

Marriage at the Resurrection

²³ That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. ²⁴ “Teacher,” they said, “Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for him. ²⁵ Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. ²⁶ The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. ²⁷ Finally, the woman died. ²⁸ Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?”

²⁹ Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. ³⁰ At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. ³¹ But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, ³² ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’^[b]? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

³³ When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

The Greatest Commandment

³⁴ Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

³⁷ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’^[c] ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’^[d] ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Whose Son Is the Messiah?

⁴¹ While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, ⁴² “What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?”

“The son of David,” they replied.

⁴³ He said to them, “How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him ‘Lord’? For he says,

⁴⁴ “‘The Lord said to my Lord:

“Sit at my right hand
until I put your enemies
under your feet.””^[e]

⁴⁵ If then David calls him ‘Lord,’ how can he be his son?” ⁴⁶ No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Footnotes:

b. [Matthew 22:32](#) Exodus 3:6

c. [Matthew 22:37](#) Deut. 6:5

d. [Matthew 22:39](#) Lev. 19:18

e. [Matthew 22:44](#) Psalm 110:1

STUDY QUESTIONS:

- 1. Jesus is being tested by another Jewish sect, the Sadducees. Research commentaries, etc. and record what you find about this group. Why would they be opposed to Jesus.**

The Sadducees were a religious group that did not believe in resurrection or life after death. Your reward or punishment is dealt you in this life. They were noted for their wealth and power, they justified their good fortune as a sign of God's reward for their faithfulness and righteousness, in turn, they deemed that the poor, sick, marginalized people were being punished by God so they ought not to interfere with God's will and felt no need to help others, they deemed themselves set apart as a privileged and elite class. They were strict conservatives theologically and tended to resist change, holding that only the Pentateuch or Torah, was canonical as Scripture. Resurrection is first mentioned in Daniel 12:2, a book which the Sadducees did not claim as Scripture.

They deemed the prophetic writings and especially the apocalyptic writings such as Daniel were highly suspect. They were compromisers with the Romans politically and though they resisted Greco-Roman influences, they were not as strictly opposed to the Romans as were the Pharisees, Zealots and others who resented them. They were distinct from the Pharisees, but seen here cooperating with them against Jesus whose popularity with the common people and his criticism of them was deemed dangerous to them, so they, like the Pharisees wanted to rid themselves of Jesus.

The question of "levirate marriage" (levi from the Latin levir, "Brother in Law") derives from the Pentateuch scriptures, Deuteronomy 25:5-6 and was considered an important Jewish tradition. (Genesis 38:1-8, Tamar; and Ruth 1-4 are examples.) The rationale for this law as the continuation of the family lineage. The Sadducees deemed that although there was no resurrection, one in a sense, lived on in his progeny. To die without offspring was considered an incomplete life.

They calculated their case in their confrontation of Jesus both to affirm the Torah but also to show the absurdity of resurrection with the multiple-brother levirate marriage scenario.

- 2. What is the question that the Sadducees ask Jesus?**

They pose a question regarding the marriage of a widow to her brother in law (levirate marriage) that has all seven brothers die before the widow conceives a child to carry on the original brother's lineage. They ask Jesus whose wife she would be in the resurrection since she was married to all seven? The idea was that they were posing a ridiculous situation to discredit the validity of resurrection using a Scriptural tenant.

- 3. How does Jesus answer the Sadducees' question?**

Jesus answer authoritatively noting that the Sadducees did not know Scripture or the power of God. Then proceeds to school them on both.

4. What does Jesus mean that the Sadducees did not know Scripture? Weren't they scholars of the Law?

Jesus is not referring to knowledge of the Scripture, but rather to the proper interpretation of it and proceeds to demonstrate his authority in doing so correctly. Jesus notes that in Exodus 3:6 God reveals Godself as willingly bound to people of past generations. Though these people are dead and buried, they are not gone forever. God maintains them in close relationship. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

5. What does Jesus mean that the Sadducees do not know the power of God?

As noted in question 4, God is not the God of the dead but of the living. The power of resurrection and eternal life is entrusted to God's own power to bring and renew life in those who have entrusted themselves to God for resurrection, however that comes about. Jesus does not reveal how or when that happens, only that with God all things are possible. Remember that the one who is sharing this is the one who has entrusted his own life to the Father for resurrection which will be realized after his crucifixion and burial.

6. What are the Sadducees and crowd's reactions to Jesus' answer?

The crowds were astounded at Jesus' teaching. Matthew goes on in verse 34 that Jesus silenced the Sadducees (as he has previously done with the Pharisees and Herodians).

7. In the next section of this text, what do the Pharisees then ask Jesus?

They ask Jesus what is the greatest commandment in the Law"

8. What is Jesus' answer?

"'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. When Jesus says that the second is like the first, he means that it is of equal standing and that one cannot separate the two.

9. Why is this question important, what is the purpose of asking it, how were the Pharisees trying to trick Jesus with this question?

The nature of the test is not clearly defined in the Scripture. However, the general consensus of Rabbinic teaching held that all the laws were to be given equal status, any ranking of them was merely human presumption. The lawyer here may have been trying to draw Jesus into some sort of argument over whether ritual or ceremonial laws were of equal standing to moral laws. This may explain why Jesus went on to talk about the second greatest commandment and that all the commandments hung on these two, this was the acceptable conventional understanding. This last statement also reflects how Jesus would correct the Sadducees and others in their misinterpretation of the commandments and Scripture in general. Jesus interprets through the hermeneutic of these commandments, the love of and for God.

- 10. This section ends with Jesus asking the Pharisees his own question as he had done previously when they asked him about the source of his authority and he in turn asked them about John the Baptist (Matthew 21:23-27) What does Jesus ask the Pharisees in verse 42? How do they answer him?**

Jesus asks them about the Messiah, specifically whose son is the Messiah. They reply that the Messiah is the son of David.

- 11. How does Jesus take his question further with them? How does he question their answer?**

He notes that David calls the Messiah Lord (Psalm 110:1) and so he asks how the Messiah could be both David's Lord and his son?

- 12. What is their answer and response to Jesus' questions of them?**

They cannot answer his question. They realize that they are getting nowhere with this and that Jesus authority cannot be successfully disputed or questioned. So as Matthew shares, they dare not ask Jesus any more questions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1. What if anything does Jesus reveal to us about resurrection in his answer to the questions from the Sadducees?**

Jesus does not offer the "what and how" of resurrection for us other than to assure us that resurrection is real and that we live on in our covenant with God. Later teachings by Paul and revelations from John's apocalyptic writings offer us glimpses of entering the presence of the Lord spiritually after our mortal deaths. Revelation also indicates that there will be a new heaven and a new earth and that God will abide with God's saved people in both realms for eternity.

- 2. What is the significance of Jesus' holding both the command to love God and love neighbor as equal commandments?**

*Jesus is essentially saying that we cannot say we love God if we do not also love our neighbor. Since we are all made in the image of God, then we must regard each other as God does, we must love each other as God loves us. Otherwise we are despising God's own creation which in essence despises God for loving those who are our neighbors.-*9889*