

Saints Triumphant – November 13, 2016
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

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Luke 20:27-38 (NIV)

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 raise up offspring 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 the age to come 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 burning 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."**

Dear friends in Christ;

We confess that we believe in the resurrection from the dead and the life everlasting each and every time we use the words of the Apostles Creed. Do you know that the majority of Americans may not share that belief? A survey that was conducted in 2006 asked the question: "Do you believe that, after you die, your physical body will be resurrected someday?" Only 36% of those surveyed answered yes. Fifty-four percent answered no and 10% said that they weren't sure.¹ For some reason believe in some sort life after death seems to be more commonly accepted. 72% of Americans believe in heaven but only 58% of U.S. adults believe in hell. What was interesting to me is that even among those who identified themselves as being members of a Christian church there was still a lower percentage of people who believed in hell than those who believed in heaven.²

Such skepticism regarding the resurrection and Eternal life isn't new. Already at the time of Jesus, there were those who did not believe in the resurrection and life after death. Our text for today reports a conversation that Jesus had with the Sadducees. **Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question.** In response to their question

Theme: Jesus Assures Us of the Resurrection to Eternal Life

1. By telling us what it will be like
2. By proving it from Scripture

Let's begin by taking a closer look at the question the Sadducees posed to Jesus. **"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 raise up offspring 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?"**

¹ <http://www.religionnewsblog.com/14273/most-americans-dont-believe-in-the-resurrection>

² <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/10/most-americans-believe-in-heaven-and-hell/>

This question provides us with some additional insights into the beliefs of the Sadducees. In addition to denying the resurrection, they only accepted the first five books of the Old Testament as their “bible.” The writing of Moses that said that if a man’s brother dies and leaves a widow but no children that he must marry the widow and have a child for his brother was intended to perpetuate the family line and to allow property to remain in the family. (cf. Deuteronomy 25:5) You can almost imagine the smile on their faces as the Sadducees posed their rather ridiculous sounding question to Jesus. **“Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?”**

The Sadducees were a rather small but influential group. They were well represented in the Jewish High Council and the Sanhedrin. They also highly influenced the Herodian kings and the Roman governors. They refused to believe what they could not see and what they could not understand with their minds. They had not come to Jesus to learn from him as their teacher. Their intention was to make Jesus look silly and to discredit him as a teacher by asking him a foolish question about a situation that would never happen. In reality, what they were doing was showing just how foolish and faithless they were.

The Sadducees may have been smiling when they posed their question to Jesus. Both Luke and Matthew have included this account in their Gospels. According to Matthew Jesus responded to this query by telling the Sadducees that they “did not know the Scriptures or the power of God.” (cf. Matthew 22:29) Jesus then continued with the response recorded in our text – a response in which Jesus affirmed the teaching of the Resurrection to Eternal Life by describing it and proving it from the writings of Moses.

Perhaps the Sadducees had baffled other teachers with their question but it didn’t faze Jesus at all. **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 the age to come 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.**

The first mistake the Sadducees made was to assume that things in the next world would be the same as they are in this present age. Jesus explained that marriage is only for this life. He then speaks of the fact that those who are counted worthy of taking part in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will enjoy a new and different kind of existence. When Jesus speaks of those who are “considered worthy,” he is speaking of those who believe in him as their Savior. It is important for us to note that Jesus is describing the age to come and the resurrection from the dead as it applies to believers. It is true that all the dead will rise on the last day as Jesus teaches in John 5:28-29, some to eternal life, and others to eternal death and condemnation. The unbelievers will pass from temporal death into eternal death. They will not be counted worthy of the life that Jesus describes in our text.

There will be no marriage in the age to come because believers will all be part of the family of God – children of the resurrection Jesus calls them. The Apostle John reminds us that all those who believe in Jesus are already children of God but that what we will be has not yet been made known. (cf. 1 John 3:2) Jesus explains what those who believe will be in our text. They will be immortal – unable to die. In that way, they will be like the angels. They will also be like angels because angels do not marry. Those are ways that believers will be like angels in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead.

From Jesus own resurrection as well as from passages like Job 19:26, “in my flesh I will see God,” we know that in the resurrection our bodies will be reunited with our souls. The Apostle Paul explains that Jesus will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (cf. Philippians 3:21) Based on the fact that the disciples recognized Jesus and that the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration were able to recognize Moses and Elijah, we can assume that we will recognize each other in the life to come.

When we receive the full and eternal inheritance that is ours through faith we will enjoy living together in one family – God’s family. The ties that enjoyed in this life time will no longer be relevant or necessary. They will no longer be important to us in the same way. The “old order of things has passed away.” (cf. Revelation 21:4) There will be no more tears, no more death, no more sorrow or mourning. There will only be perfect and eternal joy, happiness, and contentment. Revelation 21 & 22 paints a wonderful picture of the life to come.

After Jesus described the resurrection to eternal life for the Sadducees, he continued to show them from the Scriptures (from the writings of Moses) that the resurrection eternal life is real.

37) But in the account of the burning 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."

The account of the burning bush in which the Lord appeared to Moses and called him to lead the nation of Israel out of their slavery in Egypt was well known to all of the Jews. God inspired Moses to write what happened. Moses quoted the Lord himself as saying that he is the God of his fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. (cf. Exodus 3:5)

Jesus used the words of the Lord himself to prove that the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul was the teaching of Scripture. God created man with both a body and soul. When a person experiences physical death; the body and the soul separate. The soul continues to exist without a body. If Abraham, Isaac and Jacob’s bodies would remain in the grave, then the Lord would be the God of the dead. That’s impossible. God is the Lord of the living – he is the one keeps his promises and deals with his people according to his grace. He is the one who forgives sin and promises eternal blessings to his people.

In our text, Jesus has assured us of the resurrection to eternal life by describing it for us and proving it from Scripture. His words are a comfort to those whose lives in this world have been saddened by the loss of a loved one who has died in the Lord. His words comfort us with the assurance that our loved ones will be blessed in the age to come and that we will share that life with them because Jesus has earned our salvation for us. Jesus’ words are also an encouragement to us to remain faithful to the teachings of Scripture as we await our own rescue and deliverance. Jesus’ words offer us hope during the trials and troubles of this life. Finally, Jesus’ words help to dispel our doubts and to assure us of our resurrection to eternal life.

May the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. (2 Thessalonians 3:16 NIV)
Amen.