

Sons of the Resurrection

Luke 20:34-40

December 10, 2023

Well, we are in Luke 20 this morning, and in our study as we come to the text, we find Jesus fending off yet another attack, and this time from the Sadducees. We started into this text last week, and by God's grace we'll finish it up this morning. As I looked at my notes this morning, I realized I could have cut this into another half. So that's three halves. Three sermons could have done that, but I didn't do that. So get comfortable.

Sadducees, as we saw last time, have come to challenge the doctrine of resurrection, which seems strangely coincidental, doesn't it, since this is Jesus' last week of earthly life before he goes to the cross, before he goes into the tomb, before he is raised from the dead. Jesus will die, be buried,

and only to rise from the dead, all within a week of this interchange with the Sadducees.

Let's start reading the section we covered last week, and, and then I'll do a brief review. But let's start reading in verse 27 of Luke 20. "There came to him some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection, 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. Now there were seven brothers, and the first took a wife and died without children, and the second and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. Afterward, the woman also died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife.'"

This is meant to be a gotcha moment for Jesus and a, a bit of a chance to scoff at not only Jesus, but also the Sadducees and the Pharisees were rivals and opponents, theologically and in many other ways as well. But this is meant to be a, a scoffing. It's meant to be a gotcha moment for Jesus, to

embarrass him publicly, to knock him down a few notches in the eyes of the people because the Sadducees saw him gaining power, gaining influence, gaining authority and they didn't like that threat and that rival to their own power.

So that's the section, set up, here, and the challenge that they want to bring is the challenge of the absurdity of the concept of bodily resurrection. We'll get into why that is in a moment, but I mentioned during our Scripture reading time in 1 Corinthians 15, I know that none of us as professing Christians would deny the resurrection as some were doing in the Corinthian church. No one in your, in our evangelical churches today would dare to take the side of the Sadducees, scoffing at the doctrine of resurrection. We are evangelicals, after all. *Euangelion*, evangelical means we are people of the Gospel, and the Gospel is the good news, the good news that we can be saved from our sins and rise from the dead. So we wouldn't in, in any of our profession, we would not side with the Sadducees. We wouldn't side with the deniers of resurrection in the Corinthian church.

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But as I mentioned in our time of Scripture reading, I do wonder, and I actually wonder this often, I wonder this sometimes as I examine my own heart, and maybe you have examined your heart in this way as well. But I wonder how many professing Christians live as if the doctrine of resurrection were not true, living as if the doctrine of resurrection doesn't really make a practical difference in our day-to-day lives, doesn't really set the priorities for us, it isn't the hope that we're fixed upon, rising from the dead. We live instead as if this world is all that matters, trying to live as Joel Osteen commends us to do, to live our best life now, try to grab up everything we can, see as many things, travel as many places, get as many toys, do as much stuff as we can do.

I wonder if this world has, this modern world with all of its, honestly, I, I like the conveniences of the modern world. I like running water. I like flushing toilets. I like electricity. I like warmth. I like comfort. I, I like all those things. I don't wish we could go back to the Stone Age. But in times of great prosperity, it's a different kind of a test of the heart, isn't it? Will we become fat and lazy in our prosperity and

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giving our attention instead to maintaining our prosperity and our comfort and our ease?

Or will we see all the gifts that God gives in the world as signs pointing our eyes toward heaven to see the giver of all good things, and to not worship the gift, but worship the giver. Not to seek, to strive, to hold on to what we like, and what is comfortable, and what's fun, and what's enjoyable, but instead to hold those things loosely in, in fact, in many times, to reject them all together, that we can instead have our arms open wide and our hands open wide to embrace what is truly great, what is truly wonderful, what is truly majestic, what is our true destiny as humanity, to give glory and honor to our God in the name of Jesus Christ.

And so my hope for you and my prayer for you as I've been thinking about this passage of Scripture is that our Lord's teaching will instruct and correct, maybe rebuke in some cases, but in every case it will encourage your heart, that it would put your hope never in this life, but always and ever in the life to come. And I hope that you will evaluate your life and

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that you'll think about the way you've been living, think about the way you've been conducting yourself in your days and your weeks and your months and your calendar, think about your, your bank account or your checkbook, or however you keep track of the flow of money, it's a good way to evaluate where your priorities are and that you'll think about that in light of this text and think about how you live. Is it distinctly Christian or is it more worldly than Christian with some Christianese over the top?

Well, we started into our three-point outline last week. Remember those three words I gave you: the condescension, the correction, and the confirmation. We only got to the first point last time, the condescension, and that first point, expanded, was number one, the condescension of the scoffers, the condescension of the scoffers. The Sadducees are the scoffers, and they condescend to talk to Jesus, to stoop down and speak to him, a peasant, a Galilean, no less.

He, they came from an aristocratic class of wealthy elites, and they held positions of power in the temple. Their subordinates are the ones who ran temple operations, operations

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that kept them rich. They oversaw and controlled everything in the temple. Remember the procession of Jesus as King? He came into the city, caused quite a stir. Nothing, though, was so disruptive to them as his clearing of the temple, as his entering into the temple and basically taking over, driving out all the buyers, and the sellers, and the money-changers, and all the animals, and all the cacophony, and all the stuff that was going on there, driving them out so that he can restore the temple to its purpose. "My house shall be a house of prayer for all the nations," not a, "you've made it a den of robbers." Let's drive out the robbers and go back to prayer and instruction and teaching. So he came to clear the temple, and that frankly threatened all their business agreements, their business arrangements, all their enterprise. They needed to do something.

So the Sadducees, they had a lot to lose. They, they had influence. They had authority. They had money. But of greatest concern to them was this threat that Jesus and, and his teaching and his, his way of living, who he is, the threat that he posed to their entire way of life, the philosophy of life that was justifying their lifestyle. He was, he was cramping their style,

and about this they agreed with their Pharisee rivals, this Jesus has to be stopped.

So they come to Jesus. They issue the same kind of attack that embarrassed the, their Pharisee rivals in the past. They weaponized scorn, and they used scorn to try to make Jesus look foolish, showing the absurdity, they thought, the absurdity of the doctrine of bodily resurrection, and they wanted to, to cast it in contrast, in contradiction to the sacred writings of Moses. On that, every Jew agreed. We talked a lot about the Sadducees last week. I'm not going to repeat or rehash all that. If you missed it, I will refer you to that sermon. It's posted online. I think you may find some helpful things about the Sadducees if you're not exposed to them, if you haven't been exposed to them before.

But suffice it to say, just as Luke tells us here, the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection. But Luke also reveals in Acts 23, verse 8, that Sadducees don't, not only do they not believe in resurrection, they don't believe in angels or spirits. So basically, you might call them materialists. They

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say that there's no continuation of the soul after death, and so they're very much like your best life now. That's very much their philosophy. This life is all there is, and that is exactly how they lived.

For the Sadducees, the only way to achieve any kind of "immortality," and I do put that in quotes, they would put it in quotes, is to perpetuate one's name. They don't believe in the immortality of the soul. They believe men, bodies, souls are mortal, and the only way to perpetuate one's imor, one's immortality is to perpetuate one's name. So attain power, get position, get authority for yourself, get influence during your life on earth, buy up land, amass as much wealth as possible, build businesses, get strong and wealthy, and then hand off whatever you didn't spend, whatever you attained, whatever you gained and gathered, hand that all off to family members. In that way, you live on through your offspring, through your family.

You may have heard of the term nepotism. Nepotism is where you give preferential treatment to family members. You disregard

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principles of right and wrong, principles of merit, disregard merit, disregard just reward, and you show favoritism based on partiality. Nepotism, sometimes we call it cronyism, almost universally condemned as corrupt except when it's a petty dictatorship like North Korea or Russia or the Mafia. That's how they live is that cronyism and then nepotism and apparently the Sadducees as well that's how they live. For them, nepotism was a way of life. It was a means of attaining a, a form of immortality for themselves and that's why the high-priestly family kept it all in the family. They were Sadducees, they handed off their position, their priesthood, to their next of kin.

That's what made the Sadducees such strong proponents of free will, human free will. They were totally antagonistic to God's sovereignty. They wanted to believe that rewards and punishments were wholly determined in this lifetime only, and not meted out in some, some kind of afterlife. No judgment seat for them. So just work hard, get money, position, power, that's your reward here and now, and then fail in some way as many people do, and say, that's on you, you should have done better, should have worked harder.

So this is what made the Sadducees such hard men, cold, callous to people, indifferent to suffering. They were uncaring toward lower-class people, those they, they considered below them, those from the common classes, the peasant classes. This is the, he-who-dies-with-the-most-toys-wins philosophy, that's how they lived. And they handed that wealth down to posterity that's how they achieved a form of earthly immortality, as their name is remembered and carried on, honored by their achievements in and through their family.

So these are the Sadducees. They are the agents of the challenge, as we mentioned last week. The authority for the challenge, it comes in Moses. The Sadducees, sensing the need, as all men do, to justify their philosophy of life by appealing to an external authority, something beyond themselves, they, too, did that. They thought they could find justification for their, their cold form of materialism and their unabashed nepotism by appealing to the Law of Moses.

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They were strict rationalists in their interpretation of Moses, and as Jesus shows, they violently twisted Moses and his words into their own image. They distorted Moses, what he actually wrote, so it conformed to their own presuppositions. And that's what we see in verse 28 as they cite the law of levirate marriage from Deuteronomy 25:5-10. The Sadducees liked this passage for several reasons. First, these are the words of Moses. Can't get better than that. This is the gold standard, unquestioned source of canonical authority. Second, they like this text because they saw it's established on, and therefore justifies, they believe, their own philosophy of life: Achieve immortality through posterity. So if your, your brother, your older brother marries a woman, dies, dies childless, it's your responsibility, step in there, raise up offspring for your brother.

Third thing they liked about this text is it provides them with the argument that they used before with great effect against their adversaries, the Pharisees, this argument that they hoped they could use to embarrass and silence Jesus as well. It's the absurdity, the third point we had last week, the absurdity in the challenge against Jesus. And we're referring to

the form of argumentation used by the Sadducees against Jesus, absurdity, it's a *reductio ad absurdum*, a form of logical argument that attempts to reduce the opponent's position into absolute absurdity. That's what, that's what he's, that's what they're doing with Jesus, right here.

It goes like this. So, Jesus, you believe in bodily resurrection, do you? Well, if the dead are raised, wouldn't it lead to some embarrassing levels of, of immorality contrary to Moses? In cases of levirate marriage, a woman goes through seven brothers in her lifetime and legitimately, legally married to each one, so whose wife is she going to be then, in your perfect world? They think they've got him. They're laughing, snickering. They think they've caught Jesus once again between two opposite views, two opposite impulses. Will he hold fast to resurrection and oppose Moses, or is he going to cave to the superior authority, turn tail, walk away in defeat?

Brings us to a second point this morning, and here's where we continue on in the text. Number two, the correction, the correction of the teacher. The correction of the teacher. We'll

read Jesus' response in its entirety starting in verse 34, and then we're going to come back and take a, a closer look at the text. Jesus said to them Luke 20:34, "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, for they cannot die anymore because they're equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. 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."

One of the unique features we see in Luke's account, which we see this in contrast to the accounts of Matthew and Mark, but a unique feature we see here is a distinction that Luke makes between, this age, as you see in verse 34, and, that age, in verse 35. And that distinction between, this age, and, that age, is loaded with eschatological significance. It's a eschatological significance that I would love to unpack for you right now, but I will not do that. I'm going to resist that impulse. It is a, another sermon for another time or another

series of sermons for another time. But I, I just want to acknowledge that's there. And it is a very important distinction: This age and the age to come; this age and that age.

But we want to be careful as we look at that distinction and realize the implications for eschatology, we want to be careful not to make the same mistake that the Sadducees did, that is by trying to be too restrictive with this text and make it say things it doesn't say, make it so restrictive that it excludes some considerations. Because Jesus is answering a particular challenge from the Sadducees. He's going to talk eschatology, but only in reference to their question, only in reference to them. He's not going to go into a long explanation of eschatological significance. He's not saying all there is to say with regard to last things. His teaching here is limited in scope and limited in design.

So by distinguishing, this age from that age, Jesus has identified two broad ages: The one we're living in now, and then the eternal state. But the emphasis in this context, what Jesus

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is talking about, he's talking about the sons of this age. That's where the emphasis is in contrast to those who are of that age. So it's not the ages that he's, he's concerned with distinguishing between right now, even though he does. It's the people. It's what characterizes the people of the one age and the other. You get what I'm saying?

Even so, there's a lot that the New Testament does unpack about this age, about the transition from this age to the next age. We, you know, we didn't read the section in 1 Corinthians 15, but you could have, if we would have read the whole thing, we would have seen Paul describes the order of the resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15. We would see also in the rest of the New Testament the, the resurrection of the unrighteous. Matthew 25:46 refers to that, the, John 5:29. Both of those texts pointing back to Daniel chapter 12, verse 2. There's a resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous.

He's not talking about all that, here. Doctrines of the rapture, the great tribulation, the second coming, followed by a, an intermediate and millennial kingdom that Revelation 19 and

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20 talks about, prophesied first back in Ezekiel 38 to 48, Jesus leaves all those details off the table in this discussion. He leaves those details to later revelation because he's going to get, they wouldn't make sense now to this context in this conversation. They do make sense after his resurrection when he gives the Holy Spirit to his Apostles and the prophets in the New Testament, and they pen the words of the New Testament. There's more to come.

But in all three synoptic accounts, Jesus' corrective begins as it does here, with eschatology, and he shows that there is a change to be expected in our anthropology, in our doctrine of man, our understanding of mankind, and it occurs due to the resurrection. Only Luke includes the distinction Jesus makes between, the sons of this age and those of that age, "those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection of the dead." He's the only one that makes this distinction between Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Now, having said that, it's gonna help to know what the Sadducees, before we get into what Jesus says here, get into it

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in some detail, it's going to help to know what the Sadducees did believe about God, about man, about future things. So let me just give you a very short, very brief summary. Regarding God, the Sadducees believed in what we might refer to today as a form of deism. Really amounts to a practical atheism, but basically, they taught that God, after he created the world, he left the world to operate by the laws of nature, physics that he set up and established. He kind of spun it up, set it going like a top, and then he left it also to the governance of mankind and mankind's free will, left them to do their thing.

God doesn't govern the world by providence, executing his divine will. They viewed that as fatalism. Instead, as one writes, explaining this about the Sadducees, "They believe that God neither intervenes in history at large nor cares for the individual, in particular. Thus good and evil, prosperity and adversity have their origin solely in the free will of man." End quote.

So regarding man, what do the Sadducees believe? They denied the immortality of the soul. It's a little misleading to

say they're complete materialists. They don't deny spiritual reality; they just deny the continuation of the soul or of the spirit. They say that the soul can only exist and remain alive in conjunction with the body. In that sense, they do understand, rightly, that to be human is to be composed of two parts, an immaterial and a material part, that is correct.

And even when we die and our spirits go to be with God, there is something that's not quite right with that situation even though we do go into life with God. In Jewish terms, it'd be the bosom of Abraham. But in Christian terms, we go to be with Christ in paradise. As Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "Today, you will be with me in paradise." But that thief's body still stayed in the ground. There's something that's not right about that, and that's why Romans 8 talks about the, the longing of the sons of the resurrection, the sons of redemption, to be united with a resurrection body. That's what it is to be human, is to be embodied, a spirit that's embodied.

So the Sadducees, they so emphasize that, that they denied that the two could be separate, that the spirit could live on.

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The soul exists only in this life. It's only a part of this world as long as it remains of the body. Once the body dies, so does the soul. No soul survives after death, so no soul faces any judgment, just snuffed out, annihilated, that's it.

And so when it comes to their eschatology, the Sadducees denied the resurrection of the dead because they denied that the soul continued beyond death. Mortality of the soul was the most basic presupposition and shaped all of their theology. Again, they're man-centered, they're man-centered, and that error in their man-centeredness then distorts everything else in their world view. You see how that works?

You can say that the Sadducees were like today's uniformitarians. Have you heard of uniformitarianism? It's arguing that the, for this evolutionary view of the world, with the mantra, that the present is the key to the past. The present, whatever, whatever conditions we see now, whatever geological conditions, whatever physical conditions on this earth, what we see now, we just kind of extend that back through time, and that's how everything got here.

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Well, the Sadducees just flipped that around and said the present is the key to the future, too. The present is the key to the future. Whatever processes we see now, that continues on. Problem was, what they thought they knew about the future was based on what they thought they knew about the present, which is based on what they thought they knew about God, what they thought they knew about man.

And they were wrong on every point. Their starting point was wrong, and so if you start here on your compass, and you want to go there, but you start here, you're going to get wider and wider divergence from where you want to be. All of it was wrong. Turns out everything you believe in life, everything you believe in life, it stands or falls on your view about God. If you've got a wrong errant view about God, about who he is, about what he is like, you're going to have a wrong view about everything else.

So with some of that in mind about the Sadducees and their theology, let's get into some of the details, and hopefully some

of that will come to your mind and help shape the way you hear what Jesus is addressing. We have two sub-points, here, following Jesus' answer, A and B. Letter A, the teacher starts by correcting their eschatology. He corrects their eschatology in verses 34-35. In correcting their eschatology, by the way, he also corrects their anthropology, and he starts actually with a declaration of soteriology. You're like, there's a lot of "ology" in this. Yes. Eschatology, doctrine of last things. Anthropology, doctrine of man, *Anthropos*, in study of. And then soteriology, *soterios* is savior, salvation, so doctrine of salvation.

Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age into the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection." In verse 34, Jesus identifies this group that he calls "the sons of this age," and we will come back to clarify them once we see them in contrast to another group, identified there in verses 35 and 36.

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The second group is identified in two ways, parallel expressions. First, they are "those who are considered worthy to attain to that age." That's one way of identifying them. And secondly, carry that verb forward, they are "those who are considered worthy to attain to the resurrection from the dead." So there are those who are considered worthy to that age and to the resurrection from the dead, parallel expressions, same group.

That verbm considered worthy, interesting, *kataxioo* is, it's used twice in, in Luke's readings, here and in Acts 5:41. In Acts 5:41, the Apostles left the presence of the Sanhedrin that was presided over, by the way, a Sadducee high priest along with his Sadducee colleagues. Acts 5:17 says, "They were filled with jealousy over the popular appeal of the Apostles' preaching and teaching about Jesus and the resurrection." It says in verse 41, "After being flogged, they were ordered not to speak in the name of Jesus any longer." And both, by the way, Don't mention that embarrassing doctrine of resurrection either. "They went out, left the presence of the Sanhedrin council, and they were rejoicing," and here's the verb, that they were counted worthy, *kataxioo*, to suffer dishonor for the name.

The suffering for the sake of Jesus Christ was a gift of grace, just as Paul said in Philippians 1:29, "It's been granted to you," that is to say, as a gift of divine grace, "it's been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him, but also suffer for his sake." Belief, faith, and suffering as a Christian, both are granted as a gift of grace. Faith that brings salvation, suffering as Christians, both gifts of divine grace. I hope you see it that way.

We find the same connection and the only other use of this verb in the New Testament, *kataxioo*, in 2 Thessalonians 1:5. When we back up one verse, read the verse 4, just get the context. Paul says, "Therefore, we ourselves boast about you among God's churches," you Thessalonians, "about your endurance and faith and all the persecutions and inflictions that you endure. This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy" *kataxioo*, there's the verb, of the kingdom, "worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also are suffering."

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It's impossible to miss the New Testament connection between salvation, entering into the kingdom of God, and the suffering that's endured by those who are in the kingdom of God. The suffering endured by those who receive salvation, those who are true citizens of the kingdom, because being citizens of his kingdom here, among the kingdoms of this world isn't popular. We are a threat.

But to be considered worthy, to be counted worthy, it's a nod here to justification by faith. Justification, God declaring the guilty sinner righteous solely because of his grace, because of the objective reality of the atoning work of Christ on the cross. God does not declare guilty sinners righteous based on their own merit because they have none. We can all attest to that. The only merit that they have is the due penalty for their sins, which is a sentence of an eternal death in hell, but based on the merit of Christ Jesus, solely because of God's grace, the benefits and the rewards that are due to Christ, righteously due to him as a reward, God grants those to his people, to his elect, all those who repent and believe because they and they alone are united to Christ by faith and by the power of the Spirit.

So those who are counted or considered worthy that Jesus is talking about, worthy to attain to that age, worthy to attain to the resurrection from the dead, it's an expanded way of referring to God's elect, to God's people, to those who are counted righteous in Christ.

Believe me, the way that Jesus has described, these participants in resurrection life, this immediately rubbed the Sadducees the wrong way. Remember, they're not about God declaring anybody anything. That's fatalism to them. They don't see it as grace. They see it as an offense against human free will, human power, human might, human earning. They're all about personal merit, the exercise of human free will, choice to do hard work and earn the good rewards. Talk of God's grace offended them, deeply irritated them, confronted their pride and believe me, Jesus using this language is intentional. The offense is meant to cause them to stop and reflect and think about their soteriology, about their theology.

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Now from that statement on the prerogative of divine grace, this statement about soteriology, counting some as worthy to attain to that age, some as worthy to attain to the resurrection from the dead, by that statement Jesus identifies one group, and he does so in contrast to another group, the previous group, the first group he identified, the sons of this age. Not only that, but all that follows after identifying this group of blessed people, those in verse 35 "counted worthy to take part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead," they are those in verse 36 who are equal to angels; also in verse 36, those who are sons of God, who are sons of the resurrection; those in verse 37, they're the dead who are raised; those in verse 38, they are the living, those who live to God. They all of those belong to the same group of blessed people. And that second group stands in contrast to the first group in verse 34, "the sons of this age."

Okay, so who are "the sons of this age"? Notice, Jesus is not using, sons as opposed to daughters. He's not using sons to emphasize maleness, here, male offspring in contrast to female offspring. Male, "sons of this age" marry, but it's the female "sons of this age" who are given in marriage. So "sons of this

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age," it's a group of male and female. It's those people who belong to this age.

We go back to Luke 16:8, Jesus uses a similar contrast. It reads this way in the Christian Standard Bible, "the sons of this age are more astute than the sons of light in dealing with their own people." So you've got "sons of this age" in contrast to "the sons of light." The ESV translates that same verse "the sons of this age," they translate that as "the sons of this world." That's accurate. Those who are bound to this world, those who are bound to, tied to, caught up in this world. We just use the, the shorthand expression, worldly people. That's what the sons of age, this age, refers to.

In Luke 17, we saw this when we studied this section, Luke 17 verse 26 and following. We realize Luke is using the, "marrying and," giving marriage, "given in marriage" expression based on, already set up by, what he has taught us in Jesus' teaching in Luke 17:26 and following. Marrying and giving in marriage is that which characterizes those who are caught up in

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the routines of life, mindlessly living as if this world is all that matters.

There's nothing wrong with marriage at all, with getting married. But when that's all that matters, when romance is all that matters, when family is all that matters, no concern for the life to come, you've got to take a couple warnings from history, and that's what Jesus unpacks in Luke 17. That's what characterized the days of Noah, when Noah was building an ark, and people were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage until the day 120 years later when Noah entered into the ark that he had built, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

If you are just caught up in this life and doing the things of this life and enjoying the romance and enjoying the family and family celebrations and work, work, work, and all the things you're doing in keeping busy, take note. This world is not all that there is. Judgment's coming, and you may be caught. You shouldn't be caught unaware because the Bible tells you. So it characterized the days of Lot as well, when people were eating

and drinking, buying and selling, planting, building. But on the day that Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulphur, rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. Very rude awakening for the people in Sodom and Gomorrah. Same thing when the Son of Man comes, it's going to be a rude awakening.

So all that to say, going back to Luke 20, the sons of this age, the sons of this world, those who live for this world, who haven't transcended the, the rhythms of the temporal world and the distractions of the world and the priorities of the world. It's a world that's defined, by the way, as, by the reality of death, because living for marriage is living for procreation, living for business and production, culture, politics. These are the people who are "the sons of this age." They are the offspring of a fallen, cursed world that's governed by death.

So this expression, "the sons of this age," is, you could say, it's synonymous as Jesus uses this other term in this concept of this generation. Same kind of an idea. This generation, in Jesus' language and his, his expression, refers

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to an evil, wicked, unbelieving generation, a group of people that is worldly and unregenerate, caught up in this life alone.

So in the context of Luke 20, and in the context of all of Luke, when Jesus identifies "the sons of this age," it's the Sadducees who are firmly included in that group of people in that expression. They are decidedly caught up in matters of this life. They are, by philosophy and by practice, dedicated to this world alone and not to the next because they deny it. They are dedicated to the idea of marrying and giving in marriage because that sums up everything that matters most to them.

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

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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 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.

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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 it, *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.

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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, of, 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

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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

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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. The 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.

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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.

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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

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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.

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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 and to 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*, 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 a 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

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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. 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

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united to you in faith, reconciled to you, and to have you as,
as Father, please send your Spirit, be pleased to send your
Spirit and save yet one more for your glory. In the name of
Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.