

Marriage

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The institution of marriage is respected and revered among Christians throughout the world. A key question that most Christians fail to ask themselves is whether marriage lasts for life only, or forever beyond the grave. If man and woman come together as one, can that union last into the eternities?

The Ordinance of Marriage

Marriage is one of the most important ordinances that we as children of God will ever receive during our time in mortality—perhaps for all eternity. Marriage is ordained of God (D&C 49:15) and is “the most sacred relationship that can exist between a man and woman” (Gospel Principles, 241). Marriage has been a key component of the gospel since the beginning and is so sacred and important that the Lord has provided a way for marriages to last forever and not just until “death do you part.”

For those who might be skeptical of marriage beyond mortality you must ask yourself: would a loving Father in Heaven bring together two people for a life time of love, challenges, and togetherness, only to make them split apart for all eternity after death? The scriptures make it clear that the Lord intends marriages and families to live beyond the grave, and therefore has made a way for that to happen on earth through the sealing powers of the priesthood in holy temples.

The Sealing Powers that Make Marriage Eternal

For a marriage to be for time and eternity, it must be performed in the holy temple by a Melchizedek Priesthood holder who holds the sealing power. Just as Jesus Christ gave Peter the power to bind on earth and in heaven (Matt. 18:18), so are specific priesthood holders given this same power today (D&C 132:19).

The marriage sealing is a simple ceremony where a couple kneels at the altar of the temple, surrounded by friends and family and two specific witnesses. The man and woman covenant to one another before God. The presiding sealer, acting under the direction of the Lord, promises the couple being married wonderful blessings, including exaltation, reminding the couple that such blessings are predicated on their living righteous lives in keeping the commandments of God. When the ceremony is complete, the couple is declared to be husband and wife for time and all eternity.

Understanding the True Meaning of Matthew 22

Before considering the doctrine of being together forever, one must first resolve the scripture from Matthew 22 where the Sadducees challenge Jesus on the subject of marriage in the Resurrection. Jesus answered, “For in the Resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven” (Matt. 22:30). This scripture could be interpreted to mean eternal marriage is not to be. After close examination of this remarkable scripture one will come to understand that there will indeed be no marrying in the resurrection, but rather all such matters are taken care of in mortality—specifically in the holy temples of the Lord on earth before the resurrection. Thus the importance of sealing marriages in the temple today!

The Blessings of Temple Marriage

Besides the blessing of being married for all time and eternity, there are temporal blessings of a temple marriage that can be realized on earth. According to the Barna Research Group, “Among married born again Christians, 35% have experienced a divorce. That figure is identical to the outcome among married adults who are not born again: 35%” (Barna Research Group, “Born Again Christians Just As Likely to Divorce As Are Non-

Christians," September 8, 2004). Conversely, the Los Angeles Times reported the findings of Brigham Young University professor Daniel K. Judd in April of 2000 who estimated that only 6% of Latter-day Saints who marry in a temple ceremony subsequently experience divorce (William Lobdell, "Holy matrimony: In era of divorce, Mormon Temple weddings are built to last," (Los Angeles Times, 2000-APR-8. See: <http://www.adherents.com/> Mirrored at: <http://www.divorcereform.org/>). While the longevity of a marriage clearly depends on the commitment of both spouses, it is indisputable that temple marriages are nearly six times more likely to stay intact on earth than those who are married outside of the temple.

Concerning the eternities the Lord states: "In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees; And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage]; And if he does not, he cannot obtain it" (D&C 131:1-3). One need only consider the invaluable experiences and depths of love exchanged between devoted spouses to understand why marriage would be a requirement to enter into the most sacred of eternal mansions of our Heavenly Father.

Conclusion

The thought of being able to be sealed with the spouse and family you love for all time and eternity is a joyful one. Inside the bonds of a wonderful marriage both spouses desire to be together forever and a path that allows such joy is one that deserves careful consideration.

An eternal marriage is the pinnacle of a Christian's spiritual and temporal life and should be taught, discussed, and planned for from the very earliest age. The prophet Spencer W. Kimball taught: "Marriage is perhaps the most vital of all the decisions and has the most far-reaching effects. ... It affects not only the two people involved, but their children and ... their children's children. ... Of all the decisions, this one must not be wrong" ("The Matter of Marriage" devotional address, Salt Lake Institute of Religion, 22 Oct. 1976).

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