

The God of the Living

Matthew 22:23-33

December 2nd, 2018

Big idea: We will be resurrected to a life that is different but superior to this life.

Intro –

What happens when we die? Do we continue to exist in some way? What is it like?

Throughout history and across cultures there seems to be an ingrained sense of life continuing after death. (partially adapted from Alcorn, *Heaven*)

Terracotta soldiers discovered in 1974 in China that were more than 2,000 years old. It included an army of 8,000 life-size soldiers along with horses and chariots, acrobats, strongmen, and musicians.

Australian aborigines – heaven as a distant land beyond the western horizon.

Mexicans, Peruvians, and Polynesians believed they went to the sun or the moon after death.

Native Americans believed that in the afterlife their spirits would hunt the spirits of buffalo.

In Egypt, bodies were embalmed and placed with maps next to them as guides.

Although these views don't align with the Bible, they do reflect a common human pull to the afterlife. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says God "has set eternity in their hearts."

Early Christ tombs reflected a focus on life after death as well. (quoted in Alcorn, *Heaven*)

In Christ, Alexander is not dead, but lives.

One who lives with God.

He was taken up to His eternal home.

I think too many think too little about heaven today. And what we do think about is more likely to fill us with fear or boredom than expectation.

Classic Farside comic of a man sitting alone on a white cloud, wearing a white robe with angel wings and nothing to do. His caption says, "I wish I'd brought a magazine."

Heaven as boring, isolated, ephemeral, so utterly different from this life as to be unrecognizable and undesirable.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, a Christian spinster tells Huck about heaven, "She said all a body would have to do there was go around all day long with a harp and sing, forever and ever. So I didn't think much of it."

Heaven as an unending worship service

"Heaven" can be broken down into different categories

Intermediate heaven – Where a believer in Christ will go if he or she dies today

Philippians 1:23 But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better;

Millennial kingdom – 1,000 year rule of Christ on the earth after His second coming

Revelation 20:1-10; fulfilling the Kingdom promises throughout the gospels

We will be resurrected to be with Him (Rev. 20:4; 2 Tim. 2:12)

New heaven and earth – New, restored earth for us to live with God forever

Isaiah 65:17 "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.

Revelation 21:1a Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away...

Live on a new earth with the Lord

In the passage we will study today, Jesus is confronted by a group of people known as the Sadducees who don't believe in the resurrection or any type of life after death. And they try to trap Jesus in this belief by bringing up a scenario of multiple marriages.

1. The Sadducees challenged the **resurrection** by appealing to a logical flaw about **marriage**. (22:23-28)
 - a. "On the same day" – as the previous trap about the poll tax. Series of 4 interactions, the first 3 were attempts to trap Jesus. In the fourth Jesus turned the tables and questioned them.
 - b. Sadducees
 - i. Pharisees and Herodians in the last section
 - ii. One of four Jewish sects – Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots, and Essenes.
 1. Smallest but most wealthy and politically influential.
 2. Pharisees were most numerous, popular, and outwardly religious. Believed their works earned them God's acceptance.
 3. Zealots were politically and militarily active, extremely nationalistic and hated their Roman occupiers.
 4. Essenes were reclusive and focused on copying the OT. It's this community that preserved the Dead Sea scrolls on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea.
 - iii. Didn't believe in the resurrection. (v. 23) Also rejected angels and the existence of a human spirit that continued after death (Acts 23:8).
 - iv. Held to the Pentateuch alone as authoritative and stuck to a strictly literal interpretation, unlike the Pharisees that added an extensive oral tradition.
 - c. They paraphrase Deuteronomy 25:5-6
 - i. **Deuteronomy 25:5-6** "When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be *married* outside *the family* to a strange man. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. ⁶ "It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.
 - ii. This would have been from the Pentateuch so they accepted it.
 - iii. This was a concept that became known as Levirate marriage, from the Latin word *levir* for brother-in-law.
 - iv. It may seem strange to us. You ladies might be thinking of your brother-in-laws and thinking, "I wouldn't want to marry him!" But it was put in place to protect the woman and continue on the inheritance of a family line that could have been cut off. It met a very real need but isn't a practice continued into New Testament times.

- d. They likely bring up a hypothetical situation, although it's possible it was real.
 - i. Their attack is against the resurrection, not marriage. They assume that if the resurrection is true then life would continue or pick back up where it left off so marriage would continue. If that's true, where does it place the woman with 7 husbands?! They are trying to make the concept of a resurrection seem absurd.

2. They didn't understand **scripture** or the **power** of God. (22:29-33)

a. Jesus' presuppositions about Scripture:

i. It is **understandable**.

1. They were chastised for not understanding what they should have read and understood.
2. Jesus often says to the people, "Have you not read...?" (Matt. 12:3, 5; 19:4; 22:31) Implying that if they had read they should have been able to understand. Doesn't mean the Bible is always easy to understand; just that it is possible for us to understand it. It isn't some mystical book that we can never hope to understand.

ii. The very words are **accurate**.

1. He bases His argument about the resurrection on the tense of the verb – God is the God of Abraham not "was" the God of Abraham.

iii. The "Old Testament" is **relevant** and applicable.

iv. It has been **handed down** to us reliably.

b. Marriage is significant but **temporary**. (vv. 29-30)

i. Marriage is good because it was not good for man to be **alone**; He needed a helper.

1. Genesis 2:18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."

ii. Marriage is a living picture of the relationship between **Christ** and the **church**.

1. **Ephesians 5:22** Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord.
2. **Ephesians 5:25** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,
3. **Ephesians 5:31-32** FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. ³² This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.
4. Because marriage is the closest human relationship, those in loving marriages may have a hard time imagining that their marriage wouldn't continue after this life.
5. There will be no need for procreation
6. The living picture will be fulfilled between Christ and the church

- a. Randy Alcorn, "But the Bible does *not* teach there will be no marriage in Heaven. In fact, it makes clear there *will* be marriage in Heaven. What it says is that there will be *one* marriage, between Christ and his bride – and we'll all be part of it . . . The one-flesh marital union as known on earth is a signpost pointing to our relationship with Christ as our bridegroom. Once we reach the

destination, the signpost becomes unnecessary . . . Earthly marriage is a shadow, a copy, an echo of the true and ultimate marriage.”

- b. “The purpose of marriage is not to replace heaven, but to prepare us for it.”
(Quoted by Alcorn in *Heaven*)

7. We will still know each other and have close relationships

- a. Even the best marriage now is marred by sin. It hinders closeness, vulnerability, and openness. We harm each other, intentionally and unintentionally.
- b. All relationships in heaven will be free from the damage and hindrances of sin.

8. John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, “Life is precarious, and even if it is long by human standards, it is short. “What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes” (James 4:14). .. So it is with marriage. It is a momentary gift. It may last a lifetime, or it may be snatched away on the honeymoon. Either way, it is short. It may have many bright days, or it may be covered with clouds. If we make secondary things primary, we will be embittered at the sorrows we must face. But if we set our face to make of marriage mainly what God designed it to be, no sorrows and no calamities can stand in our way. Every one of them will be, not an obstacle to success, but a way to succeed. The beauty of the covenant-keeping love between Christ and his church shines brightest when nothing but Christ can sustain it. Very soon the shadow will give way to Reality. The partial will pass into the Perfect. The foretaste will lead to the Banquet. The troubled path will end in Paradise.”

9. He doesn’t say we will be angels, but we will be like angels in that we will not be married.

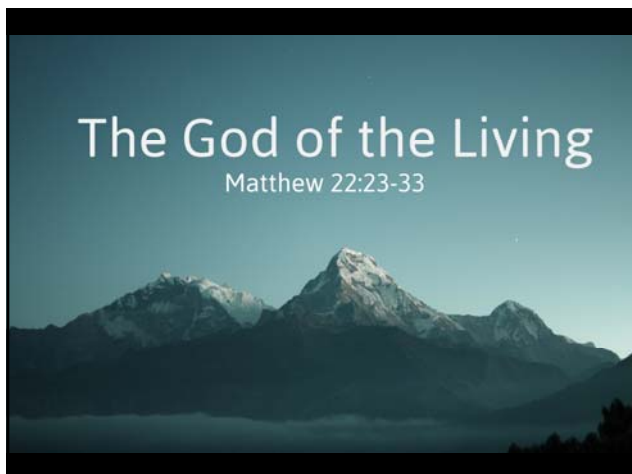
iii. To be single is not to be “second class.”

- 1. We can idolize marriage and family in such a way that those who are single are marginalized.
- 2. They may not experience the earthly picture, but they do experience the eternal reality.

c. We will be resurrected to something better than the present life. (vv. 31-33)

- i. Their confusion was they assumed that life after the resurrection, if you believed in such a thing, would be just like this life and they were confused about how that would work with marriage.
- ii. They don’t understand the “power of God.”
- iii. But Jesus challenged them on the resurrection itself, not just on marriage.
- iv. He could have quoted from many OT passages
 - 1. **Daniel 12:2** "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt.
 - a. All will live on after death, but not in the same destination.
 - 2. **Job 19:25-26** "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth. ²⁶ "Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God;
 - 3. **Psalms 49:15** But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, For He will receive me. Selah.
- v. He did it by appealing to the portion of scripture that they viewed as authoritative.

1. **Exodus 3:6a** He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."
 2. The Sadducees took it for granted that this well known passage said "I am..." not "I was." The words are so familiar they don't consider the significance.
 3. The Sadducees denied a spirit/soul that continues after physical death. At death, everything ceased, they believed. Although the passage Jesus referenced didn't focus on the resurrection, it did focus on the spirit that continues after death.
 4. When God spoke those words to Moses, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had all been dead for centuries. Yet God used the present tense "I am" to describe his relationship with them.
- vi. As Christians, any time we are worried about some aspect of life after death we should remind ourselves that we are doubting the power of God.
1. *Will my dog be there? How can I be happy without my sweet pets!*
 2. *What will my relationship with my children be like?*
 3. *What will my body be like? Will I be young? Old?*
 4. *How can I really enjoy the good things without the contrast to the bad?*
 5. *How will I really be able to go on adventures if death and pain aren't real threats?*
- vii. Life will be different but always and in every way better.



1

What do we mean by "heaven?"

Intermediate heaven – Where a believer in Christ will go if he or she dies today

Philippians 1:23 But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better;

2

What do we mean by "heaven?"

Millennial kingdom – 1,000 year rule of Christ on the earth after His second coming

Revelation 20:1-10; fulfilling the Kingdom promises throughout the gospels

3

What do we mean by "heaven?"

New heaven and earth – New, restored earth for us to live with God forever

Isaiah 65:17 "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.

Revelation 21:1a Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away...

4

1. The Sadducees challenged the resurrection by appealing to a logical flaw about marriage. (22:23-28)

Deuteronomy 25:5-6 "When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be *married* outside *the family* to a strange man. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. ⁶ "It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.

5

2. They didn't understand scripture or the power of God. (22:29-33)

a. Jesus' presuppositions about Scripture:

- i. It is understandable.
- ii. The very words are accurate.
- iii. The "Old Testament" is relevant and applicable.
- iv. It has been handed down to us reliably.

6

2. They didn't understand scripture or the power of God. (22:29-33)

b. Marriage is significant but temporary. (vv. 29-30)

- i. Marriage is good because it was not good for man to be alone; He needed a helper.

Genesis 2:18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."

7

2. They didn't understand scripture or the power of God. (22:29-33)

b. Marriage is significant but temporary. (vv. 29-30)

- ii. Marriage is a living picture of the relationship between Christ and the church.

8

2. They didn't understand scripture or the power of God. (22:29-33)

Ephesians 5:31-32 FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. ³² This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

9

Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*

“But the Bible does *not* teach there will be no marriage in Heaven. In fact, it makes clear there *will* be marriage in Heaven. What it says is that there will be *one* marriage, between Christ and his bride – and we’ll all be part of it . . .

10

Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*

“...The one-flesh marital union as know on earth is a signpost pointing to our relationship with Christ as our bridegroom. Once we reach the destination, the signpost becomes unnecessary . . . Earthly marriage is a shadow, a copy, an echo of the true and ultimate marriage.”

11

John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*,

Life is precarious, and even if it is long by human standards, it is short. “What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes” (James 4:14)... So it is with marriage. It is a momentary gift. It may last a lifetime, or it may be snatched away on the honeymoon. Either way, it is short.

12

John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*,

It may have many bright days, or it may be covered with clouds. If we make secondary things primary, we will be embittered at the sorrows we must face. But if we set our face to make of marriage mainly what God designed it to be, no sorrows and no calamities can stand in our way. Every one of them will be, not an obstacle to success, but a way to succeed.

13

John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*,

The beauty of the covenant-keeping love between Christ and his church shines brightest when nothing but Christ can sustain it. Very soon the shadow will give way to Reality. The partial will pass into the Perfect. The foretaste will lead to the Banquet. The troubled path will end in Paradise.

14

2. They didn't understand scripture or the power of God. (22:29-33)

b. Marriage is significant but temporary. (vv. 29-30)

iii. To be single is not to be "second class."

15

2. They didn't understand scripture or the power of God. (22:29-33)

c. We will be resurrected to something better than the present life. (vv. 31-33)

Daniel 12:2 "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt.

16

2. They didn't understand scripture or the power of God. (22:29-33)

c. We will be resurrected to something better than the present life. (vv. 31-33)

Job 19:25-26 "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth. ²⁶ "Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God;

17

2. They didn't understand scripture or the power of God. (22:29-33)

c. We will be resurrected to something better than the present life. (vv. 31-33)

Exodus 3:6a He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

18