

NO MARRIAGE IN HEAVEN: A REVERSE ORDER OF CREATION OR RESTORATION?

Nuhu Akoga & Musa A.B. Gaiya

Abstract

“No marriage in heaven” is thought provoking and appears hard to be accepted by many believers and scholars because of the innate expectation and anticipation of the perfect present order of life at the second coming of Christ. But the synoptic gospels captured Jesus’ statement saying there is no marriage in heaven because all believers in heaven shall be like angels. By this statement it means God shall reverse the order of creation which will alter the original creation of man and woman created to complement each other in the paradise of Eden. In the analyzing the idea of the ‘reverse order of creation,’ it would seem to emasculate the omniscience and omnipotence of God, by asserting that God changed his mind because of the fall. For to reverse, is to change completely the existing order of things. This will be inappropriate as applied to the all-knowing God. Pondering on this hard theological matter, this paper postulates that restoration is the expectation of the church in order for God to prove His omnipotence and to establish His justice for all His creation. For restoration has to do with renewing that which has been damaged. Using Biblical and Philosophical analyses engaging qualitative methodology, the research concludes that, the ‘reverse order of creation’ is a mirage but upholds restoration as an expected order in the new heaven and the earth.

Keywords: God, Heaven, Marriage, Restoration, Reverse, and Mirage

Introduction

Heaven is known to be the abode of God as conceived by virtually all religions and culture across the globe. The idea of heaven has continued to urge mankind to conceive of life beyond this present world. For instance an ancient philosopher, Plato says that “human know instinctively that they will one day stand in resurrected form before God” (Graham 26). In like manner, Aristotle another ancient philosopher adduces that “species of mankind possess immortality.” On the other hand, one of the greatest literary geniuses in history Shakespeare, writes that “I have immortal longing in me” (Graham 6).The

statements made by these past heroes show that there is in human a natural feeling of life beyond this present world which is often referred to as heaven.

The belief in heaven is strongly rooted in the Judeo-Christian faith in the revealed word of God. Most Christians uphold the view that heaven is a throne of God where His splendour, majesty and glory are in display in unquantifiable measures (Isaiah 66:1, Deut. 26:15). Prophet Isaiah saw God in his vision seated in His throne high and exalted, that even the Cherubim and Seraphim attending to him ought to cover themselves with their wings because of the superb and fabulously splendour of His glory (Isaiah 6:1-3). No one has been to heaven the throne of God physically to give a vivid description of it. Isaiah claimed he saw it in his vision but had never been there. Paul says, "I knew a man who was caught up to the third heaven and heard inexpressible things that a man is not permitted to tell" (2 Cor. 12:2-4). These inexpressible things are probably, things that human beings lack words to explain or explicate them plainly in human language.

Nevertheless, the church believes that though heaven is invisible but is real and shall be the abode of believers after this present world passed away (Rev. 21:1). The concept of heaven as advanced by some scholars as a location or state of being, remained a mystery for ages. Probably, it is in line with this that Paul says "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him (1 Cor. 2:9, cf. Isa. 66:1-2). This assertion made by St Paul negates the claim made by some people in the recent time that they have been to heaven after they had a long coma and returned to life. They included Maria Hansen, David Bennett, Julius Bissinger among others.¹ In Nigeria Rhoda Rika of Holiness Revival Movement claimed she had been to heaven in the state of coma (Lupe, Interview). Although heaven remains a hidden mystery, but it is the hope of believers that all genuine followers of Christ shall be taken to heaven at the second coming of Christ by faith (John 14:1-2, 1 Cor. 15:50-58).

The question that however might remain in the heart of many believers is, how is the nature of new heaven going to be? Will there be marriage in heaven as expressed in other people's faith? Will heaven be a restoration of paradise that was lost to Adam or will it be a reversed order of creation at the coming of Christ? By reversed order of creation the author means God changing the entire state of mankind into the sphere of no man and no woman. Does the phrase, "they shall be like angels" in Matthew 20: 22 mean there shall be no sexes in paradise? How

¹ See ChurchcreativePros. Com. Accessed on 20th November, 2023.

do we know the precise nature of angels in order to ascertain or subscribe to this view? These thought provoking questions are hard to establish fundamental and convincing presuppositions on them, but this paper navigates the Bible and other great minds in order to elucidate on the state of mankind in heaven at the eschaton, despite the fact that there has been less exploration by scholars in this topic.

Christian View of Marriage

In Christianity, marriage is regarded as an “intimate and complementing union between a man and a woman in which the two become one physically, in the whole of life” (Alexander 510-513). It is believed by the church that marriage is the most basic and significant social relationship to human kind. This relationship must be nurtured and maintained for the welfare of all. For without marriage, society will cease to exist or shall fail. No doubt, from the fall of man society contracted marriage according to customs suitable to them for the expansion and growth of society. In Christianity marriage is contracted based on the injunction in Genesis 1:26-28, and 2:18, 23-24. This relationship is necessary for the procreation and multiplication of humankind. This view is espoused by Hodge who says that marriage is a divine institution and also an indispensable means for the continuance of the human race (376). The church believes that God’s design for marital relationship is heterosexual, not homosexual, and monogamous not polygamous (Alexander 511). It rules out other sexual pervasions such as lesbianism, bestiality, incest and cohabitation. These sexual perversions are products of fall.

Christianity portrays marriage as the most suitable, enjoyable and sweetest relationship God blessed mankind with. Alexander describes it as the most intimate human relationship on earth (510). For instance in sexual union which is the ultimate consummation of marriage relationship, human being cannot describe the climax of utopia which strengthens the bond of marriage. Without this part of relationship, no marriage can stand. It forms the integral relationship of any marriage which the joy of it seems to transcend this life. There seems to be a belief and the feeling in mankind that marriage will transcend beyond this life as noted below in diverse traditions across the world. This belief triggered the question by the Jewish sect the Sadducees in Mathew 22:30, “will there be marriage in heaven”? Probably this question was asked by this sect to mock Jesus because the Sadducees did not believe in life after death.

However, as excellent and exquisite as marriage is, it seems to be something that will terminate in this life and would not continue in the life hereafter. This is the belief of some Christian denominations across the globe. The teaching is believed to be taught by our Lord Jesus in His response to the Sadducees and captured by all the synoptic gospels (Mat 22:30, Mk. 12:18-31 and Lk. 20:27-28). This paper observes that the phrase “there is no marriage in heaven” has been given an extreme interpretation which seems to negate the original order of creation. On this note, the original order of creation which Adam and Eve enjoyed before the fall cannot be restored, hence there is no marriage in heaven. This assertion poses some questions² in the heart of many faithful concerning the original plan of God in the Genesis’ account about mankind which has been shattered and battered by sin. Will God necessarily change his original plan because of the fall? Was it in the original plan of God to allow reproduction of mankind after the fall to change their state into that of being like angel? In the view of other scholars like Alexander, “without the fall, probably no one would have ever been single. Perfect people would have yielded perfect marriages in the first paradise” (513). By this assertion perfect people would have been given their rightful partners as was the case of Adam and Eve in Eden. But would there be a reverse order or restoration after this state of life? These and few other questions are the reasons for this paper.

Views of other Religions about Marriage in the Hereafter

- a. **African Traditional Religion:** In African Primal Religion, it is believed that life does not end here. Life continues in the hereafter. This is the belief of many African societies. Take for instance in ancient Egypt, dead kings were buried with their living wives and servants with the hope that the present world relationship will continue in the hereafter (Unger 251). This was also a common practice among some tribes in Nigeria before the advent of colonial masters and the missionaries. It explains why scholars like Ayandele among others wrote about the practice of immolation which was common among some cultures in Southern Nigeria which was rejected by the colonial masters and they took some steps to nip it in the bud (5). The practice of burying living wives and slaves was common in the pre-colonial days because of the belief of the people that life continues after this life. On this view marriage contracted in this life may continue in heaven. In Jukun society, heaven is regarded as the

² This is deduced from the author’s interactions with some believers on the questions of marriage in heaven.

abode of God, which is “Amando”. Therefore, Africans clearly believe in the continuation of marriage relationship in the life hereafter.

- b. **Islam:** In Islamic faith, marriage union is clearly taught in both the Hadith and the Koran. For Muslims, paradise is a place where sex will be enjoyed to the fullest (Surah 56:10-22; 35-38). Islam teaches that heaven contains six major things to be enjoyed; beautiful virgins, young handsome men, water, wine, fruits and green silk and brocades (Sura 76:13-21), as noted in the writing of Moshay (23). It is clear in the Islamic faith that certain special women or virgins will be allocated to some men who truly spread the course of Islam to be enjoyed in the paradise. In this regard Islam believes that, there will be marriage and sex in heaven (Caner and Caner 136).
- c. **Hinduism:** Hinduism emerged for about two thousand years before Christ. It is believed to be the oldest Religion on earth. This claim is debatable when compared with African Primal Religion which is as old as mankind (Thomas 61). Though this religion has won over 400 million people on earth (62), it has no defined view about the life hereafter. To Hindus life is in the search for ultimate reality which is a monotheistic God. This search shall pass through series of stages after this life. However, the practice of Sati whereby a widow was burnt alive to ashes with the dead husband signified how, continuation of marriage after this life is considered an important element of Hindus’ faith (Hanks 183).

The above three Religions among others are sampled out to provide clue that there is in mankind a natural feeling about life hereafter, although in a distorted form. Long ago King Solomon espoused this feeling in mankind in the scriptures opines that ... God has set eternity in the human heart... (Eccl. 3:11). In fact, even the notable ancient Greek Philosophers i.e. Socrates and Plato who believed in immortality, seemed to uphold the belief in marriage beyond this life (Boettner 63). Perhaps the revealed word of God has given a better understanding about marriage in the celestial city ascribed as heaven.

Biblical Fact about Marriage in Heaven

Heaven is an enigmatic domain which precise nature has never been fully disclosed to believers, yet it is believed among Christians as enshrined in the scriptures that at the resurrection believers shall possess an everlasting body or a body of immortality. The Old Testament Saints believed this as noted in (Gen. 5:24, Isaiah 26:19, Daniel 12:2 and Job 19:25-27). But the Sadducees a Jewish sect which emerged in the 2 century BC (within the period of inter-testaments) did not believe in the resurrection, contrary to their counterpart the Pharisees (Niswonger

63-64). In view of this, they asked Jesus a question on the levirate system of marriage practiced according to the Law of Moses in (Deuteronomy 25:5-6). They thought by this question they would trap Jesus and of course cause people to mock Him. Jesus stunned them and the entire audience in His response. He said to them “you are in error because you do not know the scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven” (Mt 22: 29, NIV). In this regard there will be a restoration of the original creation of Adam and Eve.

The answer given by Jesus shows clearly that, there is no marriage in heaven by the resurrected believers. Believers in their immortal bodies shall be like angels. The phrase “they shall be like angels” means they shall possess nature almost similar to that of angels, but not exactly the same with them. They shall be restored to the paradise which is almost like the sphere of angels which God can freely fellowship with them exactly like that of Adam and Eve in Eden. But the statement “there is no marriage in heaven,” raises a fundamental theological issue which deserves some clarification. Does it mean that God shall reverse his order of creation in the Garden of Eden which initially was decreed but was interrupted, corrupted or distorted by the fall? Or does the phrase need further interpretation to re-authenticate the Genesis account of creation which was corrupted by the fall and Jesus came to redeem?

Is Reverse Order of Creation a Reality or a Mirage?

The phrase “when the dead rise, the neither marry nor be given in marriage,” is a biblical fact but raises a question about what shall be the nature of man and woman? (Mk 12:25). Luke’s account states that, “The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage” (Luke 20:34-35). These plain statements carried by the synoptic gospels calls for close examination as to whether the order of creation instituted at the Garden of Eden will be reversed i.e. changed or be restored. Of course as asserted in many religions across the globe there is a strong belief and feeling that the present order of marriage will continue in the hereafter probably in a modified form.

But the Bible says there is no marriage in heaven. This seems to mean that at the resurrection there will be no man and woman as the first creation myth portrayed to us. There will be no sexes, male or female gender as instituted in the

original creation narrated in Genesis chapters one and two. The authors see here a conflict between the first creation in Adam and the new creation that would be in Christ Jesus. The point is that the phrases noted by these Evangelists (Mathew, mark and Luke) show that the reversed order of creation may be considered as an expected reality and not a mirage. In this case it evinces that God has changed His mind after the fall. It means sin caused Him (God) to change His plan instead of restoring the initial order of creation to its perfect sphere as in the first creation. The author finds it hard to accept this view as it seems to undermine the power of God. This appears to be the view of Lutheran scholars as cited by Berkhof a reformed scholar (737). In like manner Grudem also espouses this view as essentially Lutherans's position when he cited Berkhof (1161). According these scholars Lutherans developed their view based on passages like 2Pet.3:7-13, Rev. 20:11 and Rev. 21:1. The proponents of this view however seem to forget that their position underestimate or underrate the initial purpose of creation which has been thwarted by fall. This will lead to hiatus in God's purpose of creation which needed to be bridged.³ It is expected that the original plan of God should be brought to reality which must involve man and woman as recorded in Genesis account.

Perhaps, those who asked Christ this question were so shallow in their own thinking, because they were mindful of the levirate style of marriage in the culture of Israel which actually provoked another theological thought about the nature of mankind in the next state of life. Henry states that "marriage in the present state is necessary. It was instituted in innocency, whatever intermission or neglect there has been of other institutions, this was never laid aside, nor will be till the end of time" (Henry's Comm. 261). At the end of time, the bodies of believers shall be transformed and be glorified and be like that of angels (1 Cor. 15:42). They shall be of the same corporation with the innumerable company of angels (Heb. 12:22, 23). This view is attested by Mullen who says that it will be a state of the restoration of the image of God which has been battered by sin (334). In this state, there will be no marriage and given up in marriage. It shall be a state of perfect sphere. In the opinion of this article, the verb 'marry,' the noun 'marriage' and the adjective 'given up in marriage' are all products of fall which Jesus Christ said will

³ By this statement the author means a gap or vacuum would be created if the original or the first creation has not been restored to prove the sufficiency of God. To reverse the state of man and woman in the future glory rather than restoring it to the original creation seems to portray Him as changing His mind.

never manifest in heaven as thought or conceived by this people. They shall cease to be part of the heavenly glory which the Sadducees were concerned about in this physical world.

Will there be a Reverse Order of Creation or Restoration?

There will be no reverse order of creation at the eschaton or at the end of time for that will emasculate the omniscience and omnipotent power of God. This is clearly the position of this article. In Christianity, it is believed that in Adam paradise was lost while in Christ, paradise was restored but shall fully be established in His second advent. This to some extent depicts the restoration of mankind to its original order free from marry and remarriage syndrome of this fallen world. Alexander asserts that in the original creation, Adam and Eve and their progeny would have remained in the permanent relationship if not distorted by sin (511-513). In a sense Adam and Eve's progeny would enjoy the relationship that was ordained from the beginning as each person would wake up to meet his or her partner fit for him. Scholars like, Mullen, Berkhof, Grudem among others seem to uphold the view that God shall restore the original creation that was lost in sin to prove to Satan that God's original plan cannot be altered or thwarted forever (Grudem 1161). No doubt Grudem avers that, though creation have been marred and distorted by sin, God will not completely destroy the physical world which would be an acknowledgment that sin had frustrated and defeated God's purpose, but rather he will perfect the entire creation and bring it into harmony with the purpose for which he originally created it (1161). This means the renewal or the restoration of the present creation as upheld by the Reformed Theologians. Reformed scholars like Berkhof among others use these passages in the scriptures to argue for the restoration of the creation in the Second Advent. The passages include: Ps. 102:26, 27; Heb. 1:10-12, and Heb.12:26-28 (Berkhof 737).

In this development, it should be made clear that the phrase, "believers shall be like angels" could mean in another sense, the restoration of the first order of creation which was lost in sin. In the creation story, marriage was not mentioned; rather a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and become one flesh in the perfect world of Adam before sin. The distorted form of marriage would not have existed if not for the fall. In fact the words "marry" and "marriage" would not have entered human vocabulary or language, because just like Adam was given a helper suitable for him (Gen. 2:18), so shall it be with every inheritance of new heaven and new earth. And there would not be

marry and re-marriage syndrome. Every man and woman would be in perfect unity of family relationship divinely arranged to enjoy and worship God to fulfill the purpose of creation as in creation myths. For without this accomplishment it appears the purpose of God for creation has been frustrated and rendered God omnipotent power questionable in the hearts of many rational minds. Perhaps, I have not expressed myself adequately, in this sense. But by analogy, the short span of life and the immeasurable desire in mankind to fulfill certain things, point to that reality; that heaven is going to be a restoration of the lost paradise to establish the justice of God as affirmed by Boettner (67-71).⁴

On the issue of sexes, it is not mentioned in the Bible that, the present nature of man and woman shall be annihilated. By the way, no reasonable research has been carried out on this topic as asserted by Tevington in his article (2). What is clear, is that every man and woman shall be like angels which is enigmatic. Of course we are not free from our cultural bondage which is full of prejudice towards accepting the fact that even women shall be like angels. Since they are created in the image of God they shall possess that nature of being like angels (Gen. 1:27b). If you think they cannot be like angels, ask yourself, how was Eve in the original creation? Was she not rated as a created being, a little lower than angel? (Ps. 8:5). On the question whether we shall be restored to our former spouses at the resurrection as noted by Vine (182-183); it is not clear in the scripture. What is clear is that, paradise shall be restored in the order God intended it as in Eden where Adam and Eve were in fellowship with God which is the essence of eternal life (Rev 22:1-2, Isaiah 35:8). Berkhof says we shall see God in Christ Jesus face to face. He adds that there will be something corresponding to the body, leading to recognition and social intercourse on the elevated plane (737). This means a high state of sphere like that of angels which mankind from creation to Adam would be restored to accomplish the purpose of God for creation.

⁴Boettner in *Immortality*, p. 67-71 notes that, life here is incomplete seeing that great minds, brains, talented people and the host of many skilful men and women only live for a short time without living their lives to the full. He affirms that there must be a restoration of the original creation to vindicate the justice of God. He maintains that the instinctive and the innate knowledge about the future state of man in mankind necessarily justifies the argument for the restoration of the present order in the new heaven and the new earth (2Pet. 31:13 cf. 12).

Conclusion

Heaven is a celestial city where Christ is. Jonathan Edwards writes that the Saints will swim in the oceans of love in heaven and be eternally swallowed up in the infinitely bright, and mild and sweet beams of divine love....⁵ That is the greatest expectation of all the faithful Christians. But ‘no marriage in heaven’ appears to be a reversed order of creation which this paper considers a mirage. It appears, God would change his mind, and will demolish the existing nature of mankind because of what sin has done to the world portraying God as bowing to sin. This paper wishes to submit that in the new heaven and the new earth which shall usher in the reign of Christ, there will be restoration of the original creation in Christ Jesus contrary to the Lutherans’ view of re-creation. But who is man to understand the mind of God on this hidden mystery? For we know little and understand little. However, the author has the conviction that unless the present state of mankind is restored to its original order in the new heaven and new earth to establish the justice of God, humanity has not met her original aspirations. That is why Grudem evinces that “we can expect that we will have physical bodies that will once again be “very good” in God’s sight and that will function to fulfill the purpose for which he originally placed man on the earth.”⁶Therefore, “no marriage in heaven” in the position of this paper is not a reverse order of creation but the restoration of paradise that was lost in the first creation.

Soli Gloria Deum.

⁵ See *Reformation Bible* for complete assertion of this statement made by Jonathan Edwards.

⁶ Grudem p.737

Works Cited

- Alexander, Ralph H. "Marriage" in *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker books House Co., 2000.
- Ayandele, E. A. *The Missionary impact on Nigeria 1842-1914*, London: Longman Ltd, 1966.
- Berkhof, Louis. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1958.
- Boettner, Larraine. *Immortality*. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Com. 1956.
- Caner, Ergun Mehmet and Caner Emir Fethi, *Unveiling Islam*. Kaduna: Evangel Publisher Lt. 2002.
- ChurchcreativePros, www. Com. Accessed on 20th November, 2023.
- Graham, Billy. *The Secret of happiness*, Charlotte: W. Publishing Group. 2002.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology* Intervarsity Press, 1994.
- Hodge, Charles. *Systematic Theology* in three Volumes. Vol. iii. Hendricksen Publishers, USA. 2003.
- Hanks, Geoffrey. *70 Great Christians*. Bristol, Christian Focus Publication, 1992.
- Lupe, Cephas. Interviewed at Veenstra Theological Seminary Donga Taraba State, on 23/11/2023
- Matthew Henrys' Commentary on the whole Bible Vol. 5 Matthew* – John Hendrickson Publisher, 1992.
- Merrill F. Unger. *New Unger's Bible Handbook*, Revised by Gary N. Larson, Moody Press Chicago 1998.
- Moshay, G.J.O. *Who is this Allah?* California, Chick publication, 1990.
- Mullen, A. Bradford. "Believers and Heaven." In *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*. Edited by Walter A. Elwell. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996, pp 334-335.
- Niswonger, L. Richard. *New Testament History*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1992.

Tevington, Andrew. *Idea on Marriage vary with Faiths*. www.ok. Com. Published. Nov. 2007.

The Reformation Bible. Orlando, Reformation Trust Pub. 2015.

Thomas, T.K. "Hinduism," in *Guide to Religion* by David A. Brown, (London SPCK 1975), P.61

Yaku, Cephas Lupe. Interview at Veenstra Theological Seminary Donga 15/12/2923.

Vine, R.D. *God's Answer to Your Questions*. Grantham: The Stanborough Press Limited ND.