



THE GOSPEL OF  
**Luke**

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 20:27-44**

To understand the difference between earthly and heavenly life.

## The Details Matter

Observation is one of the three fundamental parts to good biblical hermeneutics. It provides the foundation of understanding what the text *says* before one can understand *what it means* (interpretation) or more specifically *what it means for us* today (application). Observation is the key to unlocking contextual data that makes sense of what is happening in the passage. An example of this is found in Luke 20:27. A question concerning resurrection is raised which leads Jesus to unpack a little bit about the future eschaton. Usually, the focus of this passage is put on the question of marriage in the afterlife (or the lack thereof), and that actually misses the focus. To understand what is happening in this passage, one first needs to know *who* is asking about resurrection. Verse 27 tells us: “There came to him some Sadducees.”

A cursory study of the Sadducees reveals some key differences between them and the Pharisees. Robert Stein gives a summary description: “The Sadducees originated as a priestly sect claiming descent from Zadok, the high priest under David (1 Kgs 1:26). In Jesus’ day they were no longer exclusively priestly but were a party or circle of priestly and lay aristocrats, hellenistic in orientation, who catered to the well-to-do. They were bitter opponents of the Pharisees, who were a lay party with whom most Jews were sympathetic.”<sup>1</sup> Moreover, they rejected any and all traditions found outside of the Torah. This may be attributable to their

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<sup>1</sup> Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary (vol. 24), eds. E. Ray Clendenen and David S. Dockery. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 502.

rejection of traditions found outside the Pentateuch.<sup>2</sup> Given the few Old Testament passages that deal with the (vague) idea of resurrection are found in the prophets and writings, those who hold to a purely Torah-centric view of Scripture would find no Scriptural warrant for such a concept.

The question concerning marriage and the afterlife is not about gaining a clarity concerning marriage in a post-resurrection context; the question is intended to disprove resurrection altogether. The Sadducees think that by posing this extremely unlikely scenario of a woman marrying seven men but having children with none of them, they will prove how ridiculous the concept of resurrection is to begin with. But their assumption is that life in the resurrection will essentially just a continuance of life prior to resurrection, and this is not the case. Below is a breakdown of the passage.

## The Multiple Marriage Scenario

Verses 28 through 33 spell out the scenario the Sadducees pose wherein a woman marries a man, and before having children with him is widowed. She then marries the man's brother, and then he dies, and this progression happens through seven brothers, none of them resulting in kids. At first glance, it seems like an even stranger scenario in our post-modern context, but this kind of practice was established and carried out in the ancient near east, and for good cause. The so-called "levirate marriage" (from Latin "levir," meaning "husband's brother") provided a means by which to preserve the memory of the deceased man and continue the brother's inheritance throughout the family line (Gen. 38:8; Deut. 25:5-6). The practice forms a major part of the narrative of the Book of Ruth (Ruth 4:1-12). It might be that the Sadducees are imagining an extremely embellished form of levirate practice here.

After all seven men die, the woman dies (Lk. 20:32), and then the question is posed to Jesus in verse 33: "In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife." The assumption of the Sadducees is that life in the resurrection will essentially be no different than life as it is now, except maybe a little better. Given that this woman in the made-up scenario has been married legally to all seven men, it presents a conundrum, but only if life in the resurrection is the same. Jesus responds to this problem with a re-analysis of the resurrection in the following verses. Below are some key details in His response.

### **NO MORE MARRIAGE**

First, Jesus dispels the idea that life in the resurrection will be the same as life in the flesh in verses 34 and 35: "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage." There will be no need for marriage for at least a couple of reasons. For one, marriage is a picture of the union the church has with Christ (Eph. 5:22-33), but in the resurrection we will have full union with Christ (Rev. 22:1-5). Beyond that, marriage is meant to be the covenant through which the creation mandate is carried out, but this will no longer be necessary either because everyone intended to experience the final judgment will already be in existence. Marriage is also intended to prevent loneliness (Gen. 2:18), but God will dwell with man eternally after the resurrection (Rev. 21:3).

### **EQUAL TO ANGELS**

Jesus then says in verse 36: "For they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection." It is not that we will be equal to angels because we no longer marry

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<sup>2</sup> David E. Garland, *Luke*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 807.

(since angels procreated at least once with humans in Genesis 6) but because we “cannot die anymore.” We, like the angels, will not experience death after the resurrection.

### **RESURRECTION IN THE TORAH**

Though Jesus’ answer has turned the Sadducees question on its head, He still makes an argument for resurrection, but this time from the Torah since it’s the only form of Scripture acceptable to them: “But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, 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. Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him” (Lk. 20:37-38). Appealing to the Exodus account of the burning bush (Ex. 3:6). If God is only the God of the living and not the dead, how can it be that He is God of dead men during Moses’ context (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob)? This kind of reasoning was so above them that they resolved to “no longer dare ask Him any question” (Lk. 20:40).

### **MORE CHALLENGES**

Though they no longer desired to challenge Him, He continued to press them: “How can they say that the Christ is David’s son? For David himself says in the Book of Psalms, “‘The Lord said to my Lord, “sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”’ David thus calls him Lord, so how is he his son?” (Lk. 20:41-43). The argument of Jesus’ day is that the Messiah would be the son of David, but by David’s own words the LORD (God) refers to the Lord (Messiah). That would mean that the Messiah is also above David, not simply his offspring. In the same way that the resurrection is not merely an extension of life on earth, the Messiah is not an extension of the Davidic monarchy. The resurrection is greater than our current context, and the Messiah is greater than David.

## **What About Now?**

The takeaway in general is the reality that life after resurrection will be different than it currently is in a variety of ways. There will be no marriage (Lk. 20:34-35). Christ will dwell with His people forever (Rev. 21:3). There will be no more sin, tears, pain, or death (Rev. 21:4). While we will be raised in our bodies in resurrection, our bodies will be in significant ways different than they are now (1 Cor. 15:40). This is not to say that this life doesn’t matter or that marriage isn’t valuable, but that life after resurrection will be significantly more than we can fathom in our current state.

## **Study Questions**

### **Day One**

1. Read Luke 20:27-32. Who comes to ask Jesus a question? In your own words, summarize the hypothetical scenario that they pose to Jesus.

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2. Read Luke 20:33. What question do they ask Jesus?

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### **Day Two**

1. Read Luke 20:34-35. How did Jesus respond? What does He say concerning marriage? Why is this true?

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2. Read Luke 20:36. According to the above notes, how do those in the resurrection become “equal to angels?”
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### Day Three

1. Read Luke 20:37-38. How does Jesus prove resurrection according to the Torah? What passage does He quote?
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2. Read Luke 20:39-40. What is the response of Jesus’ opponents?
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### Day Four

1. Read Luke 20:41. What question does Jesus further press onto those with whom He is speaking?
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2. Read Luke 20:42-44. What Psalm does Jesus quote? What is His point in quoting this Psalm?
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## Week 74 Discussion: Know the Scripture

In Luke 20:27-44, Jesus is questioned by the Sadducees concerning resurrection. The Sadducees are opposed to the concept of resurrection because in their minds, there are no such passages in the Scripture that speak to it (Remember: the Sadducees only receive the Torah in the Old Testament). However, Jesus knows the Scriptures intimately and thus proves the resurrection from Exodus 3:6. He defends biblical doctrine with Scripture. Talk as a group about the importance of knowing the Word of God in order to converse with people who are in opposition to Christian teaching.

1. Icebreaker: Would you consider yourself “well-versed” in the Scripture? Why or why not?
2. Would others consider you “well-versed” in the Scripture?
3. What book of the Bible are you most familiar with? Least familiar with?
4. What is your daily/weekly Scripture reading routine? Do you have one? If not, why not?
5. How important is the Bible to you? Is that level of importance reflected in your day-to-day actions?
6. How can you be held more accountable to read the Scriptures more regularly?

## Takeaways:

1. Jesus is questioned by the Sadducees concerning resurrection with a hypothetical scenario.
2. Jesus shares how life after resurrection will be different, and then proves resurrection from the Torah.