

Our Resurrection: A Ruse or Real?

Luke 20:27-40

Please open your Bible to Luke 20:27-40.

Let's consider three thoughts from our passage.

An absurd approach by the Sadducees

An absolute admonition by the Savior

An appropriate application by the saved

I. AN ABSURD APPROACH BY THE SADDUCEES – vs. 27-33

A. Their Doctrinal Position is Absurd – v. 27

In the beginning of the chapter the chief priests, the Scribes and the elders came to Jesus and questioned His authority. He responded with a parable about tenants of a vineyard who intentionally beat up his servants and killed the owner's only son. Jesus stated that the owner had the authority to come and remove them from the vineyard.

Because Jesus thwarted their plan to prove He was a charlatan by trying to trick Him through their questioning, we read in verse 20 that they sent spies to set Him up with what they perceived to be a no win scenario for Jesus. Was it right to pay taxes to Caesar? If He said yes, the people would turn on Him because He sided with Rome. If He said no, Rome would arrest Him for teaching insurrection. Jesus turned the tables on them and said that there is a responsibility to give what belongs to Caesar and also give to God what belongs to Him, the latter meaning that we are to give our very selves to God.

Both failed in their attempt to discredit Jesus. A third group stepped forward with a question. They are the Sadducees. Tradition holds that their group, which was part of the ruling Sanhedrin, dated back to Zadok who served as priest under King David. Among the Sanhedrin of Jesus' day, they wielded great influential power. They were Aristocratic and wealthy.

They held only to the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch. The rest of the Old Testament was merely a commentary on the writings of Moses. They rejected the traditions of the Scribes and believed that only the Law was binding.

“Only what is written is to be esteemed as legal...what has come down from tradition of the fathers need not be observed.”

In regard to the law, they were very strict. Jewish historian Josephus wrote that they were “very rigid in judging offenders above all the rest of the Jews.”

One of the beliefs they held to was the issue at hand and the source of the question posed to Jesus. We find out in one simple statement by Luke that the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. That's why they were sad you see. They did not believe in life after death nor did they believe in a punishment that would occur in a future life. No heaven. No hell. They believed that any retribution for sin would occur in this life. They believe all that because the books of Moses were silent on them. Because they didn't believe in the resurrection, they lived in the here and now. Consequently they lived for power, position, and profit.

What dumbfounds me is that in their strict adherence to the writings of Moses what did they do with teachings about the necessity of the Redeemer and the whole sacrificial system? Why do you need a sacrifice for sin if there is no afterlife?

If you don't believe in the afterlife or in eternal punishment, why try to live a moral life? What benefit is there in trying to be good or following a set of religious tenets? Because the soul and body cease to exist at death, you might as well eat, drink and be merry – get all you can in this life. This is in direct contrast to what Jesus taught. He said that we should store up our treasures in heaven and not on earth that we should be concerned with the eternal not the temporal, watching and waiting, looking and

longing for the promised heavenly home that He has prepared for those who belong to Him.

It's interesting that the Sadducees would hold such a view, when most Jews and most cultures in that day believed in an afterlife. Throughout history and in every civilization there has been the anticipation even expectation in life after death. Ecclesiastes 3:11 states that God has set eternity on the heart.

Egyptian history records in the Book of the Dead stories and instructions related to their belief in the afterlife. Archaeologists have uncovered tombs with wealth buried along with food provisions that were to be used by the dead in the afterlife. Servants were killed and placed in the tomb to attend to their master's needs.

They have found similar provisions in ritual burials among the American Indians, Chinese, and Vikings who were given weapons and food, even armies.

The Greeks would place a coin either on the tongue or the eyes of the dead in order to pay to be ferried across the mystic river of death into the afterlife.

In Greenland, children were often buried with a dog to guide them in the afterlife.

Benjamin Franklin wrote a poem that speaks of his belief in an afterlife.

The Body of
B. Franklin, Printer
Like the Cover of an old Book,
Its Contents torn out,
And stript of its Lettering & Gilding,
Lies here, Food for Worms.
But the Work shall not be lost,
For it will, as he believed,
Appear once more,
In a new and more elegant Edition,
Corrected and improved
By the Author.

Traditional Jewish belief held to life after death including a place of torment after judgment.

Job 19:25-27

Psalms 16:9-11

Psalms 49:15

Psalms 139:8

Yet the Sadducees rejected that belief.

It makes perfect sense then why they wanted to kill Lazarus (John 12:9-11) after Jesus raised Him from the dead. He was a threat to their very doctrinal position that there is no resurrection.

It makes perfect sense when we read Acts 4 where Peter and John are warned specifically by the Sadducees not to preach about the resurrection. Because they didn't believe in it they didn't want it taught.

Their doctrinal position is absurd.

Their deceptive plot is absurd.

B. Their Deceptive Plot is Absurd – vs. 28-33

Let's be clear that by resurrection we mean coming back to life from the dead. By the question they are about to ask Jesus they assumed that *if* such an event were to take place then there would be a resumption of activity as we know it. Life would go on as it had before death.

Let's consider then their absurd question.

They begin their hypothetical scenario based on the Jewish law known as the Levirate law regarding marriage. They take Jesus back to the Old Testament and the Law of Moses. Note that they are basing their question on the law. This will be important in Jesus' response. Here's what the law says according to Moses. If a man and woman marry and he dies without giving an heir to carry on his family line, then according to the law, the next brother was to marry his dead brother's wife or to simplify it, his sister-in-law. The first born son would then carry on the birthright and name of the

deceased in order to perpetuate his family line.

This law was given in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. The book of Ruth is a great example of this law in action. If the nearest relative refused then that relative was subject to significant insult by the community. The law was given to protect widows from being neglected.

They continued with their scenario by making it utterly ridiculous. There were seven brothers in this family, each married this widow, each left no heir to continue on the family name of the first born. It's not seven brides for seven sons, it's one bride for seven sons. Here she is married seven times and buried seven husbands. Eventually, they say, she also died. Forget about any inheritance, they wanted to know in the resurrection, in the afterlife, who will be the lucky guy that gets to have her as a wife, since she was married to all seven brothers?

That's quite a question. Remember, they don't believe in the resurrection. Their logic had led them to deny the power of God. They weren't interested in receiving more information to correct their erroneous belief. It was an attempt to make Jesus look foolish by presenting Him with a ridiculously hypothetical case. Their deceptive plot was absurd.

Let's consider how Jesus responded. It's an absolute answer by the Savior.

II. AN ABSOLUTE ANSWER BY THE SAVIOR – vs. 34-40

The first thing we see is that Jesus gives a practical response for the resurrection.

A. A Practical Response for the Resurrection – vs. 34-36

He begins by differentiating between what takes place in this age and in the age to come after the resurrection. In this age, He says, people marry and

are given in marriage. It's the natural thing to do. Why? The answer is seen in the opening chapter of the Bible.

Genesis 1:20 "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it.'"

The purpose of marriage was to perpetuate the human race, to keep the line of man going. However, in the age to come marriage won't be necessary because we will be like angels. People won't die. Then he clarifies or makes an important distinction. Mankind and angels are different. While Jesus says that when we die we become like the angels, He does not mean nor did He say that we become angels. Some people believe that. You have probably heard someone say after someone has died that heaven just got another angel. Jesus indicates here that is not the case. It isn't true. We don't become angels. Angels have always been and always will be different from mankind. I think that is abundantly clear not only here from the teaching of Jesus but also in the book of Revelation where we see gathered around the throne of God all the heavenly host of angels as well as people from every nation, tribe, and tongue.

Revelation 5:11-13

What Jesus meant when He said we would be like the angels is that we will also live forever. Because there will be no more death, there will be no need for marriage in order for procreation.

What He says dismantles their erroneous belief about marriage. Now I want you to go back to Matthew's account of this event. He includes something important that we need to see. Matthew 22:29

Let me repeat that: "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God."

It literally means they were deceiving themselves.

Jesus confronted them on two important issues that we need to take serious note of.

1. They did not know the Scriptures.

As scholarly as they were about the Law of Moses Jesus said they didn't know it or understand it. How about that for an indictment? They had read the Scriptures. They had studied the Scriptures, but they didn't know the Scriptures. People who attack the Bible don't know it or understand it.

Now, I want to pause right there and ask you this question. Are we like the Sadducees not knowing the Scriptures?

How often have we misquoted a verse in an attempt to prove a point?

How often do we use sweeping generalities from Scripture to make a statement that isn't true?

You have probably heard someone say "God helps those who help themselves" as a means of justifying their actions.

I think that's found in the book of Hezekiah.

It's not unlike those who believe that the Constitution specifically calls for separation of church and state.

My point is, folks, let's know what Scripture says, not what we think it says or what we hope it says. Jesus accused them to their face of not knowing the Scriptures. It should challenge us to know what's in the Bible; to be ready to give a defense.

(I Peter 3:15)

They didn't know the Scriptures. Don't let that be said of you.

The second error Jesus accused them of was in not knowing the power of God.

2. They did not know the power of God.

In Prayer Meeting we are studying the major doctrines. Currently we are studying the doctrine of

God and right now we are discussing His attributes, those aspects of His nature that make Him, well, God. We have been studying His omnipotence, the truth that God is all powerful. Scripture speaks explicitly of His creating the universe out of nothing by just the power of His spoken word.

We read in the Old Testament of His power bringing on a global flood and saving eight people from His wrath that destroyed the world.

His power delivered the Israelites through a series of plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea on dry land as He separated the waters so they could cross on dry land and then destroying the Egyptian army by those same waters.

His power fed them for 40 years in the wilderness.

His power delivered David from Goliath, Daniel from the lions, his three friends from a fiery furnace and many other acts that demonstrated His power.

In the New Testament we see a host of miracles from feeding thousands, making the lame walk, the blind see, the deaf hear and the dead to rise.

In both the Old and New Testaments we read that nothing is too difficult for God.

Two tremendous acts displaying His power are in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and in our salvation. Lost and destined for an eternity in hell we read that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for anyone who believes.

Have you claimed His power in salvation through faith in His Son who died for our sin?

We read in the Old Testament and from the words of Jesus, and in the book of Revelation the display of His power as He will rein judgment and bring justice to bear on the world for its rejection of Christ and continuance in sin.

But the Bible speaks of one other display of His power and that is in the resurrection of the believer. Do you believe in the power of God? Such a belief learns to trust Him in all things, but the Sadducees were denying the power of God in the resurrection.

In a practical response to their error Jesus says they did not know either the Scriptures or the power of God. But His response goes deeper or further than just a practical sense for the resurrection, Jesus also gives a biblical reason for the resurrection.

B. A Biblical Reason for the Resurrection – vs. 37-38

Remember that I said the Sadducees referenced the Old Testament law to base their hypothetical question. If they were going to attempt to use the Law of Moses to refute the notion of a resurrection, Jesus was going to use the writings of Moses to defend the resurrection.

Jesus took them back to the burning bush when Moses encountered God.
Exodus 3:4-6

Notice that God uses the present tense when referring to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – men who had been dead for centuries. He spoke of them as if they were still living, not living in the sense of being in our memories or living through their descendants. They were alive because their soul was waiting the future resurrection of the body. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

Jesus stated that even Moses spoke as fact that the dead will rise again. He concludes in verse 38 that “He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to Him all are alive.”

Death is not the end. It is a portal into the eternal and the resurrection is the gate by which we enter. Scripture bears testimony of a resurrection.
Job 19:25-27 “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God I myself will see Him with my own eyes – I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!”

Psalm 16:9-10 “Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let Your Holy One see decay.”

Daniel 12:2 “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.”

(Isaiah 26:19)

(Ezekiel 37 (Valley of dry bones))

Yes, there is a resurrection and Jesus supports it with evidence from the same book they claimed to follow. The patriarchs were preserved alive in anticipation of a future resurrection of the body. And let’s be clear that their resurrection rests in the same way as ours – through faith in the Jesus – they were looking forward to His redemptive sacrifice, we are looking back at it. Only through faith can we be made worthy to be sons of God and sons of the resurrection. Our faith is what qualifies us to become sons of God.

John 1:12 “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the sons of God even to them who believe on His name.”

We see clear evidence of a biblical reason for the resurrection. The passage concludes with a cautious reaction about the resurrection.

C. A Cautious Reaction About the Resurrection – vs. 39-40

It is not the Sadducees who respond, but those who stood theologically opposed to their belief about the resurrection who speak up. This other group, probably quietly, so as not to appear to totally side with Jesus, indicate that His answer was well stated.

But the conclusion of the matter is that neither group had any pretext in which to question Jesus any further. Their questions were not going to give them sufficient reason to condemn Him.

So what does this have to do with us? Let me conclude with a final thought about the resurrection as it relates to us. It is an appropriate application by the saved.

III. AN APPROPRIATE APPLICATION BY THE SAVED

I Thessalonian 4:13-17

I Corinthians 15:51-52, 57

These passages provide us with four important truths to keep in mind about the resurrection.

A. The Possibility of the Resurrection

I don't remember much from math, but I did learn that if $A = B$ and $B = C$, then logically and mathematically $A = C$.

If the Patriarchs are considered alive from Jesus' perspective, preserved for the day of a bodily resurrection, it stands to reason that because I also have a soul, when I die, my soul will be preserved for a future resurrection of the body.

Paul affirms this.

The possibility of our resurrection rests in the resurrection of Christ. Because He was raised from the dead, death and the grave will have no eternal hold on me and when He gives the call for my body to be raised up, nothing in heaven or on earth is going to hold me in the grave.

I read a story once about a woman who did not believe in the resurrection. To prove it she went to great length and expense to ensure that her decayed body would remain in the grave. She had an elaborate and thick vault built that would be impossible to open. The problem is, an acorn took root growing to become a mighty oak and in the process split open the vault.

The possibility of the resurrection is in the power of

the resurrected Lord. Because He lives, we too will live.

B. The Promise of the Resurrection

The resurrection isn't just possible, it is a promise. In I Corinthians 15:12-19 Paul argues from the greater to the lesser. He argues that because Christ has been raised, then we too will be raised. He concludes by clearly stating that if we aren't raised then Christ never rose from the dead either. Scripture clearly attests to the resurrection.

At the time of the resurrection we will receive a new body, a glorified body, a body fit for heaven. We will retain our identities but there will be no more death, sickness, pain, or limitations. John writes that we will be like Christ, for we will see Him as He is.

Lewis Sperry Chafer writes "The transformed, resurrected body will be limitless in power, infinite in glory, eternal in endurance, and adapted to the spirit."

It is received as a promise through faith in Christ.

C. The people of the Resurrection

This resurrection is for those who are in Christ according to the passages referenced. The Bible does speak about another resurrection that takes place after this that will be for all the dead who were not saved. Paul though, is speaking specifically about those who are in Christ who have died, those who have placed faith in Him for salvation. They wait for the resurrection of the body to be joined with the soul, to be joined with those who are alive when Christ returns so that together we will be with Christ forever. That is the purpose of the resurrection.

D. The purpose of the resurrection

It is so we might be with the Lord forever in heaven, gathered around His throne to praise and worship the Lamb who was slain, who is worthy to receive all praise. Together with all the believers throughout time and with the angelic host we will praise Christ who made it all possible through His power, received as a promise.

So, are you prepared for that day?
Don't be fooled into thinking that there is nothing beyond the grave. Prepare for the resurrection by trusting Christ today.

If that has already been your decision and expectation begin now to thank the Lord that you will take part in the resurrection with the saints. The resurrection is not a clever ruse, it is a certain reality.