

“The Lord of the Living”

Luke 20: 27–38

11 November 2007

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Luke 20:27–38

Some Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection, came to him and asked him a question, “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies, leaving a wife but no children, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother. Now there were seven brothers; the first married, and died childless; then the second and the third married her, and so in the same way all seven died childless. Finally the woman also died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had married her.” Jesus said to them, “Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.”

Prayer.

1. **SETTING:** Jesus in Jerusalem, last events before death & resurrection. Jesus in the Temple. He had cleansed the Temple. 3 attempts to trap him.
 - Entrapment #1: Source of Authority (20:1–8). The chief priests and the scribes came with the elders and said to him, "Tell us, by what authority are you doing these things? Who is it who gave you this authority?"
 - Entrapment #2: Paying tribute to Caesar (20:20–26). So they watched him and sent spies who pretended to be honest, in order to trap him by what he said, so as to hand him over to the jurisdiction and authority of the governor. So they asked him "Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?"
 - Entrapment #3: Today's Gospel. Jesus is in the lion's den!
2. **WHO WAS ASKING THIS ABSURD / SHOCK QUESTION? SADDUCEES**
 - Sadducees: Priestly class.
 - Privilege: officiating as priests in Temple after Babylonian captivity.
 - Class disappeared with destruction of Jerusalem.
 - Wealthy.
 - Theologically conservative.
 - Belief: only in written Torah. The first 5 books of Hebrew scriptures.
 - Biblical Literalists.

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- No mention of resurrection in the Torah, so the Sadducees held no belief in a resurrection or heavenly, angelic realm.
- Heated, public debates with Pharisees.
- Pharisees believed in written AND oral tradition.
- Pharisees believed in a more Greek melding of body and soul.
- Debates: "Resurrection Riddles."
- Today's Equivalent: Biblical Literalists v. Biblical Interpreters
- Conservative v. Middle-of-the Road
- Sadducees v. Pharisees
- "Wrong, abomination, sin."
- "Authorities who didn't believe in a resurrection ask, "So, Jesus, what do you think about the resurrection?"

3. SOCIETY'S BELIEFS AT THAT TIME

- Middle of the Road
- Didn't believe or practice Levirate marriage (Deut.25:5-10).
- Husband's brother would marry widowed sister-in-law, bear a son, such that the name would remain immortal.
- Most believed in Resurrection & Life after death.
- Today's equivalent: CHURCH DOCTRINE.
- Generally more conservative than popular opinion.

4. JESUS'S RESPONSE

- Wise: a response in kind (v.37-38), citing Moses:
And the fact that the dead are raised, Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive."
- IF God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob, and
- IF God tells this to Moses, who came after the Patriarchs, and
- IF God is the God of the living,
- THEN Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob MUST BE Living, i.e. RESURRECTED!
- (Stick that in your pipe and smoke it, mister Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection!)
- Then, Jesus moves on: Tells us what the next age holds (v.34-36)
Jesus said to them, "Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection.
- Those Considered / judged Worthy in that age ...
- First Death, then Resurrection (No Immortality). That is, to have resurrection means that you must have death.

- Become equal to angels. They are like angels and are Sons of God (Related to the Divine like Jesus, the Son of God).
- Language fails to describe further.

5. WHAT TO LEARN FROM TODAY'S GOSPEL

- APPROACH JESUS WITH AN OPEN MIND AND HEART
 - i. The Sadducees approached Jesus set in their ways.
 - ii. Don't make the same mistake.
 - iii. Listen to the experience and witness of others; how God has moved through their lives.
 - iv. Look for new and different directions God may be leading you and your life
 - v. Open your heart and mind to prayer and the scriptures that the Holy Spirit might ebb and flow freely in your midst.
- MARRIAGE, TODAY & TOMORROW
 - i. Marriage is an institution of this age.
 - ii. Imperfect. Even 99.44% is less than perfect.
 - iii. Spouse abuse (physical / violent, emotional, sexual)
 - iv. Divorce.
 - v. The thought of being reunited with your spouse may be bad news to some!
 - vi. Don't be disappointed if you are not reunited!
 - vii. Jesus tells us that life in the age to come will be Perfect. It will be better than any earthly experience; beyond possible imagination.
 - viii. It will be like Angels.
 - ix. Related to the Divine.
- JESUS BRINGS RESURRECTION BY BOTH HIS WORDS AND HIS DEEDS!
 - i. So often we think of Jesus as bringing us resurrection simply by His being raise from the dead.
 - ii. As Jesus won victory over the grave, so too have each of his disciples been given victory over the grave.
 - iii. But here today, Jesus **assures us with his words** that our God is a God of resurrection.
 - iv. Though we die, yet will we live, for our God is a God of the living.
 - v. And we will live with God forever.

6. Conclusion

- Come to Jesus with an open mind and heart.
- His salvation is perfect in every way.
- It is actualized by both his word and his deeds.
- Our God will save us, and we will live together forever.
- This is the Word of our Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.