

Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide

Luke 20:27-47

This is the first and only time in the Gospel of Luke that we come across the Sadducees. Up until now, most of the opposition that Jesus faced came from the Pharisees and teachers of the law. Remember that we are in the midst of “Passion week”, the last week of Jesus’ earthly ministry prior to the crucifixion. Opposition was mounting and growing to a fever pitch. Chapter 20 of Luke is just one argument after another. Now the Sadducees were weighing in with their pet issue.

Here’s a little bit to know about the Sadducees from N.T. Wright:

“By Jesus’ day, the Sadducees were the aristocracy of Judaism, possibly tracing their origins to the family of Zadok, David’s high priest. Based in Jerusalem, and including most of the leading priestly families, they had their own traditions and attempted to resist the pressure of the conforming to the tradition of the Pharisees. They claimed to rely only on the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament), and denied any doctrine of a future life, particularly of the resurrection and other ideas associated with it, presumably because of the encouragement such beliefs gave to revolutionary movements. No writings from the Sadducees have survived, unless the apocryphal book of Ben-Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) comes from them. The Sadducees themselves did not survive the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70.”

Generally speaking the Sadducees and Pharisees did not get along. As we’ve mentioned numerous times, the Jews wanted out from under Roman control and oppression, and for some, at any cost necessary. The Sadducees, of the religious sects around at the time, were the least motivated for such a change because, quite frankly, it was working for them. They had their position, their power, their money...so why mess with the status quo. They took exception to any person or group that could raise the ire of the Romans, or who might cause the Romans to be less accommodating to them.

It seems in this chapter that people were coming out of the woodwork to take a crack at stumping the young, popular rabbi. The Sadducees had their own pet question/riddle they liked to use to debunk (in their minds at least) the idea of resurrection. They used the issue of Levirate marriage (Wikipedia’s description of Levirate marriage is pretty good if you feel so moved to learn more about it).

Keep in mind that all this “testing” that various people/groups were aiming at Jesus in this chapter was designed to see what sort of authority and credibility Jesus had as a rabbi. How well did He handle Scripture? Again, Jesus is brilliant, simply a genius par excellence. We saw it in the previous passage with how He handled the question of paying taxes. And now we see it again with how He dispels with the Sadducees. Remember that the only Scripture the Sadducees thought was valid, important, “inspired”, if you will, was the “books of Moses”, i.e. the first 5 books of the Bible. So what part of Scripture did Jesus use to illustrate to them their

point was off base? Yep, you guessed it. Jesus used an account from the book of Exodus to make His point and disprove their point. Brilliant!

Oh, and it should be noted that at least on the subject of resurrection, Jesus and the Pharisees were in agreement. Some years later the apostle Paul found himself in hot water—which was often the case for Paul—as he stood trial before the Sanhedrin. In Acts 23 we read, *“Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees called out in the Sanhedrin, ‘My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead.’ When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.)”* Acts 23:6-8 A very savvy and strategic “divide and conquer” move on Paul’s part.

Now in the exchange with the Sadducees, Jesus revealed some new information. There is no marriage in the age to come. Now that we know that, and if we “begin with the end in mind” it may give us cause to rethink the typical understanding of (and often uber importance we place upon) marriage and family. You may recall from Luke 8:21 that Jesus has already laid some groundwork for redefining family, *“My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s word and put it into practice.”* It always does us well to pause and consider if our understanding and practice of something is in line with what Jesus reveals to us.

- Q. What are your thought and feeling upon hearing that there is no marriage in the age to come?**
- Q. How can understanding the idea of no marriage in the age to come effect our understanding and practice of marriage in this age? (How do Jesus’ words confront the premium that we often put on marriage?)**
- Q. Consider and discuss what a more “kingdom-minded” understanding of “family” look like and be practiced.**

Now Jesus turns the table. People had been trying to trap Him, stump Him, but now He throws a “riddle” of sorts their way. He quoted Psalm 110:1 and then asked how the Messiah could be both David’s son and David’s Lord? Silence. Crickets. Matthew’s account of this story specifically says, *“No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask Him any more questions.”* (Matthew 22:46). They had more than met their match. So picture the scene, Jesus at the center of a crowd, surrounded by religious leaders each in turn, it seems, taking their best crack at Jesus. Jesus shooting down one after the other. But beyond the gathered religious leaders were spectators, the larger crowd simply watching all this go down. Mark’s account states, *“The large crowd listened to Him with delight.”* (Mark 12:37). It would seem that the crowd of commoners were entertained by all this, which we must imagine really stabbed the ego/pride of the religious leaders. All the more reason to find a way to get rid of Jesus.

Below are some thoughts and questions from Mike Houghtaling who preached yesterday (great message yesterday, Mike!)

Q. Do you see marriage as a be-all-end all? Have you viewed marriage as such in the past?

Q. What dangers do you see for yourself personally if you allow marriage to be your be-all-end-all?

The teachers of the law liked Jesus' teaching on resurrection since it jibed with their theology (Luke 20:39). Interestingly, Jesus came at the teachers of the law in 20:45-47. I wonder if Jesus did this because he wanted them to know that their correct doctrine (in this case, resurrection) was not something that excused the way they lived their lives.

Q. Are you ever tempted into excusing your behavior because you believe the right things? If so, how?

Interestingly, Jesus' critique of the teachers of the law includes the way they shamelessly cheat widows. Widows in the ancient world were some of the most vulnerable people. (Hence the existence of Levirate law which was behind the seven brothers who married the one woman in the Sadducee's 'story problem'.)

Q. Who are the most vulnerable people you encounter in your life? Hopefully you are not 'devouring' (as some translations put it) them, but what are you doing to advocate for them?

In Mike's favorite part of the passage (and throughout the New Testament) we learn that Jesus was and is David's 'my Lord' who sits at the right hand of the Lord God (God the Father as we know him in the New Testament).

Q. Have you ever wondered about the divinity of Jesus and the Lord God being one? If so, how might this passage reassure you?

Q. Do you properly relate to Jesus as Lord? If someone were to replay every minute of your life for the last month, where might someone (just looking at your actions) question whether or not Jesus is your Lord?