



Luke 20:27-44

Underestimating Jesus

Introduction

How often do you underestimate how long something is going to take?

I always underestimate how long it will take to write a sermon. It's always harder than I think it will be. Building always takes longer than at first estimated. And have you ever been on a sports team and underestimated an opponent? It can lead to a humbling defeat.

There are two parts to our passage this morning. In the first part, the Sadducees ask Jesus a theological question. His answer shows them how they have underestimated what God promises. In the second part of the passage, Jesus asks a question of His own. His question reveals how the scribes' understanding of the Jewish Messiah is a vast underestimation of the Savior that Jesus actually is. We often underestimate God's promises and His salvation.

Main idea: *God offers us better promises and a better savior than we think.*

Better Promises Than We Think (vv. 27-40)

Who are the Sadducees? (v. 27)

Sadducees are a religious party. In first-century Judaism, there are number of different religious parties. We hear a lot about the Pharisees and they were the other most prominent group.

You might be a Sadducee if:

- You were wealthy and upper class.
- You lived near Jerusalem (associated with Temple and priests)
- You cooperated easily with the Romans. Some groups took a hardline stance.

Sadducees were interested in preserving Temple worship

- You only believed that the Torah was inspired by God¹
- You didn't believe in the resurrection²

¹ The Pharisees act as though the rabbinic teachings are divinely inspired. They add to Scripture. The Sadducees commit the opposite error.

² Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.1.4

- You didn't believe in angels (Ac 23:8)

Although these Sadducees are talking to Jesus about the resurrection, they don't believe in it. They say there is not enough evidence in the Torah for a resurrection of the dead.

What does the Sadducees' story mean? (vv. 28-33)

From our modern vantage point, we wonder why all these men are marrying their sister-in-law? Deuteronomy 25:5-6 says that if a man dies, it is his brother's responsibility not to let his family line die. He is supposed to marry his sister-in-law and raise kids in his brother's name. The story of Ruth and Boaz and Naomi is an example of this³.

In the Sadducees' story, if there is a resurrection are all seven men going to come home to this lady and say, "Honey I'm home!" and ask what is for dinner. Yet the point is not whose wife she will be as much as pointing out how ridiculous the situation would become if the woman is married to seven different men.⁴

Here is their reasoning:

- 1) The Law tells you to do something
- 2) But it would lead to a terrible conundrum if there is a resurrection.
- 3) Therefore, there must not be a resurrection.⁵

QUESTION: Can you think of other misconceptions people have about the Christian faith? How do they arrive at their conclusions?

The Jewish leaders have questioned Jesus' authority, His political beliefs, now His theology. These Sadducees have completely underestimated the scope of God's promises. Because of a bad reading of the Torah, and the fact that they don't consider the rest of the Bible to be inspired, they have limited God's promises to *this life*.

There are many people today who don't believe in a resurrection. Materialists believe that you simply disperse into the universe because your body is really all that there is. Other people do not believe in an afterlife, but not judgment. Many people believe in heaven, but believe that there are many ways to get there, and almost everyone goes to heaven except for Adolf Hitler and some serial killers. Some people believe that if you can just do enough good things to balance out the bad things, you can get to heaven. Others still think that if they can just do better than

³ See Ruth 4:10 and note in 4:17 how the women say that a son has been born to Naomi, even though Obed is Ruth's biological son.

⁴ Bock, Darrell L. 2008. *Luke. Vol. 2 9:51-24:53*. Grand Rapids, Mich. Baker Academic.

⁵ Morris, Leon, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 3 of Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. IVP/Accordance electronic ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988.

most people, they will go to heaven. But all these beliefs cannot be correct at the same time! Wouldn't you like to know what Jesus says about the life to come?

QUESTION: How do some of your unsaved friends or relatives think about the life to come?

What does Jesus teach? (vv. 34-38)

1. There is a resurrection

Jesus speaks about “attaining to the resurrection of the dead.”

2. The life to come is not like this life

Jesus' assertion about “The sons of this age” and “that age” means that there are distinct differences between the life to come and this life.

The life to come is different in that people do not marry. There is no marriage. From our perspective, perhaps this seems like a downgrade. That's what we think, but God offers us something better than what we think. Our relationships will be unaffected by sin. We will enjoy a perfected relationship with God and with others. We will experience the perfect love of God.

QUESTION: Given this teaching, do you think that there is an overemphasis on marriage in the church?

The life to come is different in that there will be no death. Verse 36 tells us “they cannot die anymore.” People will be equal to angels in this way. Angels don't die.

3. There are angels

In verse 36, Jesus speaks about the sons of the resurrection being like angels, so we see that they are real. Hebrews 1:14 tells us that angels are ministering spirits sent out to help believers.

4. There is a judgment

There will be a decision made about whether you are “worthy to attain” to the blessings of the life to come—an it doesn't sound like you get to choose! Some people will not be considered worthy. Some will go to life, others will go to judgment. Remember Jesus' warning from Luke 13:

No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.
(Luke 13:3 ESV)

Perishing is talking about being judged and sentenced for our sin if we have not repented of it. This judgment will be irreversible. But there is good news for

believers: you cannot die anymore. If you receive a new body, death will not touch you.

Jesus teaches about the resurrection from Exodus

Jesus offers them proof by opening the Bible. He has a high view of Scripture (after all, as the second person of the triune Godhead, he wrote it!). There are other places Jesus could refer to in the Old Testament (Dan 12:2), but He goes to the Torah, to Exodus 3, probably because the Sadducees accept this book.

In the passage, God has called to Moses from the burning bush. He is about to send Moses to deliver His people from slavery in Egypt.

And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

(Exodus 3:6 ESV)

Jesus calls attention to a detail: not "I *was* the God of your fathers" but "I *am* the God of your father, the God of Abraham, etc." Jesus demonstrates that the verb is in present tense.⁶ He tells them the reason you should believe that the resurrection is real is because Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are considered "living" by God even though their bodies have been in the grave for hundreds of years. God promised each of those men that He would be their God.⁷ If Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were dead, then it shows that His promise is limited by their lifespan.⁸ He told them He would be their God and He kept His promise to them even though their physical bodies died. So when they could not serve Him or worship Him anymore and they breathed their last, He did not just let them dissolve into nothingness. When God promises to keep you both in life and in death, His promise is secure!

Do you fear death? A healthy fear of death keeps us from doing stupid things, but we can obsess about how much time we have left, how we are going to die, and how to avoid dying. It can become life-controlling. But if God has promised us life after this life that is better than what we now have, why would we fear? So what if I take my last breath? God said that He will be my God. I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He offers to be your God forever too.

⁶ This is a great argument for the inspiration of Scripture. If Jesus is able to use a verb tense to prove His point, it shows us that we can be confident in the inspiration of the words of Scripture.

⁷ Marshall, I Howard. 1978. *The Gospel of Luke*. Eerdmans.

⁸ Edwards, James R. 2015. *The Gospel According to Luke*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

QUESTION: Read Hebrews 2:14-15. What does this teach us about the fear of death? If our fear of death is the greatest of our fears, how does this passage help us with other fears we have?

How did God become the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

God give Abraham a promise about what He would do for Abraham. Abraham responds:

And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.
(Genesis 15:6 ESV)

It is counted to Abraham as righteousness not because Abraham memorized the whole Bible, or because Abraham gave away all his wealth, or any good works. He simply believed what God would do for him.

This is how He becomes our God as well. We stop trying to save ourselves, to do enough good to balance out our bad, and believe God's promises. God wants us today to believe, to have faith in His Son. You can place all the weight of my life on God's promises so that they fully support you. Here is a promise God offers us about having eternal life:

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.
(1 John 5:13 ESV)

If you have never trusted in Jesus, respond in faith today. Believe in the Name of the Son of God. Place the weight of your life on Him to save you, and lead you, and watch Him show Himself strong in your life over and over again.

If you have already trusted in Jesus to save you, what are you having trouble trusting God with? The worst of your problems is already in your rearview mirror. Your case was on the docket in Heaven's courtroom, and you were going to lose your case and be sentenced to death. But Jesus stepped forward and took your sentence and you went free!

The Sadducees have an *incomplete Bible*, which leads to a *bad doctrine* of eternal things and an *anemic faith* in God and what He promises.

1. The Sadducees only believed part of the Bible. They subtracted from God's Word. We may not like parts of the Bible, but we remove things from it at our peril.
2. An incomplete Bible led them to bad doctrine. Their entire theology was shaped by the thought that because they did not see the resurrection explicitly sketched out, it didn't exist. Jesus showed them that even the part of the Bible they had

was enough, but not looking at the whole Bible can lead to a bad understanding of important things like eternity.

3. Bad doctrine leads to an anemic faith in God's promises.

We can become just like the Sadducees. Do you have a weak faith because you have not trusted in His Word in some aspect of your life? Last week I encouraged you to let go of the things of this world and give yourselves fully to God. We used Psalm 16:11 to talk about it.

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.
(Psalm 16:11 ESV)

Look at these promises. They actually happen to be about resurrection and eternity (which is a bonus):

- 1) In His presence *there is fullness of joy.*
- 2) At his right hand are *pleasures forevermore.*

QUESTION: Which of God's promises do you find it difficult to apply in your life?

If we trust in His promises, we will not freak out and think that the sky is falling when we lose temporary, worldly things. We will lament their loss, but their loss won't steal our joy, because our joy is rooted in God's promises.

Conclusion (vv. 39-40)

The scribes give Jesus a little encouragement. The scribes are probably Pharisees and don't mind a little jab at the Sadducees, because they are always vying for control of the Sanhedrin. In verse 40, the "they" Luke uses represents everyone: Pharisees, scribes, and Sadducees.⁹ Jesus has proven Himself. He has answered everyone's questions. Now He has a question of His own. It's a question about what kind of Savior the people of Israel are expecting...

A Better Savior Than We Think (vv. 41-44)

The Christ, the Messiah, is the one promised all throughout the Bible, from Genesis 3 on, who will come and set things right. The Scripture Jesus quotes, Psalm 110, was a text that the scribes (the teachers of the law) believed was about the coming Messiah. They were right but Jesus points out that there is something more to this passage.

⁹ Bock, *Luke*. Vol. 2 9:51-24:53.

Look at the phrase, “The Lord says to my lord.” In Hebrew, the first Lord is YHWH (God’s covenant name), and the second Lord is *adonai* (which can refer to God or can be a human, like “master”). Follow Jesus’ reasoning:

1. David calls the second “lord,” “my Lord,” establishing this person’s superiority.
2. The Christ is to be a descendent of David. David is the patriarch of His line. He is the greatest and everyone who follows him is lesser.
3. So Jesus asks, “How is it that David, the greater, is saying ‘my Lord’ to his Son?”

Now, Jesus is the Son of David in two ways:

- 1) According to His human parentage (Lk 3) and
- 2) by His Messianic title (blind man of Lk 18)

He is saying the scribes *underestimated* who this Messiah-King-Son of David is.¹⁰ He is a greater king than David. Verse 43 says “until I make your enemies your footstool,” so we see that He will defeat enemies. As a matter of fact, He will defeat greater enemies than David did, bring greater glory to God and to His people than David did.

What enemy do the people of Israel want for the Messiah to defeat? Rome. But His people have underestimated the Son of David. They think He is just there for a military victory and to restore self-rule to Israel.

Who are Jesus’ enemies? The Pharisees? The Sadducees? The Romans? This is thinking too small. Jesus, the Messiah’s, enemies are Satan, sin and death. Remember the showdown with Satan in the wilderness in Luke 4:1-13? Jesus defeated Satan by resisting temptation. He defeated sin by absorbing the payment for sin on the cross. He defeated death by rising from the grave after three days, just as He said.

We say “Jesus is my Savior” but we don’t always fully believe what a great Savior He is. What worries you? Is whatever you are worrying about a problem for someone with a Savior like Jesus? Is someone attacking your reputation a problem for Him? Jesus defeated a greater accuser. Is the sin you struggle with a problem for Him? He absorbed sin and took it with Him to death. Is there a sickness that you are struggling with? Jesus defeated death for you, and death the greatest health problem we have! All of these things are “threat level 0” for Him!

QUESTION: Read Psalm 6. How does this psalm and others like it teach us that struggling in our faith is not itself sinful? How can we struggle and remain faithful at the same time?

¹⁰ Morris, *Luke*.

It's just as Psalm 110 said, "until I make your enemies your footstool." Satan, sin and death are in His trophy case. They are what He puts His feet on after a busy day at work.

How about our work as a church? Will Satan be able to resist the church of Jesus Christ as we proclaim the Gospel to captive sinners? We know that people are the devil's captives, but if God wants to save them, does he get to resist and tell God "no"? The gates of Hell will not prevail against the forward motion of the church (Mt 16:18). This applies not only to our church but the Church across the world. We have a much greater savior than the scribes of Jesus' day taught about. And we have a much greater Savior than sometimes we actually believe!

QUESTION: Do you honestly believe that the Lord will use us as a church? Share some of your hopes for Four Points as a body of believers.

Conclusion

This morning, I am calling you to stop underestimating God. Don't underestimate His promises like the Sadducees did. He has power to do what He promises (Ro 4:20-21). Jesus promised that someday He will give you who believe a new body that never dies. He has given you a new life today and a new nature that is not mastered by sin. Walk in that.

Don't underestimate Him as a Savior. Jesus saved you from Satan, sin and death. He will bring you through the struggles you face right now as well. See the greatness of our Savior next to the problems you face and rejoice in hope.