

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 20: 27-40

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. We'll continue to read Luke Chapter 20 and today we will read verses 27 to 40.

During the final week of Jesus' earthly ministry, He knew that His hour had come. Therefore, He openly spoke with the chief priests, scribes, and elders in Jerusalem concerning the kingdom of God. Because of this, these scribes, chief priests, and elders sought ways to kill Jesus. Since they did not have the authority to impose the death penalty under Roman rule, they tried to find grounds to accuse Him, hoping to use the Romans to put Him to death. Yesterday, they tested Jesus with the political issue of paying taxes, but Jesus answered them with great wisdom. Next, they attempted to test Him through religious matters.

At that time, the two major groups in Jewish society were the Pharisees and the Sadducees. These two groups were somewhat like the conservatives and the modernists of ancient times. The Pharisees placed great emphasis on tradition and religious rituals. They insisted that people strictly obey every regulation of the Law. Yet many of these regulations they themselves could not fully keep, and over time this led to hypocrisy. These were the Pharisees, the conservatives of that era.

The Sadducees, on the other hand, were just the opposite. They were the modernists of ancient times. They focused more on this present life and on what they themselves could gain. Therefore, any rule or teaching they considered unsuitable, they simply discarded. They did not believe in angels, and they did not believe in the resurrection. Politically, they also worked closely with the Roman government in order to secure greater wealth and stability for themselves within Jewish society. Immediately following the test concerning taxes, we now come to verse 27.

Verse 27-28: “Then some of the Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying: ‘Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man’s brother dies, having a wife, and he dies without children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother.’”

These people intended to use the subject of resurrection to test Jesus. Among the entire Old Testament, the Sadducees accepted only the five books of Moses. As for the later prophetic writings—especially those speaking about the Messiah’s return and the restoration of God’s kingdom—they generally rejected them.

The passage they quoted comes from Deuteronomy 25:5–6, which says: “If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the family; her husband’s brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her. And it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.” The main purpose of this law was to preserve the name of the deceased brother so that it would not disappear from Israel. Then the Sadducees used this law to construct a hypothetical case. The example they gave was almost absurd; it was simply meant to highlight what they considered to be the problems that resurrection would supposedly create.

Verse 29-33: “Now there were seven brothers. And the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her as wife, and he died childless. Then the third took her, and in like manner the seven also; and they left no children, and died. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife does she become? For all seven had her as wife.”

Because they did not believe in the resurrection, they deliberately invented this hypothetical case: seven brothers each married the same woman in turn, and all of them died, and eventually the woman also died. Then, in the resurrection, whose wife would she be? Since they did not believe in resurrection at all, they created this example in order to expose what they considered to be the problems that

resurrection would bring. Next, we look at Jesus' reply. His answer was very direct and penetrating, striking right at the heart of the issue.

Verse 34-35: "Jesus answered and said to them, 'The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage.'"

Jesus began very directly by speaking of "this age" and "that age." The principles and systems that operate in this present world simply do not apply in the world to come. In this world, people marry and are given in marriage, but in that world there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage. People there do not marry. Why is that?

Verse 36: "nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection."

People in this world marry because human life is short and limited. In order for life to continue, there is marriage and the bearing of children to carry on future generations. But in the world to come, people are like the angels. They no longer die, and therefore there is no further need for reproduction or continuing one's family line. That is why, in that world, people neither marry nor are given in marriage.

In other words, Jesus was directly telling them: you are trying to take the principles and experiences of this present world and extend them into the next world, but that is incorrect. The laws governing this world and the next world are different. In this world there is marriage, but in that world there is none. This means that resurrection is not simply a matter of dying today and tomorrow rising again to continue the exact same kind of earthly life. No—the existence of resurrected people is on a much higher level of being. They are no longer confined to this present material world. People then are like the angels, no longer restricted by physical limitations, nor will they die anymore.

We should especially notice that when Jesus spoke about “that world,” He added certain qualifications. What were they? Verse 35 says: “But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage.” In other words, not everyone can enter that world. Only those counted worthy, and those who attain the resurrection from the dead, can enter it. This means that to enter that world, a person must pay a price and must experience resurrection from the dead.

This reminds us of chapter 19, where Jesus told the parable of the nobleman who went away to receive a kingdom. He entrusted money to his servants and commanded them to do business until he returned, at which time they would give an account. Those who gained five minas or ten minas are the ones here described as “counted worthy.” On the one hand, they were found worthy in the work God entrusted to them; on the other hand, in their lives they had passed through death and resurrection, and therefore they could belong to that world.

Then Jesus added another statement in the latter half of verse 36: “being sons of the resurrection, they are sons of God.” When we become resurrected people, the life within us is no longer merely the human life we now possess; it is the life of the Son of God within us that raises us up. Therefore, after resurrection, we become sons of God.

This stands in complete contrast to the Sadducees’ mistake of taking the experiences and principles of this present age and applying them to the world to come. After correcting that misunderstanding, Jesus continued speaking.

Verse 37: “But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’”

The Sadducees also highly respected Moses and were thoroughly familiar with the five books of Moses. Therefore, Jesus used an example from Moses to answer them. Since they did not believe in the resurrection, Jesus spoke to them very directly,

pointing them to the account of Moses at the burning bush in Exodus chapter 3, where God personally called Moses.

When God spoke to Moses there, Exodus 3:6 says: “I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” This statement was extremely familiar to the Israelites, because they were descendants of Abraham, and especially after Jacob came the twelve tribes of Israel. Therefore, whenever they referred to their God, they called Him the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, every time they made this declaration, they did not truly understand its deeper meaning. Here, Jesus brought out that meaning very clearly.

Verse 38: “For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him.”

In other words, Jesus told them very directly: “You constantly speak of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — but do you realize that when God first revealed Himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He revealed Himself as the God of the living?” Although by the time of Moses it had already been four hundred years since Abraham lived, and from a human perspective Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all dead, Jesus said that this was not the case. God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You think their bodies passed away, but in reality they did not die. God is still the God of Abraham, still the God of Isaac, and still the God of Jacob.

That is to say, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are all still alive, because to God all people are living. It is only our physical bodies that pass away. Then one day, at the resurrection, we will all be raised again and receive a spiritual body.

Regarding resurrection, Paul’s revelation is perhaps the clearest. In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, the great chapter on resurrection, verse 42 says: “So also is the resurrection of the dead: The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.”

In other words, all the limitations we experience today in our physical bodies will no longer exist after we pass through death and are raised from the dead. This was the precious lesson Jesus gave to the unbelieving Sadducees of that time. Do not think that when the physical body dies, the person ceases to exist. No — in God's sight, all people are alive.

The Bible also tells us very clearly that it is appointed for men to die once, and after this comes judgment. And within that judgment there is the matter of resurrection. One day, all people will be raised again. After the resurrection, the question will be whether or not you possess the life of Jesus Christ. If you do, yours will be a resurrection unto glory. If you do not, yours will be a resurrection unto judgment. That is, after you are raised, you will stand before judgment; and if your name is not written in the Book of Life, you will be cast into the eternal lake of fire. To the challenge raised by the Sadducees, Jesus answered their question simply, clearly, and directly.

Verse 39-40: "Then some of the scribes answered and said, "Teacher, You have spoken well." But after that they dared not question Him anymore."

Jesus' wise answer silenced them; and through His answer, we are filled with even greater hope for the future.

Let us pray together: Lord, we thank You. We are such unworthy people, yet through our faith we have received eternal life. Not only that, but You have also prepared that coming world for us. When we are all raised from the dead, because we have the life of God within us, we shall become the sons of God. Help each one of us, while living in this world, to live every day for the purpose of storing up glory in heaven for the future. Make us a people who are counted worthy of that world. Help us to willingly regard lightly the various sufferings, humiliations, and persecutions that we must pass through in this world, because we desire to be those who are counted worthy of that world. Help each one of us today to live a victorious life. We pray in the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!