

## Luke 20:27-40

Saints Triumphant, Nov. 13, 2022  
Pastor Sam Rodebaugh

*There came to him some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection, <sup>28</sup> and they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. <sup>29</sup> Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and died without children. <sup>30</sup> And the second <sup>31</sup> and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. <sup>32</sup> Afterward the woman also died. <sup>33</sup> In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife." <sup>34</sup> And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, <sup>35</sup> 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, <sup>36</sup> for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. <sup>37</sup> 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. <sup>38</sup> Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him." <sup>39</sup> Then some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, you have spoken well." <sup>40</sup> For they no longer dared to ask him any question.*

One of the most famous plays ever produced in America is play Thornton Wilder's entitled "Our Town." The play is a story about life and death, set in the small community of Grover's Corners, New Hampshire. Well, toward the end of this play, the narrator says something interesting—He's speaking to the audience, and he says, "Now there are some things we all know, but we don't take 'em out and look at 'em very often. We all know that something is eternal. And it ain't houses and it ain't names, and it ain't earth, and it ain't even the stars—everybody knows in their bones that something is eternal, and that something has to do with human beings. All the greatest people ever lived have been telling us that for five thousand years and yet you'd be surprised how people are always losing hold of it. There's something way down deep that's eternal about every human being."

He's right, of course. The author of the play doesn't reveal exactly what that eternal something is, but you and I know. We know the truth about eternity, because we've got it from the mouth of our Lord Jesus Himself. In our text for today, Jesus answers once and for all the question—

### Is There Life after Death?

- I. The Sadducees of this world say NO.
- II. God's almighty Word says YES!

The Sadducees were a sect of the Jewish religion, just as the Pharisees were. But their doctrine differed from that of the Pharisees in one important aspect: the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection of the dead. There's a popular children's song that is often sung during Vacation Bible School that has a verse that goes like this: "**I don't want to be a Sadducee. I don't want to be a Sadducee. 'Cuz they're so SAD, YOU SEE.**" They are sad; a very sad group to belong to. Because they believe that once you die, that's it. There is no life after death. What a sad idea to cling to!

They were always fighting with the Pharisees about this point. But there was one thing that these two groups did agree on: both groups hated Jesus. The Pharisees had tried to trip Jesus up with tricky questions and hadn't been able to do it. So, on this occasion, the Sadducees thought they'd have a try.

They constructed the elaborate argument I read a moment ago, about the woman and her seven husbands. The logic seemed flawless. Since the problem of who would be the woman's husband in heaven seemed unsolvable, they thought they had proved just how ridiculous the idea of life in heaven was. **"Whose wife will the woman be?"** They sneered, **"For the seven had her as wife."** No doubt they rubbed their hands with glee. "Now," they thought, "we've got this Jesus just where we want Him."

By the way, there are still plenty of "Sadducees" around in this day and age too. Isn't it true? There are lots of philosophers and college professors who make quite a point of denying the idea of life after death. They, too, build their elaborate arguments that are supposed to "prove" that, after the grave, there is nothing. How gleefully they will rub their hands together when they've cornered a Christian with one of their unbeatable arguments.

We don't have to listen to them, though. And besides, I think most people have enough common sense to know that this idea of no life after death is just not true. I'll tell you what does worry me, though, and it's not the people who deny the resurrection with their words. No, what worries me, is those who deny the resurrection with their lives. Look at all the people around us who go through their daily routine as if this world was all there is. If you asked them, many of them would say they do believe in a life after death. But that's not how they live. They know there's an eternity, but, as the playwright Wilder said, **"they don't take it out and look at it"** very often. It makes them uncomfortable, and they'd rather ignore it, so they do. They go about their business as usual. They don't come to church to hear what God has to say about it. If they even ever think about religion and God's Word, well—it's usually something they feel they can put it off until later. "Right now I've got other things to do." These are the modern Sadducees. And when asked the question, **"Is there Life After Death?"** **the Sadducees of this world say NO.**

Does that describe us? You and me? Sometimes I'm afraid it does. Jesus says that Christians are supposed to be lamps set up high on a lampstand. Our lives are supposed to show other people that there is life after death, and that by the grace of God, that's where we're headed. But how often don't we hide our lights under a bushel basket in our attempts to blend in with the crowd? How often don't we allow ourselves to be carried along by the hustle and bustle of day-to-day living? Soon we find ourselves skipping our daily Bible reading, we're missing church, we're spending thousands on ourselves and giving nickels and dimes to the Lord. Isn't that Sadducee-ism? Aren't we, in our own way, pushing back the eternal things in favor of the temporary?

Jesus said, **"Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness."** Let's catch ourselves, before it's too late. Let's ask the Lord's forgiveness and pray that He would keep us mindful of eternity, every hour of every day! There are plenty of Sadducees around already without us Christians acting like Sadducees, too.

**Is there life after death? No matter how many of this world's Sadducees say NO, God's almighty Word says YES!**

Jesus listened quietly while the Sadducees spent all that time constructing their clever argument, and then He simply knocked it all over, like a house of cards. The argument about the woman and her seven husbands—that was just the Sadducees trying to apply earthly rules to heaven. And that won't work.

Jesus pointed out what they should have already known: that heaven is not like earth, and the age to come is not like the present age. He said in v. 34 of our text ***"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."***

This is one teaching that has never been easy for Christians to grasp. And that's because the relationship between husband and wife is one of the most powerful bonds on earth. So, it's nearly impossible for a Christian to imagine not being married to his or her spouse in heaven. But God's ways are high above our ways, so this is just something that we can't quite wrap our minds around yet. But there are certain things we do know for sure about heaven: whatever our situation, it will be one of perfect happiness. In heaven, John says Revelation 21 ***"...God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."***

But the Sadducees' argument wasn't really about marriage in heaven. They were just trying to prove that there wasn't a resurrection at all, and for this Jesus sternly rebukes them. We can read in Matthew, ***"Jesus answered and said to them, 'You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.'"*** The Sadducees considered themselves to be Bible experts. But if they really knew their Bibles, Jesus said, they'd never try anything as silly as disproving the resurrection. It's as clear as day, even in the Old Testament!

The sect of the Sadducees had a special reverence for the first five books of the Old Testament, the books written by Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; so Jesus selected a passage from Exodus. At the burning bush, the Lord had identified Himself to Moses by saying, ***"I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."*** Not, ***"I WAS their God,"*** but ***"I AM their God"*** The Lord was telling Moses, that even though the patriarchs had passed away centuries before, they were still alive in heaven with God! For ***He is not God of the dead,*** Jesus said, ***but of the living, for all live to him.*** From God's point of view, the eternal point of view, there are no "dead" people. To Him, everyone is alive.

God's almighty Word proves that there IS life after death. There is a resurrection, and there is eternity. Some people deny it; others just stick their heads in the sand and try to ignore it. But on Judgment Day, the "Sadducees" of this world will find out the terrible truth, the truth that they've really known all along. As Jesus describes in Matthew 25 ***"Then the King will say to those on His left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"***

But what about you? Can you be sure that YOU are "worthy to attain that age," and the resurrection to everlasting life? Yes! There is a way, and you can be certain of it!

About a century and a half ago, an artist painted a scene which he entitled, "Checkmate." It's very interesting—it shows a young man playing chess with the Devil. By the position of the chess pieces, and the look of glee on the devil, and the look of agony on the man's face, it's clear the devil is about to win. One day, in the fall of 1861, this painting was hanging in an art gallery, and chess master named Paul Morphy was standing in front of the painting studying it intently. Suddenly he cried out to no one in particular, "I have it! I can save that fellow!" The story goes that he found a chessboard, reproduced

the positions of the pieces, and he proceeded to show how with one brilliant move could turn the game around, and lead to certain victory for the young man.

That's exactly what Jesus Christ has done for us, isn't it? He has, in one move, eternally checkmated the Devil. Jesus took all our sins upon Himself at Calvary, and in exchange gave us His perfect righteousness. Such a simple move, but so unexpected, and so brilliant! The devil thought he had won once Christ had died, but in one simple move, Jesus snatched away Satan's victory, and handed him defeat instead. In one move, Jesus rescued us from the brink of hell and opened up the way to heaven. That's why the open tomb of Easter is such a joyful symbol for us Christians. It's the symbol of Jesus' promise to each of us in John 14: ***"Because I live, you shall live also!"*** Do you realize what that means? -If it is true that Jesus rose to life again that first Easter morning, then it is also true that you will rise to eternal life when the everlasting Day dawns. Regardless of your background, your past, how great or how many your sins have been—God's almighty Word says there will be eternal life for you through God's Son! Because Jesus lives, you WILL live also!

In the 1930's a submarine sank in a storm off Provincetown, Massachusetts. Rescuers couldn't get to them immediately because of the heavy seas. But as soon as the weather cleared, divers were sent down. They searched through the length of the disabled vessel trying to find out whether there was anybody left alive inside. Suddenly, one diver heard a gentle tapping. Listening carefully, he recognized the tapping as Morse code, and the message was a question—four simple words repeated over and over again: "IS THERE ANY HOPE?" The diver tapped back, "THERE IS HOPE!"

"Is there any hope?" People are still asking that question today. Even in the midst of all the Sadducees of this world, who say that there is no hope of life after death, there are still a few desperate souls out there who are asking, "Is there any hope?" You're a Christian, and people you associate with daily know this; that means that sooner or later, in one way or another, someone's going to bring that question to you: "Is there any hope?" Be prepared to answer! "YES! There is hope! In fact, more than hope—through Jesus Christ who died for your sins and rose again, eternal life is a certainty!" **AMEN.**

**And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**