto me ...

Well that settles that. Here we have three angels: two female and one male. If all angels are male then heaven is a very strange place indeed, and no wonder they'd be looking for mortal females. But angels are not all male. Some are male and some are female.

What about the New Testament? Do angels still have gender by the time we reach the age of Christ? Or had that idea fallen out of favor?

*Mark 16:5* And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.

More proof that angels have gender. You might accuse me of stretching the point if my entire argument was based on the repeated use of the pronoun "he." But it is no stretch to point out that the words in this text, "young man," is pretty specific and clear. This angel was male.

## [8] MALE DEMONS AND FEMALE DEMONS, MAYBE

This is a chilling thought, isn't it? Do demons have gender? Well, why not? If pre-mortal spirits have gender, as the Mormon "The Family, A Proclamation to the World" clearly states, and demons are fallen spirits, then it necessarily follows that demons have gender.

Can we establish that in the Bible? Sort of, on thin evidence but here it is.

The Bible does list some male demons by name. Certainly there is Lucifer, the head devil. But there are others. And if we take the word "prince" to infer male (as "princess" infers female), then we can find some male demons, three anyway.

**Daniel 10:20** ...now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia...

**Daniel 10:20** ...and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia [Greece] shall come.

**Matthew 12:24** This fellow [Jesus] doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

So there we have three male demons anyway, if we allow “prince” to have its most natural meaning.

Next, we encounter a passel of demons.

**Mark 5:9** My name is Legion: for we are many.

Since there is no mention of gender, I’ll presume rightly or wrongly that they are mixed gendered, and lacking further evidence, I’ll leave that and move on to the question: Are there female demons?

This is thin and you don’t need to take any of this seriously. It’s just a maybe, but it’s worth mentioning. In Jewish Kabbala teachings, there are a few female demons, four in particular: Lilith, Naamah, Igrath, and Mahalath.

Now, we’re not inclined to give folklore serious credence, any folklore, even Jewish folklore. We’re not interested, after all, in fairy tales. However, there is one Bible verse that may move one of these lady demons from folklore status to biblical status. The verse is —

**Isaiah 34:14** ... the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech owl [night monster = Lilith] also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest.

How should this Hebrew word Lilith be translated? I have no idea. The experts don’t agree so why should I commit to an opinion? There are nearly as many variants as there are translations. Variants include: creatures of the night, night birds, night animals, night-monsters, and some are happy to leave it transliterated as Lilith, or night-demon Lilith. So, is the verse talking about night animals or demons? I don’t know and I doubt that anyone else knows either.

Why is that important? I don’t know that it is. I just wanted to give some equal time and some biblical credibility to this ancient mythical person, this female demon, Lilith.

Does she exist? I hope not, she’s really evil. But maybe she does. Horrors!

## [9] CHILDREN FOREVER

**Genesis 15:5** And [God] brought [Abraham] forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and [God] said unto [Abraham] So shall thy seed be.

**Deuteronomy 25:6** And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel.

**Ruth 4:10** *Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren...*

My question: Why should the dead care? My answer: They do. Why should Abraham or Mahlon or anyone who is dead care what happens to his posterity? Abraham wanted this blessing more than anything, to know that he would have a posterity that would inherit. Why? Because family matters, even after death.

What about the New Testament?

**Luke 16:19** *Then there was a certain rich man...*

This story of the rich man who dies and lands in hell, is long in the telling. So I won't include the entire story here. I'll just pick it up closer to the end.

**Luke 16:27** *Then he [the dead rich man] said, I pray thee [Abraham] therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him [Lazarus] to my father's house: :28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.*

The Lord's point in telling this parable is that you'd better make decisions about God and salvation before you die. But *my* point in telling this parable is to point out a little-noticed detail; namely, this dead man's father and brothers were still his father and brothers after death. He said, "I *have* five brethren," not "I *had* five brethren."

Even in hell, his family ties survived death and he cared about them, enough to want to protect them from his fate.

Let's wrap this up with a headcount of Job's family.

**Job 1:2** *And there were born unto him [Job] seven sons and three daughters. :19 And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped to tell thee. 42:10 And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. :12 So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning ... :13 He had also seven sons and three daughters.*

It's time for some arithmetic. Job had 10 children who all died. Then God restored Job and gave him twice as much; that is, 10 more children.

Did God count that wrong? It says God gave Job twice as much. Isn't twice 10 equal to 20? So doesn't Job now have 20 children? Obviously the *twice* is the sum of the 10 dead and the 10 living. In other words, Job *does* have 20 children, just that 10 of them are dead. But they're still his children and part of his eternal family.

So, those of you who have lost children, take hope. I used to worry for Job thinking that if I lost 10 children that no amount of new children (whether 10 or 100) would assuage my grief for the 10 lost. But understanding that God includes the dead as still in the family, well, what a wonderful thought that is.

By the way, to make this personal, my wife and I did lose one. Christian died just hours before childbirth. So, how many children do we have? To the world we have three. But to God and in our hearts we know we have four.

### [10] TEMPLE ANGELS

**Exodus 25:18** *And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. :20 And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. :22 And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims...*

**Exodus 26:31** *And thou shall make a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work; with cherubims shall it be made.*

**Exodus 36:8** *And every wise hearted man among them that wrought the work of the tabernacle made ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubims of cunning work made he them.*

**1 Kings 6:19** *And the oracle he [Solomon] prepared in the house within, to set there the ark of the covenant of the Lord. :23 And within the oracle he made two cherubims of olive tree, each ten cubits high. :27 And he set the cherubims within the inner house: and they stretched forth the wings of the cherubims...and their wings touch one another in the midst of the house.*

**Lamentations 1:8** *Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is removed; all that honoured her despised her, because they have seen her nakedness... What exactly is “her nakedness”? Is this purely figurative or is it a real something that is specific?*

**Hebrews 9:5** *And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot speak particularly. Why is the author of Hebrews reluctant to talk about the cherubims? Is he embarrassed to be frank? It appears so. There is something about the cherubims that makes this author nervous, and would rather “not speak particularly.”*

Now I’m going to get into trouble. Even people who agree with me may be upset. But facts are facts, and are stubborn things. And if they conflict with our senses of propriety, well, facts are still facts.

In the first temple, as in the tabernacle, sat the Ark of the Covenant. In the ark was the law, and covering the ark was the mercy seat. Above the ark on the right and on the left were the two cherubim (a certain kind of angel) whose wings covered the Arc. On the Arc and between the two cherubim was God who spoke to the prophets and pronounced judgments.

In the second temple there was no Arc but still there were the two cherubim.

So, what about the cherubim? What do they have to do with all this? Just this: They were male and female! And that tells us something important about angels and maybe something important about God.

Here are some historical facts:

Talmud, Yoma 54b reads: “Said Resh Lakish, ‘When the Gentiles entered the Sanctuary, they saw (the engravings of) the cherubim joined together in an embrace. They took (the engravings) out to the marketplace, and said, Should these Israelites – whose blessing is a blessing and whose curse is a curse (so they are so close to G-d) – be involved in such (erotic) matters? Immediately, (the Romans) debased (the Israelites), as it is said, All who once respected her (Israel), debased her, for they saw her nakedness (Lamentations 1:8).’”

Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 54a reads: “[The cherubim appeared in the engravings] as a man joined in an embrace with his female companion.”

A third century Talmudic legend says, “When Israel used to make the pilgrimage [the priests] would show them the cherubim which were intertwined with one another, and say to them: ‘Behold! Your love before God is like the love of male and female.’”

Qetins, a third century rabbi, said, "When Israel used to make the pilgrimage, they (the priests) would roll up for them the Parokhet (the veil separating the holy from the Holy of Holies), and show them the Cherubim which were intertwined with one another, and say to them, ‘Behold! Your love before God is like the love of male and female!’”

Flavius Josephus, a first century Jewish historian, was evasive describing the Holy of Holies. He sometimes insisted that it contained nothing, but elsewhere said that what was in it “we are not at liberty to reveal to other nations” as though he was embarrassed.

A second century record says: “When strangers entered the sanctuary [temple] they saw the cherubim which were intertwined with each other...they have seen their nakedness.” Recall that obscure verse, *Lamentations 1:8* ... *they have seen her nakedness...*

A Talmudic legend says that when Ammonites and Moabites entered the temple at its destruction, they pulled out the cherubim and accused the Israelites of hypocrisy, pretending to worship the invisible God while having figures of a man and a woman having sex in the holy of holies.

Rashi, a rabbi of the 11<sup>th</sup> century said: “The cherubim were joined together, and were clinging to, and embracing each other, like a male who embraces a female [in the act of love].

Philo Judaeus described the cherubim but reluctantly, omitting what they actually looked like, offering only that one had the qualities of the Father and to the other the qualities of the Mother. Why couldn't he have just come out and say that one was male and the other female? He seemed just too embarrassed to say it.

The Zohar of 13<sup>th</sup> century Spanish Kabbala says: “...the wings of the cherubim intertwined...one male and one female...”

Some Reference Sites (Google female cherubim):

[http://www.myjewishlearning.com/texts/Bible/Torah/Exodus/The\\_Tabernacle/Cherubim.shtml](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/texts/Bible/Torah/Exodus/The_Tabernacle/Cherubim.shtml)

<http://sacred-union.blogspot.com/2009/05/cherubim-as-graphic-images-of-god-his.html>

<http://www.sacred-sex.org/scriptures/judaism/122-the-ark-of-the-covenant.html>

Assuming this is all true, that the two cherubim over the ark were male and female, (and the evidence is compelling), what does that mean? Anything or nothing? It's an easy thing to

brush it off as being merely symbolic. (Anything we don't like in the Bible we tend to mitigate by making it merely "symbolic.") But symbolic of what? God's relationship with Israel is an easy answer, a cheap shot, a deflection, what people would say who want to escape an embarrassing conclusion.

What if mere symbolism is not the issue here, that symbolism is merely a contrivance to hide the real issue? What if the real meaning of male and female cherubim in the temple is that cherubim are indeed male and female? Or, even more shocking, that God might have a wife since it is God who resides between the two cherubim. Or maybe that God is male and female since "Eloheim" is plural. Why do we have to make everything symbolic, so that nothing means anything? Maybe it's not symbolic at all, maybe it's real.

Some will claim that male and female angels in the temple is just circumstantial evidence and means nothing. But understand that circumstantial evidence does matter if it is compelling, and if it is coupled with hard evidence. In this case, all over the Bible we meet angels with gender, so it is not incidental circumstantial evidence, but compelling circumstantial evidence that the cherubim in Solomon's temple are male and female as are actual angels of the Bible.

That is how the Israelites saw it — angels have gender. And they saw it that way because of the evidence of their scriptures.

#### [11] GENDER AND CHILDREN IN THE NEXT WORLD

*Isaiah 65:17 For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. :20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, not an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old... :23 They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.*

Many Christians ascribe this verse to the "Millennium," that thousand years of peace before the earth transitions to its final state. The problem with that is this text talks of a new heaven and a new earth, and that doesn't sound very millennial.

And in this new existence, this new heaven and new earth, the text says that there will be children. "No more an infant of days" means no more baby death, crib-death and such. And "their offspring with them" means that when people walk into this new earth existence, they will bring their children with them. These perfect people in this perfect world will have children, and you can't have children without having sex, unless you expect them all to be virgin births like Mary which would make Jesus not unique and make all men useless.

If sex is good and right in the Garden of Eden, and good and right here in this life, then why should we suppose that there is something fundamentally wrong with sex in heaven?

#### [12] THE 'LIGHTS OUT' PROPHET

Long before Israel vanished as a nation by the Roman conquest, its revelation vanished. Israel's final prophet (until John the Baptist) was Malachi, who I call their "lights out" prophet.

Imagine going out of business. You fire all your employees, your payroll accountant distributes the severance checks, you send them all home, and the building is empty. Then finally you, the last person there, head for the door. You open it, reach for the light switch, glance back

for the last time, turn off the light, step out, and close the door behind you. It was a nice try, but your business failed. You give a final despairing sigh and walk away. You're done. It's over. Lights out. Good-bye.

God must have sighed as he turned Israel's lights off. His final message, his severance checks if you will, were given to Israel by his last prophet, Malachi.

What did Malachi say? How important would that be, God's last words from his last prophet? What was the last thing on God's mind? What was the lights out message from the lights out prophet? I will tell you: it was marriage, and family. Let's wind through it.

***Malachi 1:2** I have loved you... Was not Esau Jacob's brother? Saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob :3 And I hated Esau... :6 A son honoureth his father...if then I be a father, where is mine honour?*

These opening verses deal with filial issues. They give us the prophet's direction, and alert us to what's coming.

***Malachi 2:10** Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?*

The prophet speaks of "father" in two senses: God as father and ancestors as fathers. Certainly the second is literal. Is the first? He created us, therefore he is our father, therefore he did not merely create us, he procreated us.

An interesting side note here: Mormons and some other Christians like to talk about God as the father of the whole human race. But some more picky Christians prefer to talk about God as the father only of the saved and not the father of the damned, and they cite **John 8:41-42** to make their point. It's a valid point. But this verse in Malachi tells us that God is our father *because* he created us and pushes us to believe that he is the *father* of the whole human race after all, and that we are therefore all brothers and sisters, and probably should be treating each other better than we have been. That's the message here.

In any case, our filial relationship with God seems literal.

***Malachi 2:11** Judah hath dealt treacherously...and hath married the daughter of a strange god.*

Certainly allegory. But it's the right allegory because marriage matters. That's the point. Who you marry matters, whether we are talking about sexual union or partnering with deities.

***Malachi 2:13** And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand. :14 Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. :15 And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.*

Now we're getting to real family matters. This is no allegory. The literal meaning could not be more clear. You have covered my altar with tears. Whose tears? The tears of your wives, with whom you made solemn covenants at my altar. Then you broke those covenants, that is, your marriage covenants, and so she is crying on my altar. Instead of being unfaithful to her, you should rather have been one with her. And why? To have godly children.

Let me (God) make this perfectly clear:

***Malachi 2:16*** *For the Lord God, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away...*

God hates divorce. Is that clear enough? Not any figurative divorce between, say, God and Israel, but the actual divorce between husband and wife. Even if there is good reason for it, God still hates it.

Malachi may have had in mind ***Ezra 10:19*** *And they [the priests of Israel] gave their hands that they would put away their wives...* Yes, these priests made a mistake marrying gentile wives. ***Deuteronomy 7:3*** forbids just that. But divorcing them was, I think, a second mistake. Remember, Ezra was no prophet. Who told those priests that they should divorce their gentile wives? God didn't tell them to do that. I think Malachi was objecting to that dark moment in Israel's history.

What does that have to do with my subject? Look at my supposition this way: If God hates divorce, then he also hates *all* divorce, including divorce by death. The "till death do us part" nature of our marriage covenants, may be unavoidable (we can't help dying), but that is not a good thing, it is a very bad thing.

A weak argument? Well, I'm not claiming much. I'm just documenting where God's head is at. God doesn't like death (***Deuteronomy 30:19*** *...therefore choose life...and...live*) and God doesn't like divorce. He intended for both life and love to last forever. It is we who cut them both short.

***Malachi 3:5*** *...I will be a swift witness against...those that...oppress the...widows and the fatherless...*

God calls for social responsibility towards widows and orphans. To others as well, certainly, but to widows and orphans particularly. God again has families in mind.

***Malachi 3:17*** *And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.*

God cannot leave the picture of family alone. He sees us as his children and treats us accordingly, privileged, with nepotism. God holds family in high regard, and that matters right now because revelation is about to cease. Remember, these are God's final words.

***Malachi 4:1*** *For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.*

This is the lights-out curse. And what is the curse? They will be left without root and without branch; that is, without ancestry and without posterity; that is, without family, alone. They came from nowhere and are going to nowhere, as though they had never existed.

*Malachi 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the dreadful day of the Lord:*

But Elijah will come and fix all that, the knight in shining armor.

Who was Elijah? Elijah was that stunning prophet who *didn't die*. He was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire. He defeated death and its curses. Note also that he killed the baby killers, the priests of Baal who sacrificed babies. Elijah was definitely pro-life.

Now, and finally, the lights-out verse —

*Malachi 4:6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their father, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.*

This is the blessing that undoes the curse. What God wants above all is for fathers to want their children and for children to want their fathers. Not “till death do us part,” but forever. Without that, we are cursed — indeed that *is* the curse, without “root nor branch.”

I don't know if Elijah was married or not (the Bible doesn't say), I expect he was. And if he was, guess what, he still is. Why? Because he didn't die. Well, she would be dead by now, but still, if Elijah had so great a power to escape death, then he also had the power to escape divorce by death, to claim her back from wherever she might have landed.

And so Elijah would one day return to undo that curse of being left with “neither root nor branch.” He undoes divorce by death. And this is the final verse of the Hebrew scriptures.

These are God's final words to Israel, and what a thing to focus on: family. And if the entire nation, from beginning to end, is either blessed or cursed as a family, doesn't it stand to reason that the family that God is talking about is an eternal one, a heavenly one, one that cannot, will not be torn to pieces merely by death? It all started as family — Adam's family, Abraham's family — and, at the end, it still comes down to family. What God envisions is family forever, so says Malachi, God's lights-out prophet.

### [13] THE BINDING POWER

*Matthew 16:19 And I will give unto thee [Peter] the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

*Matthew 18:18 Verily I say unto you [apostles], Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

Most Mormons know these verses well, and they should. Mormon thinking applies the words “bind and loose” to marriage. Specifically, a marriage performed in the temple by the temple priesthood. A temple marriage, a celestial marriage, is an eternal marriage. If Peter or any one of the apostles or anyone with their authority performs a marriage on earth, then that

marriage is valid, not just on earth but in heaven as well. Thus it is locked and sealed for all eternity, to survive death because Jesus defeated death.

Is that valid, or are Mormons stretching the verse beyond credulity? I'll make a case for the Mormon exegesis.

First of all, to bind and loose a marriage is at least as valid an exegesis as the common Christian exegesis that uses the text to bind (and loose) Satan. And while the word "whatsoever" is broad to allow anything, the notion of binding Satan does not seem a good fit for the reason that while God certainly wishes to bind Satan, it's hard to imagine any instance where God would wish to loose Satan. Well maybe, but *that* seems the stretch. But binding a marriage (performing a ceremony) and loosing a marriage (granting a divorce) seems a much better fit.

Some Christians see in the words "bind and loose" an active role in salvation. Binding could mean to perform a baptism, and loosing could mean to perform an excommunication as Paul hinted in *1 Corinthians 5:5 To deliver such an one unto Satan...* This appears to be a situation where God would indeed wish, or at least act, to loose Satan, thereby making the idea of binding Satan more reasonable.

But theories aside, what did "bind and loose" really mean?

Bind and loose is a Talmudic idiom that Jesus did not invent and would have been familiar with. It means to determine what is lawful and unlawful, what is permitted or forbidden under the law; that is, to interpret and apply the law as a judge or a priest or a rabbi would do. For rabbis, this was "halakah," or rules of conduct.

The Jewish Encyclopedia says this: "BINDING AND LOOSING (Hebrew, asar ve-hittir) ... Rabbinical term for 'forbidding and permitting.' ... the power of binding and loosing as always claimed by the Pharisees. Under Queen Alexandra, the Pharisees, says Josephus (Wars of the Jews 1:5:2), 'became the administrators of all public affairs so as to be empowered to banish and readmit whom they pleased as well as to loose and to bind.' ... The various schools had the power to 'bind and to loose'; that is, to forbid and to permit (Talmud: Chagigah 3b); and they could also bind any day by declaring it a fast-day (... Talmud: Ta'anit 12a...). This power and authority, vested in the rabbinical body of each age of the Sanhedrian, received its ratification and final sanction from the celestial court of justice (Sifra, Emor, 9; Talmud: Makkot 23b).

It is not difficult to imagine situations where judges and rabbis had to determine just what the law demanded. Our own judges do that all the time and enjoy flexing their judicial muscles, often, we suspect, beyond the need. We call that "legislating from the bench."

But back to the original question: Does bind and loose include marriage? How could it not? What exactly is a marriage but the permitting of a conjugal relationship between a man and a woman? And to loose it is to revoke it with a divorce. Jesus gave his apostles carte blanche authority to bind *anything* — "whatsoever." And on that list of "whatsoever" — (which included setting fast days, the reach of the law, banishing and readmitting, maybe even baptizing people, and maybe binding Satan whatever that means; pretty much anything that legal administrators were required to do) — had to be the simple performing of wedding ceremonies. Simply stated, when an apostle performed a wedding, that wedding was documented not only in the archives of Jewish government but also in the archives of heaven, and is therefore eternally bound.

So you decide. With all the legal powers that Jesus gave his apostles, is it conceivable that his long list of authoritative acts not include marriage? Impossible. That is what Mormons are insisting, that the list of apostolic authorities granted to apostles by Jesus include marriage, which, once performed by one with apostolic authority, is bound in heaven as well as on earth.

Look at it this way: When a couple gets married, then dies, their earthly marriage records are intended to endure. But they may not. Court buildings sometimes burn, computer disks crash, data gets lost. But records in heaven are never lost. They endure forever, witnessing to all that the marriage is still, and always, in force.

Recall the Lord's prayer: **Matthew 6:10** ...*Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.* God wants what he wants, on earth and in heaven, and it all gets documented. But Jesus bridged the gulf so that what God wants here gets documented there. So that if marriage is God's will for us, it ought also to be bound in heaven and not just on earth. Why do only Mormons know that?

#### [14] THE NON-DIVORCE

**Matthew 19:4** *And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female. :5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? :6 Where fore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.*

**Mark 10:8** ...*they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.*

Focus on the words "no more twain." I take them literally: never separate. God's will is that husband and wife should never become *not* husband and wife, not by divorce, not by death.

Why are they "no more twain"? Because they are "one flesh." It's not just that God doesn't want them to be separated, it's that they *can't* be separated, they are bonded forever.

So, is there marriage in heaven? How can there not be? But in heaven aren't we just spirits, so "one flesh" doesn't apply? Not so. The resurrection is *flesh* so "one flesh" does apply.

**Luke 24:39** *Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have.*

And how much of our flesh do we recover in the resurrection? I do believe that Jesus recovered *all* of his, including a digestive track.

**Luke 24:42** *And they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. :43 And he took it, and did eat before them*

And everything else, including those parts that made him male. Please don't ask me to be any more graphic than that. You have your imagination, use it.

#### [15] WIVES IN HEAVEN

**Matthew 19:29** *And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.*

We are inclined to read this figuratively: If I forsake a house for Jesus, in heaven will I receive 100 houses? If I forsake my father for Jesus, in heaven will I receive 100 fathers? And to the point: If I forsake my wife for Jesus, in heaven will I receive 100 wives? The corollary question would be: Would I even want 100 wives, or 100 fathers, or 100 houses?

In one sense this must be figurative — what we will receive will be sort of like the *value* of 100 wives, or fathers, or houses. In other words, what we will receive will be 100 times better than what we had here and lost here. To use an economic term, a fungible equivalent; meaning, tradable for an identically valued item.

But still, in another sense, this promise of blessings is literal — we really will receive equivalent blessings times 100. Whatever that means, it means something, and whatever that something is, it will be wonderful. **1 Corinthians 2:9** ...*Eye hath not seen nor ear heard ,, the thing which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

It appears that blessings are somehow fungible; that is, exchangeable, trading this blessing for that blessing and coming out ahead on the deal.

But still I have some blessings that I would not exchange for a hundred or a million times their fungible equivalent value. And number one on that short list is my wife. And numbers two, three, and four are our three children — assuming, of course, that I have a choice. But what kind of blessing would it be if I do not have the choice to keep them?

Do recall that Peter did not give up his wife; that is, he did not divorce her (as Buddah did his), did not abandon her, did not stop loving her. Jesus never asked that of him. It was Peter and his wife through to the end, and both ended up on crosses according to Eusebius. Their sacrifice for Jesus was not divorce but dying together. In that sense, maybe Peter did forsake his wife. He risked their lives by going to Rome for the cause of Christ, and both paid the ultimate price.

Now, picture Peter at the judgment bar, and God saying to him something like this: “Peter, you did great. In fact you did wonderfully great, beyond the call of duty. Tell you what, Peter. Let me keep your wife (she’ll be fine) and in exchange I will give you 100 somethings. Anything. Whatever you want. You name it.”

If you were in Peter’s place, what would you say? Here’s what I’d say: “God,” I’d say, “I’ll accept whatever you want to give me. I’m a cheerful giver and I’m also a grateful receiver and whatever you think I should have is just fine. But in regards to my wife, you want to give me 100 fungible equivalents of her? 100 wives? 100 universes? Humm. Tell you what, God. Let me have her forever, and our kids, and we’ll call it even. Fair enough?”

And God would likely say, “Good choice.”

But of course Jesus didn’t mean that, did he? — sacrifice my wife and get 100 wives in return. Well, I don’t know that he didn’t mean that, or something like it. It is what he said. He said if we “forsake” our wives and children for him, implying extra-ordinary circumstances, that we’d receive 100 times their value. Well, okay, God. What is 100 times the value of my wife? How about 100 lifetimes with my wife? Or better, how about forever with my wife? I’ll be quite happy with that, thank you, and forego whatever is behind curtain #2.

Do you think I’m stretching Jesus’ words beyond credibility? Let’s pay attention to detail. He did not say that what we will receive will be *different*, he said what we will receive will be *more*, 100 times more. And more is better. More of my wife, more of my children, more of my baby who died at birth, more of my mother and father who died decades ago who I still miss, more of all the blessings of family and all the blessings of life.

What about 100 fathers and mothers? Can we literalize that? Sure. Why not? I'd like to meet my four grand-parents, and my eight great-grand-parents, and et cetera.

Can we literalize brothers and sisters? Sure. Why not? In-laws and a forever reaching extended family.

All that plus eternal life, plus blessings that I have not seen nor heard nor even imagined. That's what God has in mind for us, I do believe. Why would anyone want to gut it at its core by rejecting eternal marriage and eternal family?

And that, I believe, is as close to what Jesus meant by what he said as we are going to get. And this is particularly true since this verse is hot on the heels of **Matthew 19:6** ...no more twain, which probably led the Lord's thinking to **:29** shall receive a hundred fold. Couple those two ideas together and you have a powerful thought.

To be thorough, I am not defending polygamy in heaven — "wives" does imply polygamy which is an embarrassing fallout of my argument, but it doesn't invalidate the argument. I am merely defending gender and marriage in heaven which Jesus is clearly saying.

### [16] ACTUAL SONS

**Luke 3:23** And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli, **:24** Which was...which was... (etc.) **:38** Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.

The whole human race is actually and literally descended from God. Adam was as much the son of God as Seth was the son of Adam, so says this verse. This reinforces my literal exegesis of **Malachi 2:10** which asserts that the whole human race is literally God's family.

### [17] SALVATION, A TEAM EFFORT

**John 4:15** The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. **:16** Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

This exegesis came to me courtesy of Doctor Kent Brown, a professor at B.Y.U.

Here is how Doctor Brown explained this text to me — and he had to explain it to me twice because I lost his first letter to me from 30 years ago, and I had to ask him for a repeat in 2010 which he graciously emailed me. Actually, though, Doctor Brown did further explain to me that the idea I'm about to share with you did not originate with him. It was suggested to him by his colleague Stephen Robinson. Anyway, it goes like this.

We normally read this text to mean that Jesus, by asking the lady to go get her husband, was setting her up to disclose to her that he already knew her marriage status; namely, that she had been divorced (or widowed?) five times and was currently living with a shack up honey. And indeed, the woman did understand from that what Jesus was about: **4:19** The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

There is nothing wrong with that understanding, Jesus did do miracles so that people would understand and believe —

**Matthew 9:6** *But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.*

That's all fine. However, there's another dynamic in this story. When Jesus said, "Go, call thy husband," he may have had another purpose other than just exposing her marriage status. Rather than just setting her up, he may have meant: "You want the water of life I'm offering? Good. Go get your husband. You need him to receive it. This is a husband and wife deal."

Does that interpretation sound reasonable? It does, particularly if you also consider:

**1 Peter 3:7** *Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*

The Bible invites us to accept eternal life *as husbands and wives*. Of course unmarried people can receive eternal life too and can be saved. No one is disputing that. But there is something special for married couples who receive grace together and walk into heaven together. Mormons believe that special thing is the marriage itself, forever without end.

#### [18] MALE ANGELS, FEMALE SAINTS

This text is really thorny. Not because of the theology, well that, but more because of Paul's sexism. I'm not going to defend it or explain it — it is what it is, a product of its time and Roman culture. But please allow me to gloss over that for now — I don't want to get tangled up in feminist politics, especially 2000 year old feminist politics, I just want to get right to my point.

**1 Corinthians 11:4** *Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. :5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. :6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. :7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. :8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. :9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. :10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. :11 Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. :12 For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.*

What is all this about? What is Paul's problem? Men should not wear hats in church and women should. Why? Because (sigh) men are in God's image and women are not. (Ouch!)

Is that just good-ol'-boy sexism? I expect it is. Or maybe it isn't *if* we allow the most natural meaning; namely that men are in God's image *because* God is male and for no other reason. But if we make it mean anything else other than mere gender (like for instance "boys are better, nyeh, nyeh, nyeh") then the text *is* hopelessly sexist. So take your pick. Either Paul is a sexist or God is male. I opt for the second.

But ignoring the sexism for the moment, another important meaning jumps out. Paul's subject is, after all, hats. And it's time to ask ourselves, why does Paul insist that women wear hats in church? Answer: **:10** ...*because of the angels!*

Interesting. Don't you think that's interesting? What in the world do angels have to do with hats? Paul is saying: "Ladies, you are pretty, and your long hair makes you even prettier. So, for the sake of the angels, either cut your hair short (which you won't do because it is your glory) or wear a hat. In church, make yourselves a bit less pretty." Why, Paul? *Because of the angels.* Male angels are male indeed and pretty women can cause them to stumble. Paul has read and taken to heart **Genesis 6:1-4**. As bizarre as this sounds (tempting male angels), there is no other interpretation that makes sense.

Why don't our sisters cover their heads in church today? Because, obviously, we no longer take this verse so seriously — although Mormon ladies might think "temple".

But here is the important point. Paul's entire argument, silly or not, stands on this presumption: angels, some angels anyway, are male!

I know a lot of you just got angry with me, but dang it, that's what Paul wrote. Deal with it. Maybe your theology can accommodate this text or maybe not. That's up to you. It is strange.

To rub it in a bit more and make a point that I've already made, if God's intent is for men and women to be together, and there are men and women in heaven, how can we possibly believe that men and women in heaven are not intended to be married?

Now, focus on this text —

***1 Corinthians 11:11*** Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. **:12** For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.

Does this mean that only in this life does a man need a woman and a woman need a man? The text doesn't explicitly say either way, but the inference is "always." Now, later, forever. And this dual-gender nature of humanity is "of God"; in other words, not something to argue about.

Trying to impress God with celibacy does not work. Celibacy is like Cain's offering, a sacrifice that God did not ask for and does not want. God wants men and women together, that's why he made men and women. All things good, even sex, are "of God," or so the text says.

Paul's assertion that men are in God's image and women are not, necessarily implies that God is male, and that necessarily implies that we have a mother in heaven. If not, what could a male God possibly mean? And that certainly is a softer exegesis of this harsh text (**1 Corinthians 11:7**). Paul has inadvertently brought us to this embarrassing question: If God is our father and men only are in his image, then in whose image are women? Only Mormons are brave enough to answer that question: women are in the image of our heavenly mother, and that sets up a whole new relationship between the human race and God. Hold that thought, I'll get back to it.

## [19] FEMALES IN HEAVEN

The Bible talks a lot about the "sons of God," so much that I have lamented, does it have anything at all to say about "daughters of God"? So in my frustration I picked up my handy-dandy concordance (Young's) and looked up the word "daughters." I found this —

*2 Corinthians 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers... :18 And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

This verse is loaded with gender. God will be (future and forever) our father (male), and we will be (future and forever) his sons (male) and his daughters (female). In other words, there will be men and women in heaven.

I suppose it could mean just here and now, but the “will be” and “shall be” are so prominent that they can only mean “in heaven,” I do believe. After all, it is nothing new to speak of sons and daughters in this life, so the promise must be referring to the next life.

And why should we not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers? Because husbands and wives really ought to be —

*1 Peter 3:7 ...heirs together of the grace of life.*

Heirs of salvation together, as husband and wife. So that when we go to heaven, we really do go together as a family.

## [20] THE MALE GOD, OUR FATHER

The Hebrew scriptures and the Christian scriptures frequently call God our Father. The right question to ask is how literal or how figurative do the scriptures really mean that? Is God really our father, or merely our creator pretending to be our father?

This is reminiscent of Geppetto the wood carver who skillfully carved a puppet Pinocchio and wanted very much to be his father. But Geppetto wasn't Pinocchio's father, he was merely his maker. And although Pinocchio finally became a real boy, we still doubt his parentage.

Here are some verses that make God's fatherhood sound pretty literal.

*Luke 3:38 ...Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.*

Adam was the son of God in the same sense that Seth was the son of Adam. Is there any part of “son of” that is unclear? Yes, I know I've referenced this verse already. But my earlier reference speaks of us as his children. Here, I use it to speak of God as our father.

*Acts 17:29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.*

The word “offspring” is fraught with meaning. It goes way beyond the simple notion that God is our creator. He is more correctly our pro-creator and deserves the title Father. It means he is our parent, we were born his children. We are the same race and the same family as God.

Not only does the word offspring carry that meaning, the context confirms that meaning. The reason we should not think of God as gold or silver is *because* we are his offspring. That reasoning only works if he is our literal parent. If he is merely our creator, then the argument fails. If he is not our parent then he might just as well be gold or silver — a gold and silver android could conceivably make a human, but could never father a human. That's Paul's point.

God is not gold or silver because *we* are not gold or silver. And we are his offspring, therefore he is like us and we are like him because we are parent and child.

**Romans 8:14** *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. :15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. :16 The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. :17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ...*

“Abba” is the most affectionate term in Greek for father. It doesn’t really mean Father so much as it means “Daddy!” the term that a small child would use for a loving parent, “Daddy, daddy, pick me up!” That’s our true relationship with God, he is literally, and not figuratively, our “Daddy.” I am not being flippant, that’s what it means. And “Amma” means “Mommy!”

**Hebrews 12:8** *But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. :9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?*

We always get back to the question, is a text figurative or literal? And that bares directly on this verse. What are we to make of “Father of spirits”? Whatever it means, it is literal. The tone and flow of the text — (we must accept God’s chastening because we are his sons and not bastards) — demands that we accept “Father of spirits” literally. We can haggle over whatever that might mean, but whatever it means, it is not figurative. If figurative, the text is meaningless.

So, what *does* it mean, “Father of spirits”? We mortals are mothers and fathers of human bodies. But where spirits come from, scientists still have no clue.

Is God’s fatherhood more than our fatherhood or less? It’s more than our fatherhood, more than merely making bodies because God fathers the very essence of what we are, our very spirits. Notice again that he doesn’t create our spirits, he fathers them. One day we will understand just what that means. For now, we just accept it, or should.

## [21] THE FEMALE GODDESS, OUR MOTHER

We finally arrive at this agonizing question: Does God have a wife in whose image Eve and all her daughters are?

Mormons used to talk openly about our mother in heaven, but we’re not so loose with that conversation any more — perhaps because we’re trying to cozy up with our Evangelical friends, which is not a bad thing to do.

But the notion of a mother in heaven is absolutely a Mormon doctrine as attested to by the church hymn still in our hymnal, “O My Father” and its courageous lines, “Truth is reason, truth eternal, tells me I’ve a mother there,” and “Father, mother, may I meet you in your royal courts on high.” A Mormon sister once asked me, “Why do we sing ‘O My Father’ on Mother’s Day?” Well, there’s the answer: “I’ve a mother there.”

Joseph Smith was a courageous prophet to teach such a thing, that we have a mother in heaven, but apparently he did. In History of the Church 5:254 there is an editorial footnote that

quotes Joseph Smith as saying: “Come to me; here’s the mysteries man hath not seen. Here’s our Father in heaven, and Mother, the Queen.”

The Mormon church has never abandoned that teaching but has repeatedly affirmed it.

John Taylor said in an 1857 newspaper article, “Knowest thou not that eternities ago thy spirit, pure and holy, dwelt in the Heavenly Father’s bosom, and in his presence, and with thy mother, one of the Queens of heaven, surrounded by the brother and sister spirits in the spirit world, among the Gods?” [Origin, Object, and Destiny of Women, *The Mormon*, 29 Aug. 1857].

James E. Talmage said, “The Church is bold enough to go so far as to declare that man has an Eternal Mother in the Heavens as well as an Eternal Father”. [*Deseret News*, 4 Feb. 1905].

John A. Widtsoe said, “among the exalted beings in the world to come we shall find a mother who possesses the attributes of Godhood. Such conceptions raise motherhood to a high position.” [Everlasting Motherhood, *Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star* 90 (10 May 1928) 298].

Huge B. Brown said, “some have questioned our concept of a mother in heaven, but no home, no church, no heaven would be complete without a mother there.” [“Relief Society — An Extension of the Home,” *Relief Society Magazine* 48 (Dec. 1961): 814].

Bruce R. McConkie said, “An exalted and glorified Man of Holiness (Moses 6:56) could not be a Father unless a Woman of like glory, perfection, and holiness was associated with him as a Mother. The begetting of children makes a man a father and a woman a mother whether we are dealing with man in his mortal or immortal state.” [*Mormon Doctrine*, 516].

Joseph Fielding Smith said, “Is it not feasible to believe that female spirits were created in the image of a ‘Mother in Heaven’?” [*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 3:144].

Neal A. Maxwell said, “When we return to our real home, it will be with the ‘mutual approbation’ of those who reign in the ‘royal courts on high.’ There we will find beauty such as mortal ‘eye hath not seen;’ we will hear sounds of surpassing music which mortal ‘ear hath not heard.’ Could such a regal homecoming be possible without the anticipatory arrangements of a Heavenly Mother?” [*Ensign* 8 (May 1978): 11].

(For a more complete list of these and other quotes on the subject, see the article by Linda P. Wilcox, “The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven”.)

That the church is still committed to the doctrine of a mother in heaven is conspicuously documented in the 1995 “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” which says that each of us is a “spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents.”

So that’s what the Mormon church believes and teaches. And that drives us to the real question which is: What does the Bible say about a heavenly mother? Anything or nothing?

So let’s get to it, and let’s begin with —

***Genesis 5:2*** *Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.*

Wait a second. *Their* name was Adam? That’s what the verse says. But isn’t *his* name Adam? Yes. Then why is *their* name Adam? Because he was a sharing guy, I guess. My wife took my name when we got married, essentially changing tribes. Some animals do that too. Lions do that. It’s the females, lionesses, who leave their pride looking for another when they reach puberty. The males stay put. Wives typically take their husband’s names. It’s not a requirement, but women still do that simply because they want to, much to the annoyance of many feminists.

My point? If Adam is a shared name (and it is, shared by him and her), is it possible that God (Elohim) might also be a shared name? If there is a mother in heaven, where might she be hiding? Maybe she is hiding in the pronoun “us,” and in the Hebrew word Elohim.

“God” is the English word for the Hebrew “Elohim,” and Elohim is a plural.

This is a sensitive subject, but here are the facts, you decide what they mean.

*Genesis 1:26 And God [Elohim] said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ... :28 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*

Who is “us”? Theologians have never had an adequate answer. It is not angels. I think it is mommy and daddy, amma and abba in Greek, em and ab in Hebrew.

But what about “God created man”? The word man is not strictly male in the sense that the word woman is strictly female. Women have their word all to themselves, men do not. The word man can (and often does) mean both man and woman as mankind, as Neil Armstrong said 1969, “One small step for man, one large step for mankind.” He wasn’t sexist, it was just that “man” was the most economic way (and most poetic way) to utter such a monumental statement.

But here is the real clue.

The plural word Elohim has two parts: the root Eloah and the suffix im. The male singular name for God is El. But that is not this. Elohim is Eloah, not El, plus im. Eloah is the feminine singular which means Goddess. And the suffix, im, is masculine. Thus, the plural God of Israel, Elohim, is male and female. It’s like saying: Sir Goddess.

When Elohim said, “Let us make man in our image,” I think it is clear what is going on. The male and female Gods said let us make man — meaning Adam and Eve — in our image, male and female. It’s not just that Adam is in the image of the male God, and Eve is in the image of the female Goddess, but that Adam and Eve *is* in the image of Elohim, the male/female Gods. That is the only explanation that makes any sense, I think.

Consider this verse —

*1 Kings 11:33 Because they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess [Elohim] of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god [Elohim] of the Moabites, and Milcom the god [Elohim] of the children of Ammon...*

Elohim is used three times, for a female deity and for two male deities. So the gender depends on the context. But more to the point, the word is not just male or female, it is both.

But this word Elohim is not the only word that confuddles us about God’s gender. The word Shaddai is equally confuddling.

*Exodus 6:3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, by the name of God Almighty (Hebrew: El Shaddai)...*

Here’s the problem. El Shaddai is feminine. The word “shad” means woman’s breast. Ouch! That changes things a bit, doesn’t it? How did the translators miss that detail? Because they wanted to, I guess.

Consider this verse —

**Job 22:26** *For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty [El Shaddai, feminine], and lift up thy face unto God [Eloah, feminine].*

Now this question: If there is a mother in heaven, where is she hiding? Answer: She isn't hiding, and never was. She is conspicuously all over the Bible, but our translators have hidden her from us. The wizard said, "Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain." Well, it's time to ignore that advice and start paying attention to the woman behind the curtain.

So, what does this dual-gender nature of the plural God have to do with my original question, is there marriage in heaven? It has everything to do with it. Here is the inescapable conclusion: If God (really, Gods) is dual-gendered, and therefore created us in his/her own dual-gendered image, how can we possibly imagine that God intended our dual-gendered nature to exist only for this life? I cannot believe that God would have said, "I made you to be like me, but only until you are dead. After that, you'll be something else." Why did God make us dual-gendered? To be like him/her. And clearly that was intended forever.

Now let's wrap it up with this verse.

**Genesis 2:23** *And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. :24* *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*

This is an instruction to men, all men, including and in particular Adam. Adam is the quintessential man, the model, the type for all men who will follow. So this instruction, which instructs all men, first instructs Adam. And that instruction is: "Therefore shall a man [*every* man, including Adam] leave his father *and mother*...". Well, how can Adam leave his father and mother if he doesn't have a father and a mother to leave? Conclusion: Adam had parents, one of each, a father and a mother, just like the rest of us. And that means there is a mother in heaven.

## [22] EPILOG

God (Elohim) has gender; in fact, both genders. In heaven there is gender. We have gender, in this life, in heaven, and forever. There's not much else to say. If you prefer to believe that there is no gender or marriage in heaven, be my guest. I have nothing else to give you. In that case, we'll just have to agree to disagree. Have a great life, and I (I mean we, my wife and I) will see you in heaven, but I wager that mine will be better.

After reading all this, you might be thinking, "Gee, I'd like to have that: a marriage and family in heaven that lasts forever. How can I have that?" As far as I know, there is only one place where you can make such a marriage covenant, and that is in a Mormon temple. For that, you'll have to go talk to some Mormons.

My grandkids just watched the movie "Ghost" (8/22/11). I watched just the last half hour with them. Patrick Swazy and Demi Moore kissed their final good-bye and he stepped into the light and was gone. I couldn't resist. I said to my grandkids, "That's why you should want to get married in the temple. Then death will have no hold on your love." They agreed.