

Sons of the Resurrection, part 2

Luke 20:34-40

I want to say this clearly: It's not that marriage is unimportant. It's that, as we've said, the Sadducees as the aristocratic class, they had made marriage all-important. And why is that? Because they sought immortality through posterity, through proper marriages among the children of aristocratic families. That's how they perpetuated their own name. That's how they gained immortality.

Let me just give a quick side note to you, especially in view of the sexually immoral, promiscuous age in which we live, that the majority assumption of human history until quite recently is that the primary reason for marriage is procreation. I know modern technology, whether it's the convenience of birth control or the absolute bloody horror of abortion, but modern technology allows modern couples to avoid the responsibilities that God designed to be a part of the sex act.

When we separate sex from procreation, separate the pleasure from the responsibility of bearing and raising children, all this has cheapened sex, commoditized sex, proliferated all manner of immorality. It's desecrated sex and marriage. It's robbed us of decency and dignity, robbed us of the privilege of procreation, understanding that children are a gift from God. No longer do we live in a culture of giving life, but of taking, of self-centeredness. We're living in a culture, really, of death.

And the reason I bring this up, as we return to what Jesus said here, I want to say that marriage is important. The primary reason for marriage is procreation, to bear and raise children, to perpetuate our line, our family. I don't want you to lose sight of that in view of what I say next. We also need to put marriage and procreation in their proper perspective. The Sadducees treated marriage as the end-all and the be-all of life, all hope of immortality through posterity, all hope of their immortality by perpetuating one's name and passing down all that's earned and owned and amassed to one's progeny. That produced a very high view of marriage and procreation. In fact,

you might say the Sadducees are the original Focus on the Family.

But we need to realize that although marriage and family are important, we should not elevate them unduly and unbiblically as the end-all and be-all. That's what the Sadducees did. Our Lord never married, never produced children, and never had a family, not physically anyway. And there's instruction for us in that, is there not? He was a single man. Listen, marriage and procreation have become elevated in their importance, and when they become elevated in their importance, that tends to happen when death is a part of the equation. Because when a child is born, when a grandchild is born, you know what that says? Hope for the future, to us. That is our affirmation of life. And that's a good thing.

But it can skew in a wrong direction, as the Sadducees made it do, as many people in our world cause it to do. When death is no more, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, when death is gone, when it's cast away, when the new operating paradigm is resurrection life, well, there's no marriage or giving in marriage because there's no need for procreation, because

there's no need to perpetuate humanity. When death is cast away forever, there's an entirely new form of existence that takes over from there. And "those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage." Why not? "For they cannot die anymore." That's Jesus' explanation. They can't die anymore. No need to procreate. Why can't they die anymore? Because they're equal to angels. They're sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

So which are you, my friend? Which are you? Which side are you on? Are you "a son of this age," your way of life characterized by that which is passing away? Or are you "a son of the resurrection," with the principle of your life and your way of life characterized not by this world, but by the world to come? Because if you're among the sons of the resurrection, if you have been counted worthy to take part in that age, well, as Jesus says, marriage is not your long-term future.

Your worth, your meaning, your significance, your value: none of that is defined by your marital status. None of that is defined by whether or not you have children. Your name is not

perpetuated through your posterity. Why not? Because you can die no longer. Literally the word *dynatai*, you are not able to die. Death becomes an impossibility. I can't do it. Therefore, perpetuating your name, your significance through marriage, through procreation, unlike the Sadducees who are firmly bound to this age, you are free and untethered from the realities that define this age. "For," verse 36, "being sons of the resurrection," two things are true of you: "You're like angels and you're like sons of God."

First, two things. "You're like angels; you're like sons of God." First, you're like angels. Luke coins a new word here. He joins the adjective *isos* or "like" or "equal to," and he joins that to the word for angels, and he gives us the word *isangelos*, *isangelos*. The word is a *hapax legomenon*. That's a fancy way of saying it's the only time an *isangelos* is used in the New Testament. One lexicographer compares this to other Greek constructions that are similar: *isotheos*, "like God," *isos* and *theos*; or *isabasilus*, the, "like the king," those two terms as well. But this is the only use of *isangelos*.

You want to be careful as you think about, like angels, especially as you come into the season of Hallmark movies and so all that sentimental pablum market. You're going to find at least a few movies of people graduating to become angels getting their wings. Jesus is not saying that the sons of the resurrection become angels, but that they're like angels. How are they like angels? Look no further than the context. He tells us. Like angels: meaning no mortality, no more dying. Like angels: no more marriage, no more giving in marriage, so no coupling up in order for there to be procreation. There's a fixed number of angels, and there is a fixed number of the elect of God. Once that's achieved, once that's brought about, no more need for procreation. There's no more dying, no more death.

Jesus does not mean resurrected human beings cease to have bodies. As I said, embodiment, embodiment is a unique joy and pleasure of being a human being, very different than the angels in that way. We are embodied spirits. They are not, disembodied spirits, never had a body. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:44, which we read, there will be a spiritual body. He affirmed it a couple times, there. Human bodies don't go away.

But secondly, not only are you like angels; you're like, you are, you are sons of God, not, you're like angels, but you are sons of God. Remember the Sadducees? They had made much of parentage and progeny. How they viewed immortality, really a compromise with their mortality is what that was, that they admitted their defeat under the reign of death, but immortality for them was kind of wrapped up in the aristocracy, the wealth generated and perpetuated by family status.

Not so for the sons of the resurrection, who are sons of God. No more marriage, no more procreation, no more mortal posterity subject to death, in a world in which death is banished forever, in a world in which even the memory of death has been eclipsed by a bright reality of divine life. It's our relation to God as our Father. We are his progeny, and that's all that matters then.

Melinda and I were driving around the other day and talking about how everything in our world is defined by death. As we're driving, we're wearing seatbelts to mitigate the potential of death should we get into an accident. As I drove, I drove within my designated lane on the road. It reminded me the lines are

there to prevent vehicles from smashing into each other, causing what? Death. Everywhere I drove, I, I looked at the mountains, our beautiful postcard view of the mountains over here. But it's carved by the waters of the great flood, reminding me that divine judgment brought death. There's death in them there mountains. I drove by, on the way, several clinics, doctor's offices, a new building going up across the road, Orthopedic Spine Center of the Rockies. All these beautiful buildings reminding us that we are dying, all to mitigate the effects of the fall, the curse tending, all tending to our, our mortal condition.

Have a listen to this, though you can turn there if you want, you don't need to, but Revelation 21. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there

be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more. For the former things have passed away.'

"And he who was sitting on the throne said, 'Behold, I'm making all things new.' He said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.' And he said to me, 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and,'" what, "'he will be my son.'" When God is your Father, he's your Father into eternity, ushering you into a whole new way of life, all things made new, that is the reality of life to come, the reality for the children of the resurrection. It's the reality for those who are no longer sons of this age, but have been saved, counted worthy in Christ, and have now become sons of God.

Well, the teacher corrected the Sadducees' eschatology, rebuking their materialism, correcting their anthropology, hit them with soteriology right up front. And they're, all those views that the Sadducees held made no provision in their theology for the power of God. And that's what is revealed here,

is a lack of acquaintance with God at all on the part of the Sadducees. They didn't know him.

This is what we see in the next point, letter B, the teacher corrects their theology proper. The teacher corrects first their eschatology, now their theology proper. Verse 37: “But that the dead are raised even Moses showed in this passage about, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord “the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob,” and he's not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him.’”

Their unbelieving presuppositions blinded them to a correct interpretation of Moses, totally prevented them from being able to understand Moses in any spiritual way at all. In correcting the Sadducees, Jesus points them to a passage that is not only definitional in the life of Moses, but it's definitional for Israel as a nation as well. It's when God called Moses from tending his father-in-law's flock of sheep in the wilderness of Midian on the Sinai Peninsula.

Jesus calls this "the passage about the bush." That's how Jews cited passages of Scripture. Versification as we know it, chapter and verse, that came much later, 16th century for full versification. But the Jews cited the incidents or themes that characterized any particular passage. That's how they remembered it. That's how they cited it, is by the theme that was in it or by the event that was in it. That was crucial to, a crucial aid to memory. I think it would be good to get back to that, don't you?

So Jesus cites "the passage about the bush," and everybody knows he's talking about our Exodus 3. Some say that Jesus cited Moses, here, because that's the only portion of the New, Old Testament that the Sadducees accepted as Scripture. So Jesus, here, is accommodating the Sadducees. He's acquiescing to their, really their rejection of the rest of Scripture as authoritative or as, as authoritative as the first five books of the Bible. Jesus is here finding common ground. That's what some say, but I disagree.

Others say that Jesus went back to Moses, the only portion of the Old Testament the Sadducees revered, held to. This

section of Scripture the Sadducees thought they were the better or the best interpreters on the planet, and he went there to show them up, really, to refute them in their own backyard, on their own terms, and then on their own ground, so to speak. And again, I disagree with that too.

We never find Jesus accommodating error and catering to false presuppositions, and we don't find our Lord in his meekness rubbing people's faces in their error. So he's not finding common ground with them, and he's not using Moses to embarrass them, either. What we do find Jesus doing, here, in his meekness, in his love for sinners, he gives these unbelieving Sadducees exactly what they need to read to find salvation. He's evangelizing them, here; and Moses in Exodus 3 in particular, that is the perfect text.

Follow the train of thought here for a moment. Just think about this. The question the Sadducees raised is about the resurrection, right? They dispute it. They, they say it's absurd. And if Jesus simply wanted to show up the Sadducees and expose their folly, he could have said, "Hey, guys, tell you what. Meet me here, right here, next week, right here. I'll

prove the resurrection to you by rising from the dead after you kill me." He could have continued, saying, "In fact, you know what? Moses and Elijah and I, we were on a mountain a few months back, talking about this very thing a few months ago. Hey, Peter, James, John, is that not right? Do I lie?" Moses and Elijah had appeared with Jesus. Remember that? Mount of Transfiguration? They spoke of his departure. Literally, the word is *exodus*. They spoke of his *exodus*, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Jesus had predicted his death and resurrection several times. His disciples were all there to verify that. Proving the doctrine of the resurrection to these unbelieving Sadducees is not Jesus' main objective because that's not the fundamental issue at stake with the Sadducees. It's their unbelief that is the issue. Remember when Jesus told the story about Abraham, the rich man and Lazarus in, in Hades, the rich, rich man suffering in Hades' torment. Lazarus had ascended to Abraham's bosom, and in his torment he longed for just a touch of water on the tip of the finger, touched to his tongue just to relieve his suffering.

And when that couldn't happen because there's a, a gulf there that can't be passed, the rich man appealed to Lazarus, or to Abraham, to go back to his brothers. I've got five brothers who, they're going to come here if somebody doesn't warn him, so can you go back? And he says, are they, "Abraham told the rich man, 'They have Moses and the prophets. They should listen to them.' 'Oh, no, Father Abraham, the Bible is not good enough. The Bible doesn't have the power to make my brothers believe. So you misunderstand, Father Abraham. If someone, though, goes from the dead to them, they will repent.'" Remember what Abraham said? He told them, "If they don't listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded if someone rises from the dead."

You know what Jesus didn't do when he rose from the dead? He didn't march triumphantly through the temple grounds, parading himself as risen from the dead. Ever wonder about that? Like, we just want to prove the resurrection. Couldn't he have just done it? No. Who did he appear to? Those who believe. In what I read in 1 Corinthians 15, remember early on, the resurrection appearances, all of them believers, all of them believers. He reveals greater light, greater understanding,

greater knowledge to his people. He doesn't accommodate himself or prove himself to those who reject him in unbelief. No, they must come through the gateway of repentance and faith first.

In this controversy as well, Jesus is giving the Sadducees exactly what they need. He's pointing them back to the proclamation of God to Moses, the same proclamation their fathers heard and refused to believe. He sends them back to the source to reckon with revelation from God in order that they might believe. So Jesus cites the passage about the bush to evangelize these men.

In fact, you should probably turn to Exodus 3 so we can read the account that Jesus cited for these men. Again, he cites just a portion of it here, but he intends, really, for them to recall the whole passage, which they would have. But for our, for our sake, we need to read it. Moses writes this in Exodus 3:1 and following: "Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, priest of Midian. He led his flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, to the mountain of God. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush.

“And he looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, ‘I’ll turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.’ When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, ‘Moses, Moses.’ He said, ‘Here I am.’ And he said, ‘Do not come near. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you’re standing, it’s holy ground.’ And he said, ‘I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.” For the reader, the divine self-identification points back to what they just read in Exodus 2:24, right at the end of the chapter. “God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God saw the people of Israel, and God knew.”

Listen, this is a God who is living. This is one who sees and hears. He's one who knows the suffering of the people who lived before him, who are under the cruel bondage of Egypt. What compels this living, hearing, seeing, all-knowing God to act on these people's behalf? It's a covenant that he made to one man and then reiterated to that man's offspring, Isaac and Jacob.

And those three men, they're not dead and snuffed out of existence. They still live to him. They still live before him. They still watch and wait for the promises that God made in his covenant to them to be completely fulfilled. They know God, that he is faithful. They know him intimately. They know him relationally. And so they watch and wait. They know he's faithful. And though they no longer walk the earth, they do dwell in the presence of God. They trust in his perfect timing. They wait for the start of his redemption plan. And as we read here, it begins with Moses, so we keep on reading, we find out that the plan culminates with Jesus Christ.

The immediate point that Jesus is making: These three men are still living. They're still alive. Even though each one of these men died physically, departed from this earth, nevertheless, each one of them still lives on. What's the basis of Jesus' observation? The basis is God's affirmation that he has a continuing relationship with each of those men.

You Greek students will recognize it here in verse 37 in your Greek text, a Granville-Sharp construction, a single article governing three substantives each separated by *chi*, following all the rules, and shows unity, shows identity. He is the same God which each, with each of these people. He is the same God to each of these men. The God who is the author of life and therefore always living, is the same God who has an abiding relationship with each of them, with Abraham as an individual believer; with Isaac, too, as another individual believer; with Jacob as well as another individual believer, each of them having their distinct experiences on this earth, which we could read the record of, each of them walking with God, each of them struggling through their, growing in faith, growing in understanding.

The text does not say, "I was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," or "I had been their God, and then Abraham died and I became Isaac's God." Doesn't say that, either. But rather, and this is inescapably clear in the Septuagint text, Hebrew text doesn't have the verbs there; that's part of the translation, part of the interpretation to understand how it works.

But the Septuagint, very, very clear, makes no mistake. He uses the *ego eimi* construction. The Lord said, "I am their God." It's a present tense verb of being. Each of these men, though dying physically, they remain in covenant relationship with this covenant-making, covenant-keeping God. Covenant, if you want to, just transpose the term, promise. He's a promise-making, promise-keeping God, and he has promises that he is fulfilling with them. Promises he made to them, all of them, in literal, perfect detail, will be fulfilled. So the God who brought each of these men into being, he is the same God who continues with them in a living and abiding relationship. "Make no mistake," Jesus says, "Oh, they're very much alive. For God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him."

If the Sadducees had been, just, if there was one iota of humility that came upon them in this moment, humbled by his correction, maybe they'd be intrigued by the fact that they had missed the point so dramatically in Moses, that they'd blown it as interpreters of Moses. Perhaps we can only hope they'd keep on reading in Exodus 3. Had they kept reading the text as we can do, perhaps they'd become acquainted, maybe for the very first time, with this living God, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and

of Jacob, the God whom, by the way, whom their fathers had rejected and died in the wilderness for it.

But after God revealed himself here to Moses, promised to deliver Israel from Egypt through Moses, remember, Moses in verse 13 started to protest. There's a series of protests that are actually quite humorous, dealing with this child-like faith of Moses in this believer. But Moses said to God in Exodus 3:13, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they ask me, "What is his name," what shall I say to them?" It's not like a, you know, secret code or something like that he's looking for. It's like what, what does his name mean? What characterizes this God, and, and, and a name and the, the person's character and their identity and their essence and their substance and everything that they are is all wrapped up in the, in the Hebrew understanding, the Semitic understanding of, of one's name.

"So if they ask me, "What is his name," what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' He said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: "I AM has sent me to you."' Not "I was." Not, "I will be." Not, "I'm coming." He's a God way beyond

Moses' comprehension, the people's comprehension. He's a God who's way above and way beyond and way more powerful in all of Exodus power, or all the might and power of Egypt, any superpower of the earth.

This affirmation, here, of divine aseity, meaning self-existence, "I AM," this absoluteness, this singularity. If the Sadducees would just reflect on this profound theology, they would by God's grace see a God whose power is limitless, whose being is eternal, whose love is infinite, whose promises are trustworthy and true, is bringing the dead back to life in a body a problem?

May God likewise reveal himself this way to all of you. Whereas one has said, "Dead things may have a creator, a possessor, a ruler. Only living beings can have a God." It's not only true for the patriarchs cited here, but as Jesus says, "He is God of the living, for all live to him"; that is, all those who are counted worthy to attain to that age unto the resurrection from the dead, and only those.

So we've seen the condescension, we've seen the correction. Here's the third and final point, very short point, number three: the confirmation of the scholars. The confirmation of the scholars. The Sadducees at this point fade to black. They've got nothing more to say, and rather than being confirmed before all the people as sound interpreters of Moses, rather than them being seen as champions, as the ones who drove away the teacher from Galilee; the peasant Jesus has exposed them actually as very poor interpreters of Moses, as very shallow thinkers who are unacquainted with this covenant-making, covenant-keeping God. They have no relationship with him. And therefore in a word they are worldly. Or in another word, they are unbelievers. They're sons of this age only.

No one is more ecstatic about the Sadducee face-plant than the Pharisees and the scribes. Verse 38, or verse 39: "Then some of the scribes answered, 'Teacher, you have spoken well,'" like, Yeah, well-done! Nice to see the Sadducees running away. That's not the scholarly confirmation I'm talking about here in this point. The confirmation actually comes in verse 40: "for they no longer dared to ask him any question." That's the confirmation of the scholars.

The verb “dared,” a reference to courage, bravery. Basically, the scholars here are terribly outmatched, outgunned. They've got nothing to say. They do not dare. They don't have the courage to face him again, ask him any more questions. And between the text there, in the white spaces, we go back to Matthew and Mark, and we realize there's another conversation that happens here. Matthew says, “When the Pharisees heard he'd silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together,” and made more, one more run at it. “One of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, again,” the text says, and clearly in Matthew, to test him. They're not saying, Well done! Hey, we're on your side. No, they came saying, Well done! Now let's, let's take another run. They tried to test him.

Mark relays the same account as Matthew. They're testing Jesus on the question of the greatest commandment. Jesus answers their question there: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.” And here the scribe commends him for his answer. Jesus commends him, says, “You're not far from the kingdom of heaven.”

But since Luke covered the greatest commandment discussion in chapter 10, which is a different setting and a different conversation than the one Matthew and Mark record here following this event says, and Luke passes over it here. He doesn't see the need to put it in here, and there's just, his reason for this is to keep this flowing. Mark 12:34 says, "After that, no one dared to ask him any more questions." So they had the conversation about the greatest command, but after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions. Matthew 22:46 says the same thing: "No one was able to answer him a word or, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions."

That is the confirmation of the scholars that I'm referring to. It's not in the fact that some of the scribes affirmed him, flattering him, saying, "Teacher, you've spoken well," because in light of Matthew's account, that affirmation is just more flattery. It's just more buttering him up, another attempt to test him, the confirmation of the scholars is in the fact that their voices fall silent.

Jesus expounded the Law of Moses to the Sadducees and to the Pharisees. And as Paul says, "We know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that," what, "every mouth may be stopped and the whole world may be held accountable to God." Jesus has just stopped every mouth. He's answered every challenge. All their swords and weapons have fallen to the ground. They've got nothing to say. When we come back next time, it's his turn to ask a question. Let's pray.

Our Father, we're so grateful for the doctrine of the resurrection. And we do admit once again, in really what amounts to confession before you, which is truth that you already know, but we do confess that we do not think or ponder or reflect upon the glory of the doctrine of the resurrection as we should. And I think that we're weaker for it. I pray that you would stir within the hearts of every believer here to, to go back, to think about their eschatology, to think about the resurrection, to think about what that means for them, and then start to work their way backwards and do some reverse engineering as they think about their life.

And from that vantage point of standing before you and before the risen Lord Jesus Christ, united then to our resurrected body, to be in the presence of your glory, in the eternal state in the New Jerusalem, and surrounded by all the angels and the saints, we, we can't comprehend what that life is going to be like. But as we think about standing there and looking back on the life that we live now, how will we want to have lived it? Is it the way we're living now, or is it something different?

Father, will you please stir in the hearts of your people to make righteous decisions in full knowledge and understanding, that our life would be filled with joy, glory, gratitude, satisfaction, significance, meaning, purpose, hope, living lives of faith, trusting in you who at the current moment is unseen. But one day we'll be in your presence, never more to depart.

And we pray that if there are any here who do not know you and don't know this blessed Gospel, that don't know the forgiveness of their sins, and don't know what it's like to be united to you in faith, reconciled to you, and to have you as, as Father, please send your Spirit, be pleased to send your

PILLAR OF
—TRUTH— 

Spirit and save yet one more for your glory. In the name of
Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.