

The Gospel According to
Luke

“The Corpse Grooms”

or, “Sadducee Bride for Seven Brothers”

Chapter 20:27-44

Introduction

There's been a lot of talk about how Muslim suicide bombers expect to go immediately to Heaven where they will receive 72 virgins to satisfy their physical pleasures for all eternity. To be fair, the Koran never states that the faithful are allotted *exactly* 72 virgins apiece - although the provision of virgins is alluded to in several places. The specific information comes from some traditional sayings outside of the Koran that are traced to Muhammad. Called *hadith*, one says, "The least [reward] for the people of Heaven is 80,000 servants and 72 wives."

Mormons believe that marriages can be ritually 'sealed' in their Temple ceremonies so that they will last forever in Heaven. After death you and your wife (or multiple wives) become the gods of your own planet and fill countless millions of worlds with your offspring.

Muslim or Mormon, *it is essentially the Playboy philosophy!* You either get a Playboy mansion, or a Playboy planet.

The Muslims are wrong... The Mormons are wrong... I can confidently declare that they are wrong because Jesus very clearly stated, **those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage.**

Suddenly we're not interested in Muslim or Mormon errors; we're intrigued about our own future in Heaven. Did Jesus really mean that we won't be married in Heaven?

Stay with me as we work through these verses. Marriage is just one part of the greater teaching. We'll organize our thoughts around two

points: #1 You Limit Living If You Live As If There Were No Resurrection, and #2 You Unlimit Living If You Live Forward To Resurrection.

#1 You Limit Living If You Live As If There Were No Resurrection (v27-33)

On their way to get married, a young couple is involved in a fatal car accident. The couple find themselves sitting outside the Pearly Gates waiting for St. Peter to process them into Heaven.

While waiting, they begin to wonder: Could they possibly get married in Heaven? When St. Peter shows up, they asked him. St. Peter says, "I don't know. This is the first time anyone has asked. Let me go find out," and he leaves.

The couple sat and waited for an answer... for a couple of months.

While they waited, they discussed that IF they were allowed to get married in Heaven, SHOULD they get married, what with the eternal aspect of it all.

"What if it doesn't work?" they wondered, "Are we stuck together FOREVER?"

After yet another month, St. Peter finally returns looking somewhat bedraggled. "Yes," he informs the couple, "you CAN get married in Heaven."

"Great!" said the couple, "But we were just wondering, what if things don't work out? Could we also get a divorce in Heaven?"

St. Peter begins shaking his head in discouragement.

"What's wrong?" asked the frightened couple.

St. Peter shouts, "It took me three months to find a priest up here! **Do you have ANY idea how long it'll take me to find a lawyer?**"

The Sadducees did not believe in life after death. They did not believe in a future judgment that would result in either eternal reward or punishment. They did not believe that God ever intervened in human affairs. They rejected the notion of divine providence and taught that everything in life is up to you.

How did they arrive at these beliefs? Their beliefs were probably shaped by their behavior. They had become the wealthy, ruling class, and were in control of the Temple. They were materialistic, enjoying the things of the world. Belief in an afterlife, in which you would be rewarded for your simple and sacrificial living on earth, was contrary to their wealthy materialist lifestyle.

To support their lifestyles of the rich and famous, they only accepted the first five books of the Old Testament, claiming that nowhere in those books was there any talk of life after death. This life was all that they were living for.

Whether they will admit it or not, most people in our culture are Sadducees to some degree:

1. Our culture is certainly materialistic.
2. If people believe in God, they don't live as if He intervenes in their affairs – unless it is to blame Him for some difficulty or disaster.
3. People are unsure of an afterlife, unless pressed for an opinion, and then they generally reject any notion of eternal punishment.
4. This life is therefore all that they are really living for.

You are dealing with Sadducees everyday. While they may not openly say there is no resurrection, they try to minimize the evidence of the resurrection in your life. They attack you, or your testimony. You can learn a lot from Jesus' strategy for answering them.

Luke 20:27 Then some of the Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection, came to *Him* and asked Him,
Luke 20:28 saying: "Teacher, Moses wrote to us *that* if a man's brother dies, having a wife, and he dies without children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother.

It's true; Moses did teach this in God's Law (Deuteronomy 25:5 & 6). It was called *levirate marriage*. Levirate marriage is the practice of a woman marrying one of her dead husband's brothers after her husband's untimely death in order to continue his line and protect his inheritance. It is a necessary practice among people with a tribal or clan structure who do not allow you to marry outside of your own people group. It already existed in societies before God gave Moses the Law and was adopted to keep the children of Israel separate from the surrounding nations.

The Sadducees presented an improbable case of levirate marriage in order to ridicule any idea of a future resurrection:

Luke 20:29 Now there were seven brothers. And the first took a wife, and died without children.

Luke 20:30 And the second took her as wife, and he died childless.

Luke 20:31 Then the third took her, and in like manner the seven also; and they left no children, and died.

Luke 20:32 Last of all the woman died also.

Everyone agreed that levirate marriage was taught in God's Word. The Sadducees argued that any thought of resurrection from the dead, to live forever in Heaven, was contradicted by levirate marriage, because you would never be able to sort-out the relationships.

Luke 20:33 Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife does she become? For all seven had her as wife."

It was a question that had always worked for them. No one had ever answered it to their satisfaction.

The unbelievers you know, many of whom are closet-Sadducees, usually have one big question that seems to work for them:

1. Their one big question might be stupid, like, *Can God make a rock so big He cannot lift it?*, or, *Who made God?*
2. Their one big question might be sincere, like, *Why did my child die?*, or, *If God is a God of love, why is there so much suffering in the world?*

Whether stupid or sincere, most of the time the questions are related to our limited experience with living on earth. Jesus answered by focusing their attention on the unlimited quality of life that can be expected in eternity.

Luke 20:34 Jesus answered and said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage.

Luke 20:35 But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage;

Luke 20:36 nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

Living on earth is limited living. It is limited by death. But what if death was defeated once and for all? You'd live forever in a glorified body that was not subject to any of the usual limitations. And, since everyone in Heaven with you would also live forever, it follows that

there would probably be different social arrangements. There would be no need to have children... Or to preserve property rights... Or maintain tribal distinctions. If there was marriage at all, it would at least be very different than it was on earth.

Well, *death has been defeated once and for all!* It was defeated by Jesus when He rose from the dead. Because He rose, so will all those who die believing in Him.

He arose in a glorified physical body; **so will you**, if you are a Christian who experiences death. Then too, you may not die. Many Christians will be alive when the Rapture occurs. If you are, you will be changed instantaneously – given your glorified physical body.

If you are a **son [or daughter] of the resurrection**, you will be **equal to the angels**. ***You will not be an angel!*** You will be like the unfallen angels in certain aspects. It's a comparison to help you get a handle on what unlimited life will be like in a glorified body. Angels have powers that we now lack – both physical and mental. They can no longer sin. They perfectly do God's will. They worship the Lord continually.

And they are not married! **You will neither marry nor [be] given in marriage:**

1. If you have or had a 'marriage made in Heaven,' it saddens you to think you and your spouse will no longer be married in eternity.
2. If you have a marriage that is Hell on earth... *You're pretty excited!*

You won't be married to one another or marrying others in Heaven... **But you will be 'married' to Jesus Christ!**

1. In describing your relationship with Jesus, the apostle Paul says you are currently engaged to Him (2Corinthians 11:2). You are the bride; He is your Bridegroom.
2. When Jesus returns for us, it is described in terms of a wedding, complete with a wedding feast (Revelation 19:6-10).

Being 'married to Jesus' sounds strange to us. Our problem is that, because of our earthly limitations, we focus too much on the physical

aspects of marriage. For example: When God married Adam and Eve, He said that the two should become **one flesh**. We mostly think of **one flesh** as having an intimate physical relationship with our spouse. The truth is, **one flesh** has a lot more to do with *spiritual unity* than with *sensual pleasure*. When God brought Eve to Adam, it was to provide him with a companion to complete him – not a sex-slave to fulfill him.

Remember the Muslim and the Mormon versions of Heaven? *They are all about sex!* It's all about you having sex all the time. There's little or nothing in it about enjoying spiritual unity with Jesus and every other citizen of Heaven.

Even now, your marriage needs to be more spiritual than it is sensual or sexual.

Marriage is an important earthly institution. We should not mess with it! But it is more than an institution: It is an illustration of the eternal unity God intends *with us* and *for us*.

You will not be married to one another in Heaven. Heaven is not an extension of earth. It's not earth without a mortgage... Or higher gas prices. It is an entirely new and unlimited way of living.

Before we move on, let me make an important application. Because the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, it limited their living. Since they were not looking forward to any afterlife or reward, they lived as if this life were all that mattered. If this life is all that matters... You are severely limiting yourself. You may enjoy the things this world has to offer; but they are temporary, and you are eternal. **You will never be satisfied even in this life.** And you will awaken in the next life to find you have not prepared for it.

#2 You Unlimit Living If You
Live Forward To Resurrection
(v37-44)

The Sadducees argued that there were no references to the resurrection in the Old Testament. *Not true!* Jesus listed at least two, starting with Moses at the burning bush.

Luke 20:37 But even Moses showed in the *burning bush passage* that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord *'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'*

Luke 20:38 For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him."

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all long dead when God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush. God referred to them in the present tense, as if they were still alive.

If **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob** were annihilated at death, and were nothing but dust, *God could not still be their God!* Since God was still their God, long after their deaths; He is the God **of the living**. **All live to Him** means that a resurrection is in their future.

Luke 20:39 Then some of the scribes answered and said, "Teacher, You have spoken well."

Luke 20:40 But after that they dared not question Him anymore.

Jesus answered their big question. They decided to quit asking Him questions. Sometimes you answer a person's big question, and they withdraw from you. They don't want to talk to you anymore.

Start asking them questions! Jesus asked a question, which further proved that resurrection is taught in the Scriptures.

Luke 20:41 And He said to them, "How can they say that the Christ is the Son of David?"

Luke 20:42 Now David himself said in the Book of Psalms:

'The LORD said to my Lord,

"Sit at My right hand,

Luke 20:43 *Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."*

Luke 20:44 Therefore David calls Him 'Lord'; how is He then his Son?"

Jesus called their attention to a prophecy in Psalm 110, quoting the first verse. **The Christ** is a reference to the Messiah. The Messiah would *also* be David's **Lord**.

If the Messiah was David's descendant, how could He also be David's **Lord**? How could He be younger in age, yet superior in rank?

The only way the Messiah could be both descendant and Lord is through a resurrection from the dead.

There most definitely will be a future resurrection from the dead. It only makes sense to **live forward** to the resurrection. Not just look forward; live forward – let your future resurrection affect your present decisions.

Applying the Word:

If you are a Christian... You certainly believe in resurrection and reward. **But it is still possible to live day-by-day as if there were no resurrection.** It is still possible to get caught-up in the things of the world, and to not be thinking about standing before Jesus to receive your reward. It is still possible to limit living.

If you have not yet received Jesus Christ, and the forgiveness of your sins... The resurrection of Jesus should trouble you. In the very first sermon of the Church Age, the apostle Peter quoted from the same Psalm Jesus mentioned – Psalm 110.

Acts 2:34 "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself:

'The LORD said to my Lord,

"Sit at My right hand,

Acts 2:35 *Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."*

Acts 2:36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, **both Lord and Christ.**"

In other words, Jesus rose from the dead... He is alive... He is returning.

Peter added, *whom you crucified.* **You** crucified Jesus in this sense: He had to come and die on the Cross for your sins.

You **will** experience a resurrection. But not everyone will go to Heaven. Only those who have personally received the forgiveness of their sins can go to Heaven.

Have you?