

MARRIAGE AT THE RESURRECTION

Matthew 22:23-46

Key Verse: 22:30

"At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven."

In the last passage we learned that God wants to bring us back to the [kingdom of God](#), missing no one. He wants to invite to the kingdom of God anybody and everybody and all the people of the world. Jesus also explained that the kingdom of God is like a wedding banquet for a crown prince. But people did not want to be invited because they had to do something in the world: buying and selling, fighting and cheating and being cheated, and going to many parties---especially proms. Today Jesus teaches spiritual reality to the Sadducees. Let's think about what kind of people the Sadducees were, and what it means to have spiritual reality. People of the world all want to be kind of Sadducees. They reject spiritual reality. But we must open our spiritual eyes to see spiritual reality in this passage.

First, the Sadducees' grotesque question (23-28). Look at verse 23. "That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question." In the Bible, the Sadducees were known not as religious people, but as aristocratic people, and mainly they were political figures. For example, they did not believe in any spiritual beings---God or angels---and especially not the resurrection. In view of history, however, they had held the high priest's office through their political intrigue; it is comparable to a non-Christian becoming a pope in the Catholic Church. One day, the Sadducees came to Jesus with a very logical and eloquent question in order to harass him. Look at verses 24-28. "`Teacher,' they said, `Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him. Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. The same thing happened to the second and the third brother, right on down to the seventh. Finally, the woman died. Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?'" Their question was so well organized, eloquent and systematic that we cannot cut their story. So we quote their question entirely. But when we think about their question, it is very grotesque and eerie. There are two points. The first is about marriage. One woman married seven brothers in a family according to [Jewish tradition](#). [The Jewish](#) tradition was that if a man marries a woman and dies, his younger brother has to marry the widow and have children for him. This tradition is well explained by Judah and Tamar's story in the Old Testament (Ge 38). However, the Sadducees' marriage problem doesn't make sense. How can one woman marry seven men? And finally the woman died too.

In their question, the marriage problem was one of the main points. They thought about the marriage problem day and night. As a result, the marriage problem of the woman who married seven brothers came out of their mouths in their question. They were aristocratic people. Their lifestyle was luxurious and what they mainly did was to seek pleasure, and engage in debauchery and immoral behavior. Their

life pattern seems to be the goal of modern people. But their practical life was not a happy one because they did not believe spiritual realities. These people thought about the marriage problem from the age of four. The other day, one of the genius boys, who is age four, said he was going to marry a beautiful girl, Miriam, age seventeen. He maintained this idea for several months. But now he has decided not to marry her, because when he grows up she is going to look like a middle-aged woman. These aristocratic and unspiritual people think a lot about the marriage problem. Their idea is that if they marry, it will be like living in paradise. They think marriage is everything. But it is not. As we know well, Clara Schumann married Robert Schumann and had seven children. Her husband died young because of his jealousy toward Johannes Brahms; he sensed that his wife liked Brahms' music talent. Clara Schumann was ten years younger than Robert Schumann, and Johannes Brahms was ten years younger than Clara. After Schumann died, Brahms, a genius musician, proposed marriage to Clara Schumann. But Clara sorrowfully rejected his proposal. Then Johannes Brahms lived all by himself all his lifetime. This is a beautiful story about marriage and a proposal of marriage. But these days marriages are not very happy ones. Prince Charles married Diana, the most beautiful girl in the world. After this, photo journalists only focused on Princess Diana and completely ignored Prince Charles. Then Prince Charles' pride was hurt. After his pride was hurt, his pretty wife did not look pretty. Rather, he was tormented by his own injured pride. Prince Charles became very sorrowful even though he had two sons growing so handsome and energetic to be his successors. Prince Charles in fact began to live as a man without a wife. Prince Charles could have embraced his wife, Princess Diana. But he was a petty man. So he did not admire his wife's popularity. Suddenly, Princess Diana died in a car accident. And Prince Charles will marry again. He will not be King of England. In fact, English Parliament wanted to stop kingship in Buckingham Palace, where the royal family lives. But they cannot close Buckingham Palace, because income from tourists is five times greater than the cost of supporting the royal family. One decent girl thought she would be happy if she married. So she really wanted to marry. Finally she married. She enjoyed her husband as much as she wanted. After a year, a boy baby was born. She was not ready to take care of the baby during the night. So she asked her husband to do so. He was not ready to wake up several times to take care of his baby because he grew up as the youngest son out of seven brothers. The wife grew up as an only daughter and she was completely spoiled. She did not want to take care of the baby during the weekend. So she made many excuses and let her husband babysit on the weekend for the last nine months. Her husband gently babysat every weekend. But it was harder labor for him than digging the ground. This woman was very gentle before people. But at home she released her tension upon her husband. She said many harsh words to her husband. Her husband was so gentle and didn't talk back to her. But lately, her husband became mentally weakened to the degree that he has to go to a mental hospital. Her idea that marriage would give her paradise was broken. These days many middle-aged women become divorced when their children are in high school or middle school. Their adulterous husbands want to marry younger women who are like their daughters. These numbers amount to mountain-like divorce files. There was a woman who visited her mother's home. Her three sisters who were all divorced were there. They encouraged her to divorce her husband, who was a little immature. So she filed for an uncontested divorce. She

took the children and moved far away. Still, her husband had to support her, sending her half of his salary by court order. This is not only her problem. The number of uncontested divorce files looks like another mountain. Jean Jacques Rousseau lived among aristocratic women. Many of them majored in piano. But their piano performance was so poor that Jean Jacques Rousseau became a piano tutor. He was so disgusted by the aristocratic women that he married an idiot woman who could not even tell time, and he lived with her throughout his lifetime. Four babies born through her were all sent to an orphanage. He became famous by writing Emile (the principle of education). His principle was so good, but his life was so weird. We once loved Elizabeth Taylor so much because her performance in movies is so excellent and her appearance is mysterious as if she were a mix of West and East. She married more than three times, but she was not happy. In the Sadducees' question, the story about a woman's marriage was indeed tragic and extremely miserable. To those who have no spiritual reality, marriage is the highest goal. They only want to enjoy happiness through marriage. But marriage gives them responsibility. And when they avoid responsibility, many tragic events happen, even in this country.

In the Sadducees' story the second major problem seems to be who would possess her. It is common sense that such a sacrificial woman who served all the brothers should be honored and left alone to get some rest. But the Sadducees asked Jesus, "Whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?" Those who deny spiritual reality are all devils who try their best to grab something with their hands.

Second, no marriage in heaven (29-33). Look at verses 29-30. "Jesus replied, 'You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.'" In the spiritual world, marriage is not the goal for man's happiness. At the resurrection, people will neither marry nor be given in marriage. They will be like the angels in heaven. This is a picture of the kingdom of God. In the world, divorce, wife-beating and husband-beating, alimony claims and payment and the custody of children, as well as babysitting problems and teenager control, are grievances to spouses after marriage. But those who believe the resurrection of Jesus Christ do not have to worry about all these tragic problems. If they marry, they marry to bear much fruit both physically and spiritually to extend the kingdom of God. Those who believe in the resurrection of Christ marry to establish a house church so that they can pray before going to bed and share unutterable happiness together, whether their life situations are good or bad. They share joy through hardship. They share joy growing in the love of God. They share joy to see their children grow in the knowledge of God. They share joy when their children are blessed and become great and wealthy. But in heaven even this kind of joy is needless because the kingdom of God has greater joys. We will all be like the angels in heaven. In the Bible, angels are agents of God. For example, when Mary was supposed to marry Joseph, the angel Gabriel visited young Mary and told her God's plan for her marriage. Luke 1:35-37 says, "The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren

is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God.'" But Jesus did not mention angels as agents of God. An angel was described as the symbol of beauty. You like beautiful girls and handsome men, right? But nobody can look like an angel. People say, "Wow! She looks like an angel!" It means she is the most beautiful girl in the world. If we see a handsome man, we say, "He is like the angel Gabriel!" It means that his handsomeness and dignity overwhelm all the women in the world. Jesus said that at the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage, but they will be like the angels in heaven. This means that those who are in the kingdom of God by believing the resurrection of Christ all look like the angels. "Like the angels" means that each one's beauty and happiness and joy are boundless. Their loving one another is the picture of an angel that nobody can paint. They don't know the word "worry" or "burden" or "responsibility" or "homework." But they think of the glory of God and his majesty on the throne. They think of ruling forever with our Lord Jesus Christ. They are face to face with Jesus who was slain for our sins, and they are loved by him with no time limitation. We will each wear the likeness of a little Jesus.

Third, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob (32). Look at verse 32. "'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' He is not the God of the dead but of the living." This means that the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was slain for our sins, will be forever. This means that the kingdom of God is forever, not at all temporal. People in this world are all sorrowful because this world is temporal and what they have achieved and acquired will vanish someday. But the kingdom of God is forever. That our God is "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" means our God is the God of eternity. One Chinese king made a Great Wall to protect his castle from enemy attack. He sought an herb medicine that would make him live forever. Now the Great Wall has become a tourist attraction. He could not find the herb medicine and died, and we may not be able to find even one of his bones. But the kingdom of God is forever. We don't have to be sorry because our lifetime is like grass; it is temporal. The kingdom of God is as Jesus illustrated: "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." It is a short example, but in the kingdom of God, God is the God of Ron Ward. God is the God of Jenny Cook. In the kingdom of God, God is the God of each of us. So in the kingdom of God, we are all brothers and sisters to our Lord Jesus Christ who is risen from the dead. In the kingdom of God, we are beautiful and happy forever. But the Sadducees, who were aristocratic people, were all earthbound and refused to know the spiritual reality. They were the most miserable people. They were preoccupied with death. There are so many funeral homes. We respect the funeral home directors of the world, whose number may be more than one hundred thousand. How do they deal with each corpse and dig the ground and put the corpse in it as their job? In truth, those who have no spiritual reality are more miserable than all of the funeral home directors of the world. Therefore, we must hear God's word, "'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' He is not the God of the dead but of the living." Only the kingdom of God is forever. We face a serious problem. Many people want to come to America, thinking that America is like a paradise. They are greatly mistaken. It resembles Sodom and Gomorrah, where immorality and violence rule. Japanese people don't immigrate to America. Neither do

German people at present. But third-world country people want to immigrate to America as a matter of life and death. Instead of trying to immigrate to America, they must know the spiritual reality. Then wherever they are they will be happy, longing for the kingdom of God.

Fourth, the greatest commandment (34-40). Look at verses 34-35. "Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question." When the rich Sadducees were silenced by Jesus, the Pharisees, who were like old wineskins, came to Jesus to defeat him with their superficial Bible knowledge and their dignity over poor and suffering people. Look at verse 36. "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" They asked this question thinking that all the Ten Commandments are equally important and that Jesus could not answer which one is the best. It is indeed a sophisticated question. How did Jesus answer? Look at verses 37-40. "Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Jesus answered their question based on the Ten Commandments. The basis of the Ten Commandments is loving God and loving one's neighbor. The answer to the question about the Ten Commandments is one: to love. First, love God. Second, love your neighbor. How can we love God? Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment." Here we learn a significant spiritual lesson. We think we can love God when we go to church once a week, after spending the weekdays working and watching all the TV programs, especially violent movies. But we cannot. When we are going to love God, we must give all our hearts. When we are going to love God, we must give all our minds. To love God with our mind means that we must study his word like a Ph.D. student struggles to find a theory in the laboratory staying up all night. But if our minds are somewhere else, we cannot love God who is almighty and holy. Loving is not partial. Loving requires total commitment. We cannot love God only with our mouths. We cannot love God only with our hearts. We must love God with all our hearts and souls and minds. We are praying, "May God make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." This prayer must be more intense than obtaining a Ph.D. There is a great happiness in having this prayer topic because it give us life direction, a goal, an object of achievement and the meaning of life. Someone may say, "I love God, but I hate you." It doesn't work like that. One boy was engaged to a beautiful girl. He thinks he can love his wife and make her happy with his own ability and let her do the work of God. That's a white lie. When we don't love God, we have no source of love. Our love dries up within two years at the most. After that a boxing match begins. Therefore if one is going to love his or her spouse, he or she must love God and receive the fountain of love from God. Then they can maintain their love relationship. Therefore verse 39 says, "And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Fifth, those who do not know the spiritual realm (41-46). Look at verses 41-42. "While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 'What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?' 'The son of David,' they replied." Then Jesus asked them a counter-question.

Look at verses 43-44. "He said to them, `How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him "Lord"? For he says, "The Lord said to my Lord: `Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.'"" This is a spiritual question about how the ancestor King David calls Jesus "Lord." Jesus quoted from Psalm 110:1-2. These verses say, "The LORD says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies." Spiritually speaking, David is the ancestor of Jesus Christ. Matthew 1:1 says, "A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham." Abraham and David are both great-great-ancestors of Jesus Christ. But Jesus is the Father of them and the Lord of them because Jesus is God, while they are the root of Jesus' genealogy. To the Pharisees, who wanted to defeat Jesus with their shallow Bible knowledge, Jesus' counter-question was indeed inscrutable and puzzling to their brains. How could Jesus be the Lord of David? That's a ridiculous and indeed funny question, they thought. But in the spiritual world, Jesus is the Son of God who came to this world according to God's promises through Abraham and David. Jesus is the Son of God who died for the sin of the world on the cross and rose again on the third day. Now he is on the glorious throne of God judging and advocating for all his people. The Pharisees and dignitaries of the time, like the Sadducees, did not understand spiritual reality. So they were also silenced. Jesus told them again in verse 45, "If then David calls him `Lord,' how can he be his son?" No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions (46).

In this world, aristocratic people who have fame and wealth seem to be happy. Those who have superficial Scriptural knowledge seem to be holy. But that's not true. Those who have spiritual reality are indeed happy, whatever situation they may be in. We are living in a material world. Spiritual realities are far away from us. Those who have spiritual reality are known as cult members or mental patients. But we must follow the Bible teaching that we must be men and women of spiritual reality.