

So far I have pointed out that it is flat-out wrong to say that every Jewish man in the first century was married and was expected to be married. It is not only demographically impossible (there were not enough women to go around) but we know of Jewish men from the time of Jesus who were not married and were proud of it. Strikingly, they, like him, were apocalyptically minded Jews – such as the Essenes and the apostle Paul. I have also argued that whatever Mary Magdalene was to Jesus, she was not his lover and spouse, to the great disappointment of us all.....

But is there an actual argument that Jesus was not married other than the silences? I think there is. And this is what it is.

A good deal of Jesus' teaching, of course, was ethical in nature, about how people ought to live and conduct themselves. Many people think of Jesus as one of the great moral teachers of all time, and I have no quarrel with that. But I do think it is important (of utmost importance) to place Jesus' ethical teachings into the context of his overall proclamation, his apocalyptic message that God was soon to intervene in the course of this evil world to destroy all those powers aligned against him – along with the people who sided with them – and bring in a good kingdom on earth. Jesus' ethics were directly related to this view of the coming kingdom. They were, in fact, a kingdom ethics.

Many ethicists today are interested in teaching people how to behave so that we can make society a better, stronger place, more beneficial to all of us for the long term. Jesus, on the other hand, was not teaching people how to behave so that we can all get along in the long haul. For Jesus there was not going to be a long haul. The end was coming soon, and ...

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