

Knowing why a bible class has been put forward for consideration is helpful. Sometimes the translation from the Greek (or Hebrew) is distracting from the original expression used by the Holy Spirit and it is reassuring to remember that God has not abandoned us merely into the power of the translators, but by analysing different Bible passages ourselves, it is possible to find consensus and circumspection from more extensive Biblical usage. This is as it should be. The more you expend personal endeavour in immersing yourself in the teaching of scripture surely the better it is. One major caveat to that is the continuation of preconception and personal bias which must always be acknowledged and resisted.

The context of the chapter is about relationships between the sexes in determining if marriage, a longer-term prospect for any believer, is relevant for those whose primary concern should be in the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a mistake to look at this verse in isolation from its surrounding context and this may lead in other directions.

“But this I say brothers the time having been shortened is, for the rest in order that both the ones having wives as not having may be, and the ones weeping as not weeping, and the ones rejoicing as not rejoicing, and the ones buying as not holding, and the ones using the world as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world is passing away”. Bagsters Literal translation. Opposites and choices are contrasted here in this section. The variation of selection is an echo of Luke 17v26-30, where both marriages, buying and selling as well as other themes, are set in the context of the abrupt ending of the age, applying equally for the end time and the Noahic era. There it is a comment upon life continuing onwards, regardless of the impending doom.

Do the decisions we make reflect our faith in God and trust in the promised return of Jesus Christ, or do we live our lives remote from

that perpetual theme on a daily basis, perhaps only thinking about such spiritual matters when we attend the meetings or are otherwise required to do so?

These expressions are all opposites

Having wives	versus	not having wives
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Weeping	versus	not weeping
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Rejoicing	versus	not rejoicing
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Buying	versus	not holding
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Using the world	versus	not abusing it
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How then is not abusing the world the opposite of using the world? The NET may help here *“those who use the world as though they were not using it to the full”*. The idea then seems to be we have to engage with the world on some level but how deep do we go in that direction?

Having to live “in” the world, but not be “of” the world as is commonly expressed among us is the pervading issue. Even what we buy is illustrative of our life choices and yes, it can be sin if we do anything “not of faith”. We must be circumspect in everything as others will be observing and God most certainly is watching us through the Angels.

Jesus used the world but not to the full! He was in this world, this kosmos, but was not a compromised participant but a realistic critic accepting of the present limitations but always pointing out their temporary nature and the need for a future replacement in all areas. He never allowed this world to taint him beyond being a participant in it. The nature we share will change, the spiritual dimension we experience will change, the political order we live under will change, the mores and prejudices of society will change, and indeed he will be instrumental in bringing about all these changes. His involvement with the world is transformational because he has overcome the world, 1

John 4v5. This extends to his disciples also. He had to be part of it in order to overcome it, he requires his followers to do the same.

If we remain rooted in the fashion of this world, which includes marriage, then we are the loser. Having the mindset that such issues, yes even marriage! Are of no lasting consequence is not easy, just as not weeping when we are distressed or refraining to rejoice with the drunken idiots that abound is not always an easy thing. Marriage is for this world, Jesus taught that in the world to come they neither marry nor are given in marriage, Luke 20v34-36, but just as it is not wrong to buy things now, it is not wrong to marry now, I certainly am married, and grateful for it. However, others have given up the prospect of marriage now for the sake of the Kingdom of God, for different reasons and this is to be commended.

It should not be a surprise that the Apostle goes on straight after this to weigh up the issues which should influence our decisions in such matters, but does so in an arresting way, perhaps stating the very opposite of what naturally we might expect. *“But I would have you without carefulness”*. Being unmarried is to avoid excess carefulness, most people would argue that the burden of being single brings the need for more carefulness and in terms of the old man that is true. The new man, however, must think differently and it is moving onto that mindset which we find so difficult.

Marriage brings such matters into focus like little else. Its power to influence for good or evil is accepted. Its impact upon our daily lives, unavoidable. Its relevance in witnessing to others undisputed. The Apostle, under inspiration, sets out these aspects which should underpin our approach to these matters.

Weeping and rejoicing are also mentioned. Our emotional status is a choice and will affect others also, both within the Ecclesia, a Body of Christ, and outside, see chapter 12v25,26. Its is all about the choices we make in interacting with those people God places us amongst.

Ecclesiastes 3 speaks of *“a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance”* we are all under the circumstance of this world and who knows what experiences God will ask us to endure. The passage goes on to state that *“also He hath set the world in their heart so that no man can find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end”*. Being creatures of this world, we cannot but be affected by it, its influence pervades and for that reason we need always to be on our guard. If we become casual and complacent then it has won, and the old man remains triumphant.

It is because this present world is short, limited, even if four score years, that we must not lose focus on the higher nobler goals of serving God in all things. If we cannot serve God in marriage, then it would be a mistake to become so entangled with another. However, everyone must be turned over to God in our lives, we recognise this, the hard part should not be in acknowledging this but in doing this! *“Brethren the time is short...”* let us lift our gaze above the mundane, being of that class who merely use the world but not to the full.

A Voice from the Altar

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