



# Minutes With Messiah

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## UNSTUCK

"I - sink in deep mire, where there is no stand-ing;"\* My feet deep in the mire, no foot-ing is found. But my Lord pulled me  
I - hold on to things, pos - ses-sions sur - round me. I just can't let them go, things I have a - massed. But my Lord re-minds  
My tongue clings to my mouth, it keeps me from tel - ling Of the gos-pel of Christ, of how I've been saved. But my Lord's sac - ri-

out, on the rock my feet land - ing; He is my rock, my so - lid ground.  
me, put - ting his arms a - round me, Things are not mine, they will not last.  
- fice and his great love com - pel - ing De - mand I speak. I'm not en - slaved.

Un - stuck. Un - stuck. Set free from the past. His word up - holds me. With love he en - folds me. Now I am Un-stuck at last.

Spiritual Explosion, the annual youth rally of the Riverside church of Christ in Albuquerque, New Mexico has been canceled due to concerns about the spread of Covid19. The theme was supposed to have been "unstuck." (Yes, without the capital for some reason.) I had already written a song based on this year's proposed theme before the cancellation. Although I could not premier it at the event, I can still publish it here.

\*The first line comes from Psalm 69:2.

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# WAS PAUL MARRIED?

“Mawwiage is what bwings us togethew today. Mawwiage, that bwessed awwangement, that dwream within a dwream.” (The Princess Bride)

This is one of the most quoted scenes from one of the great movies, *The Princess Bride*. Even though Buttercup was being forced to marry the villain Humperdinck, marriage was important. Marriage, in fact, is as old as man.

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. (Gen 2:24; Eph 5:31)

Among the apostles, we know that Peter was married. (Matt 8:14) We know that Jesus considered it important enough that he attended a wedding feast. (John 2) On more than one occasion he used a wedding to teach a lesson. (Matt 22; Lk 14:8; Matt 25:1-13) For centuries, though, there have been questions about whether two prominent people ever married. There is no evidence in scripture or contemporary secular writing to indicate that Jesus ever married. It makes for popular fiction, but has no

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basis in scripture. There was recently a purported discovery of a fragment in which Jesus refers to “my wife.” That fragment, however, appears to be a forgery, or at least of questionable provenance. On the other hand, there has been much scholarly discussion about the marital status of the apostle Paul.

## The controversy

The tradition that Paul was married, and may have continued to be married, dates back as early as the first century, without controversy. Ignatius, in a letter to the Philadelphians, writes of his desire to be found like “Peter and Paul, and the rest of the apostles, that were married men.” Clement of Alexandria, who lived in the second century, also believed he was married. Origen, writing around 325 A.D. mentions Clement’s belief and supports it.

On the other hand, we have Paul’s own words in 1 Corinthians 7. Here he makes clear his bachelorhood.

For I would that all men were even as I myself. But

every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. (1 Cor 7:7-8)

After this statement he argues that some people cannot be single without sinning. He allows them to marry. He does go on to say (verse 27) that his bias toward bachelorhood was due to “the present distress.” That is to say that Paul was against marriage at a time when persecutions were coming. “But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.” (1 Cor 7:33) How often do we see in police procedurals on television or in books that a spouse is kidnapped in order to force the other to do something they otherwise would not do. This is exactly what Paul is saying. When faced with a choice to deny Christ or die, a married person is more likely to consider what will happen to the spouse. Paul was not against marriage in general.

Clement, and Eusebius after him, uses Philippians 4:3 to show that Paul was indeed married. Philippians was written at approximately the same time as the first letter to the Corinthians.

And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.

In the verse they use, Paul refers to “my true yokefellow.” Eusebius renders it “my loyal mate.” The word used commonly referred to “those united by the bond of marriage, relationship, office, labor, study, business, or the like.” (*Thayers Greek Lexicon*) Clement (not the one mentioned in the verse) and Eusebius would be used to using it to refer to a marriage partner. On the other hand, in the passage in Philippians Paul uses the masculine form of the word, indicating a male coworker, like Timothy or Luke.

One other passage is used to indicate that Paul may have been married. Apparently some in Corinth challenged Paul’s authority as an apostle.

Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, Have we not power to eat and to drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? (1 Cor 9:3-6)

Did he not have the right not to work as a tentmaker, although he did so to save the Corinthians from having to support him? Did he not have the right to have a wife accompany him on his travels? Some take this to mean he had a wife, but chose to leave her at home rather

than have congregations that supported him have to consider her support as well. Apparently Peter and James and Jude were always accompanied by their wives, but Paul chooses not to use that privilege. Of course, it is just as possible that he is saying that he could marry, but chooses not to do so.

Some say that the tradition that Paul was unmarried dates back only to a time when the church was advocating priestly celibacy. That, however, was within fifty years after Eusebius wrote. It also ignores the obvious marriages of other apostles and leading disciples. Suffice it to say that the earliest writers on the subject claim that Paul was married. It is likely that they only mention it, though, because others were trying to establish Paul's unmarried state.

## Other arguments in favor

Others look to Paul's status in the Jewish community to support the idea that he was married. Marriage is, after all, an obligation for all Jewish males.

Paul was a Pharisee. Some have proposed that the Pharisees required marriage. There is little historical support for this. The Essenes, who were a subset of the Pharisees, actually discouraged marriage.

Some argue that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin, and members of that body had to be married. Whether they did or not, it is doubtful that Paul was a member of that body. In Acts 9 he was traveling to Damascus under the authority of the High Priest. A member of the Sanhedrin, on the other hand, was required to stay close to Jerusalem in case that body had to decide on an important matter of doctrine. So it is unlikely that Paul was a member, and therefore this argument is meaningless.

## Several options

People have put forth several scenarios to try to reconcile 1 Corinthians 7 with the idea that Paul was, or had been, married. The most obvious is that he was not married, and had never been married. The passage in 1 Corinthians 7 makes it pretty clear that he was not at that time married. It is not likely that he would have married in the few months between the writing of that letter and the one to the Philippians, especially in light of that passage.

While a Pharisee may or may not have been expected to be married, a rabbi is. There may be times when a woman would be uncomfortable talking to a rabbi, but would open up to the *rebbetzin*. Paul's status before his conversion, therefore, would have almost expected a marriage. The question then becomes, if he had been married but was no longer married, what happened? One possibility is that he was widowed. He says a lot to widows in Corinth, perhaps from experience. We tend to think today of older men or women as being widowed, but in the first century many things could lead to younger spouses dying.

The other option if Paul had been married is that he was divorced. Divorce was accepted among the Jewish people, as evidenced by the question of the Pharisees in Matthew 19:3-8.

There is another hint in 1 Corinthians 7 that could indicate that he had been married but was now divorced. Paul had been a devout Jew who now believed in the Messiah.

If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. 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. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a

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sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. (verses 12-15)

We often talk about the restrictions Jesus put on divorce. We sometimes forget that Paul allows a divorce in a case where an unbeliever can no longer live with a convert because of their faith. If Paul had a devoutly Jewish wife, as a *rebbetzin* would be expected to be, his sudden conversion to the Way could have caused such a wife to leave.

These are all good speculations, but they appear to forget one thing. The argument by Clement and Eusebius that Paul was married is based on two passages. The "lead about a wife" passage could apply to one currently married or one who had previously been married and chooses not to remarry. The passage in Philippians that refers to "my true mate," however, was written after Paul told the Corinthians that he would wish that they were "even as I." But even that passage is ambiguous enough to allow one to wonder if he were married but living apart from her.

What difference does it make whether Paul was married or not? Probably none. We don't question the marital status of any of the other New Testament writers. Perhaps the reason many would like to know is that they don't like taking marital advice from one who was never married. In spite of his qualifications in chapter 7 about when he was speaking for himself or for the Lord, it is in the scriptures and so it doesn't matter if the one giving the advice was married or not.

# *THE END IS THE BEGINNING*

“What’s past is prologue.” (*The Tempest*, II, i)  
“Today is the first day of the rest of your life.” We recognize that what has come before is often indicative of the future. In some ways, so it was with the life of Jesus. In a recent article (“The Guest Room”, December 2019) it was shown that at the birth of Jesus there was no room in the guest room, “inn” being a mistranslation. At the end of his life, it seems there was room.

And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover. (Lk 22:10-13)

The disciples were to ask for the guestchamber. In the Greek, this is the same word as used by Luke in chapter 2, saying there was no room. In this case, though, the master of the house provides a “large upper room.”

The birth of Jesus probably occurred near the Passover or, six months later, near the Feast of Booths. In either case, the coincidence of the holiday with the mandated Roman census resulted in a scarcity of room. When Joseph and Mary went to stay with relatives, there was no room in the guest room, so when Jesus was born he was cradled in the nearby manger in the lower part of the house. He had a very humble beginning.

That “lowly birth,” as a song lyric puts it, was followed by almost thirty years of little consequence.

Then came three or four years in which Jesus was a wandering rabbi, although he did make a home in Galilee. Then he came to the third or fourth Passover of his public ministry. This time, when he asks for a guest room similar to the one that was not available at his birth, he is shown to a much larger, more elaborate room, a room on an upper floor of a house.

Two requests for a guestchamber. In the first instance his parents are told there was no room for a baby. In the latter instance he is afforded a room that would accommodate Jesus and twelve or more of his followers. (We don’t know that the Passover celebration was limited to just the apostles.) Past is prologue. In just over thirty years he went from an unknown baby to a revered rabbi who could get a room on demand.

That night, however, he seemed to go from revered rabbi to an outcast. He was taken, beaten, tried, and executed. It seemed the prologue did not hold the promise that it had held just a few hours before. The story did not end, there, however, because past is prologue. That night Jesus spoke of another guest room. He did not use that term. Rather he used a word meaning a complete dwelling, not just a room.

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. (Jn 14:2-3)

Jesus went from no room in the guestroom, to a room larger than the guest room. And then he promised that he would not only occupy a room larger, but that he would provide for us. The beginning doesn’t really show the greatness of the end.

Timothy J. O’Hearn  
737 Monell Dr NE  
Albuquerque NM 87123