

Luke 20:27-47
July 12, 2020

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Do you ever wonder why after all your years of marriage, that once you get to heaven, marriage is not really recognized? Once we get our new bodies, how do you envision life eternal and who do you think you'll be with? [Let people engage]

Transition: RESURRECTION: "This passage has made many wonder if marriage relationships will exist in heaven, or if those who are husband and wife on earth will have no special relationship in heaven. We are not given great detail about what life will look like in heaven, but we are given a few truths. Family relationships will still be known in life in the world beyond. The rich man Jesus described in the afterlife was aware of his family relationships ([Luke 16:27-28](#)). The glory of heaven will be a relationship and connection with God that surpasses anything else, including present family relationships ([Revelation 21:22-23](#)).

If it seems that life in the resurrection that Jesus spoke of here does not include some of the pleasures of life we know on earth, it is only because the enjoyments and satisfactions of heaven far surpass what we know on earth. We can't be completely certain what eternal life will be like, but we can know with certainty that no one will be disappointed with the arrangements ([Revelation 22:1-5](#)). Let's begin.

BOOK:

The Resurrection and Marriage

²⁷ Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. ²⁸ "Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother. ²⁹ Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. ³⁰ The second ³¹ and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. ³² Finally, the woman died too. ³³ Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

³⁴ Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. ³⁵ But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, ³⁶ and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection. ³⁷ But in the account of the bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' ³⁸ He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive." ³⁹ Some of the teachers of the law responded, "Well said, teacher!" ⁴⁰ And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Jesus affirms what the Sadducees denied: the existence of angels, the reality of life after death, and the hope of a future resurrection—and He did it with only one passage from Moses.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, pp. 255-260). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

A Question about Moses (Luke 20:27–40)

Next in line were the Sadducees with a hypothetical question based on the Jewish law of “levirate marriage” (Gen. 38; Deut. 25:5–10). The word *levirate* comes from the Latin *levir*, which means “a husband’s brother.” The Sadducees accepted as Scripture only the Five Books of Moses, and they did not believe in angels, spirits, or the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:8). They claimed that Moses did not write about any of these doctrines. The priestly party in Israel was composed of Sadducees, which explains why the priests opposed the Apostles’ preaching of the Resurrection (Acts 4:1–2) and why they wanted to kill Lazarus, who was raised from the dead (John 12:10–11).

Jesus pointed out that His opponents were wrong and that their question revealed assumptions that limited God’s power and denied God’s Word. Resurrection is not reconstruction; it is the miraculous granting of a new body that has continuity with the old body but not identity. Paul compared our present body to a planted seed and the future resurrection body to the glorious flower and fruit (1 Cor. 15:35–50). Our Lord’s resurrection body was the same as before His death and yet different! His friends recognized Him and even felt Him; He could eat food and yet He could also walk through closed doors, change His appearance, and vanish suddenly.

The future life with God is not a mere continuation of the present life only on “a higher scale.” We will maintain our identities and know each other, but there will be no more death—hence, no need for marriage and procreation. Christians do not become angels. In heaven we will share the image of Jesus Christ and be much higher than the angels (1 John 3:2). Angels appear in Scripture as men, but they are spirit beings without sexuality. It is in this regard that we will be like them; there will be no marriage or childbearing in heaven.

Is not God powerful enough to raise the dead and give them new bodies suited to their new environment? If today He can give different bodies to the various things in creation, why can He not give people new bodies at the resurrection? (1 Cor. 15:35–44) In their attempt to be “rational,” the Sadducees denied the very power of God!

But Jesus went beyond logic and referred them to the Word of God, particularly what happened to Moses as recorded in Exodus 3. There God identified Himself with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and thus affirmed that these three patriarchs were very much alive. But if they were alive, then they were “out of the body,” for they had died (James 2:26). There must be a real world of spirit beings or Moses would not have written these words. (By the way, Moses also affirmed the existence of angels: Gen. 19:1, 15; 28:12; 32:1.)

But Jesus said that Exodus 3:6, 15–16 taught not only the truth of life after death but also the reality of the resurrection. In what way? Not by direct statement but by inference. God is the God of the whole person—spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess. 5:23)—because He created the whole person. He does not simply “save our souls” and ignore the rest of our being. Inherent in the very nature of God’s creative act is His concern for the total person. Hence, He will not keep us disembodied spirits forever but will give us glorious bodies to match our heavenly perfection.

Another factor is God’s covenantal relationship with the patriarchs. He made promises of earthly blessing to them and their descendants, but He cannot fulfill these promises if His people

are going to live forever only as disembodied spirits. Can there be a glorious new heaven and earth but no corporeal glory for the people of God?

Jesus affirmed what the Sadducees denied: the existence of angels, the reality of life after death, and the hope of a future resurrection—and He did it with only one passage from Moses! Of course, He could have referred to other passages that teach a future resurrection, but He met His adversaries on their own ground (see Job 14:14; 19:25–27; Ps. 16:9–10; 17:15; Isa. 26:19; Ezek. 37; Dan. 12:2).

Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 255-256)

20:27–40. **The Sadducees** denied all supernatural occurrences including **resurrection** (v. 27; cf. Acts 23:8). Their **question** on resurrection, therefore, was not to elicit information but to find a way to make **Jesus** look foolish by presenting an extreme hypothetical case. They posited a situation in which **a woman** married each of **seven brothers** after each previous brother had died. The idea behind such an occurrence was the Hebrew concept of the Levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5–10) in which an unmarried man would marry his dead brother's **widow** who was **childless** in order to **have children** in his name. Then the Sadducees asked, **At the resurrection whose wife will she be?**

First, Jesus said, there will be no **marriage in the resurrection** (Luke 20:34–36). This showed (a) that the present **Age** contrasts sharply with the **Age to come**; and (b) when **people** are resurrected, **they will be like the angels**, being **God's children** and **children of the resurrection**. Jesus did not say that resurrected people become angels. His point was that they, like angels, will be immortal. Thus, there will be no further need for procreation, and the marriage relationship will not be necessary.

Second, Jesus pointed out that there certainly will be a resurrection (vv. 37–38). He referred to an incident when the Lord told Moses that He is the God of the patriarchs (Ex. 3:6). Jesus appealed to **Moses** because the Sadducees wrongly taught that Moses' teachings did not reveal a resurrection. The statement that **the Lord is the God of the patriarchs** should have shown the Sadducees that the patriarchs were still alive (**He is ... the God ... of the living**), even though those words were uttered several hundred years after the last patriarch's death. **God** was preserving them **alive** for future resurrection.

The teachers of the Law and the Sadducees were at odds with each other because of conflicting beliefs. The former applauded Jesus' refutation of the Sadducees' doctrine (Luke 20:39). The result of the conversation was that everyone was afraid **to ask Jesus any more questions**.

Butler, T. C. (2000). Luke (Vol. 3, p. 336–337). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

D. Resurrection Glory: Silencing the Opposition (20:27–40)

SUPPORTING IDEA: *Resurrection is possible and will soon be exemplified by Jesus, the Son of the living God, who is God of the living, not of the dead.*

20:27. New opponents take center stage: the Sadducees. They appear nowhere else in Luke's Gospel. One trait separated the Sadducees from all other Jewish groups: They denied the resurrection because they could not find it in the five books of Moses, the only books they

accepted as Scripture. Other groups turned easily to Daniel 12; Isaiah 26:19; Job 19:26; and Psalm 16:9, 11 to prove resurrection in Hebrew Scripture. Seeing their approach, Jesus must have known what to expect.

20:28. First, the Sadducees quoted the Law of Moses, specifically Deuteronomy 25:5 (cf. Ruth 4:1–12). They centered on the practice called levirate marriage in which a brother was obligated to marry his brother's widow and raise children for the deceased.

20:29–32. The priestly Sadducees took the practice of levirate marriage to absurd lengths, through seven husbands. The result: seven dead men; one dead woman; no children.

20:33. Now the clincher to stump Jesus: Whose wife would she be in this resurrection everyone talked about? The question assumed that people live in monogamous marriage relationships in the resurrection and shows how impossible this would be for a situation like they described.

20:34–36. Jesus attacked their assumptions. First, not everyone participates in the resurrection. This is the continuation of his teaching on the kingdom of God, his teaching about the punishment awaiting people like the rich man who ignored Lazarus, and his assault on the religious leaders who would be surprised at the last judgment. Second, life in the next world is not like life in this world. People do not practice marriage relationships after death. Third, since the major focus of marriage is to rear children and fill the earth as in Genesis 1, this will not be necessary for the afterlife, since no one dies there. In this respect, and only in this respect, do people become like angels. They have put on immortality, whereas angels are created immortal. Here again, Jesus attacked the Sadducees, for they did not believe angels existed. Thus, Jesus defanged the Sadducees, taking all the venom from their argument. In so doing he implied the reality of resurrection and set the stage for his own personal proof of the resurrection.

20:37–38. Jesus finished his argument by going back to the Sadducees' own authority, the Law of Moses, specifically Exodus 3:6. Moses referred to God as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In Moses' time, the three patriarchs were long dead. Using typical methods of interpretation of his day, Jesus drew the theological conclusion that God does not have a relationship with dead people but with living people. The implication was that if he could be the God of the patriarchs, the patriarchs must be alive. Obviously, their earthly life was long past, so the life must be one after death, a resurrection life. Only God has power over life, so the resurrected life is a life with God and under his control.

20:39–40. Earlier, the scribes had joined the Pharisees in leading the opposition to Jesus (see 5:21, 30; 6:7; 9:22; 11:53; 15:2; 19:47; 20:1, 19). Now some of their group complimented Jesus. Does this indicate a break in the ranks? At least Jesus had finally silenced his opponents. They had learned they could not trap Jesus. He was too smart and clever for them. They must accept his authority without determining its source.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Lk 20:27-47). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.