

Being Like Angels**9702**

Relationships are a very interesting thing. They are the way we learn to love, and, unfortunately, to hate. God has given us the directive to love, however, and has shown us the perfect way to do it through His Son. We must try to love like he did, forgiving those who sent him to death.

We all have a variety of relationships, each with a different strength and vitality. Marriage should be the ultimate on earth of the kind of relationship that God wants us to have. But these relationships don't always work. What will happen to our relationships in heaven? The Pharisees, in order to try to trap Jesus, asked him an interesting hypothetical question about this in Matthew 22:25-30:

Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. Finally, the woman died. Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?" Jesus replied, "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.

I think Christ is here accusing his questioners of not understanding the magnitude of the whole scheme of things. They are limited in their concept of what love is really all about. I think that in heaven we will lose the idea of loving this individual or that individual, and be changed or transformed so that we love all individuals. Presumably this will be done at the same higher level for each, a level which is more intense than love for a spouse. I don't think that God intended our love to be so focused. According to these words of Christ, there will not be such narrow relationships in heaven.

This will mean loving those who have done things against you, for there will certainly be some of those in heaven. All of the bad characteristics of ourselves and others will be forgotten so that we can arrive at this level of love. I see our relationships on earth a little like a push-pin map. The red pins are for those that we love, and the blue pins are for the ones that we don't love. It is a point by point involvement, not something that covers the whole surface. I think that in heaven we will love everyone alike, not just those that we once knew. I believe that this is why Christ answers the question this way.

It is interesting that we use the book of Revelation as our guide to what heaven will be like. Most of the book, however, discusses the judgment of the earth. There are some statements about the unimaginable splendor and glory that we will encounter in heaven, and the awesome personalities of the Godhead, but there is not that much about our relationships beyond that of being subject to God. Love is not a major theme in Revelation, but it surely is going to be a cornerstone of heaven. Perhaps this is best described in the writings of John, who discusses the inter-abiding nature of the relationships between man, Christ, and God. But there is a prophecy in Isaiah 11:6 that I think illustrates the new level of love that we will find in heaven.

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

There is obviously a tremendous transformation that has happened for these things to occur. The natural enmity that exists between these creations of God has been eliminated. We do not have enough capacity as humans for this kind of love; we must undergo a change in our fundamental character. But God can do this for us through the blood of Jesus Christ. It will be the greatest part of heaven when we get there.

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