

Bi123 The Gospels 2

Lesson Bi123-8 Is the Resurrection Real?

Some religions teach that after death people return to earth in a different form. Others believe that the rewards of the next life will be physical pleasures forbidden on earth. Others hold to the idea that after death we are spirits that roam the earth. For non-Christians, death is difficult to understand. Is there really any life after death? In this lesson Jesus deals with the skeptics of his day concerning the truth about life after death. As he answered their question he revealed an amazing truth.

The Sadducees came to Christ with a question. They were the wealthy and high class religious and political group who said there is no resurrection. “Teacher,” they said, “Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and raise 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 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?” (Matt 22:24-28).

The Sadducees thought this was a question no one could answer. At issue was whether or not the resurrection of the dead is real. The Sadducees rejected the idea of the resurrection and anything supernatural, even angels. They believed that only the Pentateuch, the five books given by Moses, were really scripture. They totally rejected the idea that Jesus could be the Messiah.

They were questioning Jesus, not to gain spiritual truth, but to discredit him and his Messianic claim. If Jesus could not answer the question, then he could be ignored. Their question dealt with the Mosaic Law that required a man to marry his brother’s widow if he died leaving no heir (Deut 25:5-6). They thought there was no logical answer and therefore the resurrection must not be real.

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. But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, ‘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. When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching” (Matt 22:29-33).

First, notice that Jesus answered with the words and actions of Moses. Secondly, he spoke the truth about angels even though the Sadducees rejected the very idea of their existence. Finally, Jesus told them the truth about their spiritual condition. They did not really know the Scriptures nor understand the power of God. These religious ‘experts’ did not understand the resurrected life. People do not marry in heaven and women do not give birth. And, like the angels, they can no longer die. They are God’s children, since they have taken part in the resurrection of the righteous. The question about this woman’s husband in heaven was not a valid one. The Sadducees were badly mistaken.

The real problem was their theology. Moses' five books of the Law had special authority for the Sadducees. So that's why Jesus answered their question with the exact words God had spoken to Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:6). In describing himself, God said he was the God of the living. And who was still living with him in heaven? It was Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the three greatest patriarchs of Israel. And Moses heard this message hundreds of years after their bodies had died! Through his covenants God had promised many things to these three men. How could those promises be fulfilled if the men no longer existed? Jesus' answer pointed them to the very nature of God. For all eternity God will place great value on his relationship with his children.

Luke's account adds that some of the teachers of the law responded, "Well said, teacher!" And no one dared to ask him any more questions (Luke 20:39-40). Even though they had great hatred for Jesus, the Pharisees sided with him against the Sadducees on the matter of resurrection.

This story is **important** because it shows that Jesus loved and instructed even his enemies, while they tried to humiliate and discredit him.

The **main truth** of this story is that the religious leaders did not understand the Scriptures, the power of God, or God's purpose through their lives.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. Why did the Sadducees question Jesus about the resurrection from the dead?
A. [Pause] If you said, "They were trying to discredit him and his claim of being the Messiah," you are correct.
2. What two things did the Sadducees not understand as they tried to interpret scripture?
A. [Pause] If you answered that Jesus said they did not know the Scriptures or the power of God, you are correct.
3. Who were the people Jesus said were still alive with God, which proved the truth of the resurrection?
A. [Pause] If you answered that Jesus said, "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is not the God of the dead but of the living," you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn this story so you can tell it from memory to someone else. After telling the story ask this question, "What do you personally believe about what happens to people after they die? Is there a life after death? What kind of life is it?" Based on their answers, tell them more of the promises Jesus gave us about the next life. Pray with them about their own need for eternal life.