

Matthew 22:23-33

“The Kingdom and the Resurrection”

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Intro. The resurrection is the foundation of the Christian faith. The resurrection provides hope in difficult times, meaning, purpose, and value in all times, and certainty in an uncertain world. The resurrection gives hope of: forgiveness of sin, relationship with God, and eternity in heaven. Let's discover what difference believing in Jesus and His resurrection can make ...

Subject: The Question about the Resurrection

Object: Believe in Jesus and His resurrection

Context: After entering Jerusalem four day before the Passover (and the Cross), Jesus asserted authority to declare what is and is not acceptable worship and faith. The religious leaders seek to undermine Jesus by a series of difficult questions. Last week we considered the question of taxes and Jesus' response, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.” Now the Sadducees come with a question about the resurrection.

A. The question about the resurrection [23-28]

²³ The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, ²⁴ saying: “Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁵ Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. ²⁶ Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. ²⁷ Last of all the woman died also. ²⁸ Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her.”

1. Do potential practical problems make the resurrection seem unlikely?

The Sadducees [23] were a small party, but were very wealthy and influential in Israel's government. They were generally liberal in their theology and materialists in that they denied angels, miracles and the resurrection (unlike the Pharisees). And they only believed in the Torah (the first five Books of Moses). Their question attempts to pose a practical problem with life after death and thus discredit Jesus and minimize His influence. The Mosaic Law made provision for a Levirate marriage [Deut. 25:25]. The Latin “levir” means a husband's brother. The concept was that if a married man died without a son, the brother would marry the widow to preserve the family name and property. The firstborn son would be seen as the heir of the deceased [24]. They pose a hypothetical where the widow marries all seven brothers, then she dies [26-27]. In the resurrection whose wife will she be [28]? There are presumably many potential practical problems that could be an obstacle to our belief in the resurrection. For example, what will your body look like? For example, young, middle age, or old you? How will we recognize loved ones? What if someone was cremated? What will we sound like?

Although we don't have all the answers as to what we shall be, but we know that we will be like Jesus' resurrected body.

“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” [1Jn. 3:2].

B. Jesus' answer confirms the resurrection [29-33]

²⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. ³⁰ For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. ³¹ But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ³² ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” ³³ And when the multitudes heard *this*, they were astonished at His teaching.

Jesus' response helps us to understand that heaven is not merely a continuation of earthly life. Jesus says they are “mistaken” [29] which could be translated literally, “You deceive yourselves.” He corrects them for not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God [29]. The Bible never say that husbands and continue in marriage in heaven, and it is not a problem for God to raise us from the dead or dust. In the resurrection, there will not be marriage [30]. In that sense, we will be like the angels [30]. Notice that Jesus affirms the reality of angels, contrary to the Sadducees.

1. God will raise the dead because He has promised to be their God

Jesus supports the resurrection from Ex. 3:6, 15 [32], one of the books of the Torah accepted by the Sadducees. God uses the present tense “I am” rather than past tense “I was” because they were still alive [32]. God is the God of the living [32]. The multitudes were astonished by Jesus' teaching [33], and the Sadducees were silenced (muzzled) [34].

C. What difference does believing in Jesus and His resurrection make?

1. A certain hope in eternal life [Jn. 11:25-26, 1Cor. 15:1-19]

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. ²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” [Jn. 11:25-26]

Knowing that you will spend eternity with God provides comfort when you're struggling in this life. In the midst of a difficult and frightening season of life you have hope and comfort that it is brief compared to eternal paradise with Christ. This hope is certain, because our resurrection is linked to Jesus' resurrection; and the evidence of His resurrection is beyond a reasonable doubt. Because of His death and resurrection, we know the gospel is true, our sins can be forgiven, and we can have life today and into eternity with Christ [1Cor. 15:1-19].

2. A purposeful life [1Cor. 15:58]

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” [1Cor. 15:58].

Paul concludes his detailed discussion of the resurrection and the moral implications with the exhortation to remain steadfast in the faith and passionate in the work of advancing God's kingdom with full assurance that your effort is not in vain. Without Christ, the gospel, and the resurrection life is purposeless and elusive.

3. A heavenly focus [Col. 3:1-2]

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

In light of the resurrection, Jesus' followers are to be heavenly focused. We are to live for Christ. Thus, the material world and our flesh stop dominating our lives. The Sadducees were generally wealthy and sought to enjoy the comforts of the material world. They wanted to satisfy the flesh and the soul by living for this world and having practical religion. The Sadducees' philosophy was not unlike many modern Christians who enjoy a comfortable standard of living in this world. Although they may affirm the resurrection as a theological truth, their focus is the earth (material world) not heaven (spiritual life). The problem is that denying the resurrection as a theological truth or as a practical reality of life doesn't satisfy God or man. The clear teaching of Jesus and the New Testament should compel us to stop living primarily for this world, and discover life in Christ as we focus more on heaven and eternity.

Study Guide Qs

- 1. What are some potential practical problems that may make the resurrection seem unlikely to people? As you and your group contemplate potential problems, are any of them too big for the power of God to resolve?**
- 2. Share some of the circumstances in your life that tend to cause discouragement or fear. Share how the resurrection provides comfort and hope to you.**
- 3. How are you seeking to live with purpose, and abound in the work of the Lord in your local church and community?**
- 4. How can you create margin in your life to live for Christ more and this world less. What are some changes that you believe that Christ is calling you to make in your rhythms (patterns) of life?**