



## NG Study Guide: Matt. 22:23-33 “The Kingdom and the Resurrection” [5.21.17]

### Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. **Leader note:** Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.

### The Study

**Thesis:** The resurrection is the foundation of the Christian faith. The resurrection provides hope in difficult times, meaning, purpose, and value in all times, and certainty in an uncertain world. The resurrection gives hope of: forgiveness of sin, relationship with God, and eternity in heaven. Let’s discover what difference believing in Jesus and His resurrection can make ...

**Context:** After entering Jerusalem four days before the Passover (and the Cross), Jesus asserted authority to declare what is and is not acceptable worship and faith. The religious leaders seek to undermine Jesus by a series of difficult questions. Last week we considered the question of taxes and Jesus’ response, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.” Now the Sadducees come with a question about the resurrection.

#### A. The question about the resurrection [23-28]

##### Do potential practical problems make the resurrection seem unlikely?

The Sadducees [23] were a small party, but were very wealthy and influential in Israel’s government. They were generally liberal in their theology and materialists in that they denied angels, miracles and the resurrection (unlike the Pharisees). And they only believed in the Torah (the first five Books of Moses). Their question attempts to pose a practical problem with life after death and thus discredit Jesus and minimize His influence. The Mosaic Law made provision for a Levirate marriage [Deut. 25:25]. The Latin “levir” means a husband’s brother. The concept was that if a married man died without a son, the brother would marry the widow to preserve the family name and property. The firstborn son would be the heir of the deceased [24]. They pose a hypothetical where the widow marries all seven brothers, then she dies [26-27]. In the resurrection whose wife will she be [28]? There are presumably many potential practical problems that could be an obstacle to our belief in the resurrection. For example, what will your body look like? For example, young, middle age, or old you? How will we recognize loved ones? What if someone was cremated? What will we sound like? Although we don’t have all the answers as to what we shall be, but we know that we will be like Jesus’ resurrected body. *“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” [1Jn. 3:2].*

**Q1. What are some potential practical problems that may make the resurrection seem unlikely to people? As you and your group contemplate potential problems, are any of them too big for the power of God to resolve?**

## **B. Jesus' answer confirms the resurrection [29-33]**

Jesus' response helps us to understand that heaven is not merely a continuation of earthly life. Jesus says they are "mistaken" [29] which could be translated literally, "You deceive yourselves." He corrects them for not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God [29]. The Bible never says that husbands and wives continue in marriage in heaven, and it is not a problem for God to raise us from the dead or dust. In the resurrection, there will not be marriage [30]. In that sense, we will be like the angels [30]. Notice that Jesus affirms the reality of angels, contrary to the Sadducees. Marriage is a picture of a believers' union with God and that union will be fulfilled in heaven. Also, there will be no need for procreation in heaven.

### **God will raise the dead because He has promised to be their God:**

Jesus supports the resurrection from Ex. 3:6, 15 [32], one of the books of the Torah accepted by the Sadducees. God uses the present tense "I am" rather than past tense "I was" because the Patriarchs were still alive [32]. God is the God of the living [32]. The multitudes were astonished by Jesus' teaching [33], and the Sadducees were silenced (muzzled) [34].

## **C. What difference does believing in Jesus and His resurrection make?**

### **1. A certain hope in eternal life [Jn. 11:25-26, 1Cor. 15:1-19]**

*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. <sup>26</sup> And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"* [Jn. 11:25-26]. Knowing that you will spend eternity with God provides comfort when you're struggling in this life. In the midst of a difficult and frightening season of life you have hope and comfort that it is brief compared to eternal paradise with Christ. This hope is certain, because our resurrection is linked to Jesus' resurrection; and the evidence of His resurrection is beyond a reasonable doubt. Because of His death and resurrection, we know the gospel is true, our sins can be forgiven, and we can have life today and into eternity with Christ [1Cor. 15:1-19].

***Q2. Share some of the circumstances in your life that tend to cause discouragement or fear. Share how the resurrection provides comfort and hope to you.***

### **2. A purposeful life [1Cor. 15:58]**

*"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord"* [1Cor. 15:58]. Paul concludes his detailed discussion of the resurrection and the moral implications with the exhortation to remain steadfast in the faith and passionate in the work of advancing God's kingdom with full assurance that your effort is not in vain. Without Christ, the gospel, and the resurrection, life is purposeless and elusive. Knowing the Scriptures and the power of God [29] empower you to live the resurrected life today.

***Q3. What do you believe is your purpose in your local church and your community? Are you living this purpose? What are some of the obstacles you're experiencing?*** Leader note: If someone in your group doesn't know what their purpose is spend time in your gathering having group participants to help people discover their gifts and purpose.

### **3. A heavenly focus [Col. 3:1-2]**

*"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."* In light of the

resurrection, Jesus' followers are to be heavenly focused. We are to live for Christ. Thus, the material world and our flesh stop dominating our lives. The Sadducees were generally wealthy and sought to enjoy the comforts of the material world. They wanted to satisfy the flesh and the soul by living for this world and having practical religion. The Sadducees' philosophy was not unlike many modern Christians who enjoy a comfortable standard of living in this world. Although they may affirm the resurrection as a theological truth, their focus is the earth (material world) not heaven (spiritual life). The problem is that denying the resurrection as a theological truth or as a practical reality of life doesn't satisfy God or man. The clear teaching of Jesus and the New Testament should compel us to stop living primarily for this world, and discover life in Christ as we focus more on heaven and eternity.

***Q4. How can you create margin in your life to live for Christ more and this world less. What are some changes that you believe that Christ is calling you to make in your rhythms (patterns) of life?***

**Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:**

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

**Pray, and ask God to give you an opportunity to share with a neighbor how the resurrection has changed your life.**

**Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:**

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

**Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:**

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

**Leader Notes:**

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
- 3. Feel free to use an icebreaker question or activity** to get to know one another better.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**
  - a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.