

Matthew 22:23-33 | “Is the Resurrection Real?”
Preached on March 31, 2024 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew 22, verse 23. *[pause]*

This morning we are going to be looking at what Jesus says about the resurrection of the dead, and He can speak to it, for He would go on to be raised! *[pauseeee]*

What do you think are the views of people about an afterlife? *[pause]*

Pew Research found that 17% of Americans don't believe in *any* afterlife.¹ *[pause]*

Now at first that may seem low, but think about it this way...

There are about 336 million people in the United States.

And if you took 17% of all of those people, that would be about 57 million people, just in our country, who don't believe in *any* afterlife. *[pause]*

That's 57 million people in our nation who think that all that exists is the here-and-now.

You die and that's it. *[pauseeee]*

As you can see, this is not an uncommon view in our world today, and I assume it's only going to grow as time goes on. *[pauseeee]*

Once when I was maybe 6 or 7, I was talking to another young boy that was my age.

And we started talking about what happens when you die, and he said, “I believe that you die and that's it. You just rot in the ground.” *[pause]*

As a young boy, who grew up going to church, I was shocked at how someone could believe that.

Yet as they say, “There's nothing new under the sun.”

For Jesus likewise faced some people who didn't believe in an afterlife, and they were called the Sadducees. *[pauseeee]*

Now they were certainly more religious than many in our country, who don't believe in an afterlife, yet they still didn't believe in it. *[pause]*

We are told in verse 23, “The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question.” *[pauseeee]*

The Sadducees believed that when you die, you die, and that's it.

¹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/11/23/views-on-the-afterlife/>.

In fact, they seem to be against much of the nonphysical realities found in the Bible, for they didn't even believe in angels or spirits, either.² *[pauseeee]*

This is like many today who think that all that is real is the physical world: what you can see, smell, hear, touch, and taste. *[pauseeee]*

So these Sadducees go to Jesus to try to trip him up by pushing Him into the theological debate of the day about resurrection. *[pause]*

Just listen to their question, starting in verse 24. *[READ 24-28]*

The Sadducees point out that in the Law, if your brother died with no children, you were supposed to take your brother's wife and raise up offspring for him.³ *[pause]*

So they give an example of 7 brothers who were married to the same woman at different times because each one died without having a child.

Therefore, who would be her husband in the resurrection? *[pauseeee]*

What the Sadducees were doing was trying to use an argument technique that uses an extreme example to show the ridiculousness of a belief. *[pause]*

With their case study, they were trying to say, "Look, isn't the idea of a resurrection absurd?" *[pause]*

They were implying, "I guess people will be polygamists in heaven with incestuous marriages, if they follow the Law.

And if it's only 1 of those husbands, who is her husband in the resurrection? Why that one? Wouldn't that be arbitrary?" *[pauseeee]*

They thought that they put Jesus in an impossible dilemma with this one, but He responds to their question, and shows them (and us) that....

I. The resurrection of the body is true!

Listen to what He says in verses 29-33. *[READ]*

Jesus calls out the Sadducees by saying, "You are wrong." *[pause]*

He's saying, "You err, you are misled, and you are away from the truth here." *[pauseeee]*

Can you imagine hearing Jesus say to you, "You're wrong."? *[pause]*

What a startling thing to hear from the lips of Jesus.

² See Acts 23:8.

³ See Deuteronomy 25:5-6.

It should cause them to open wide their eyes and then turn back to the truth.

But I wonder if *we* turn back to the truth when Christ shows us that we are wrong? *[pause]*

Do you dig your heels in, trusting your own thoughts and beliefs, or are you willing to change according to Jesus' word? *[pauseeee]*

Now Jesus doesn't simply say they are wrong.

That in itself would be a hard blow to take, but notice how He says, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God." *[pause]*

Ouch!

Talk about a dagger!

They acted like they knew the Scriptures and knew God, yet Jesus tells them that they don't truly *know* the Scriptures nor the power of God. *[pauseeeee]*

Jesus is showing us that you can know Scripture without truly *knowing* Scripture. *[pause]*

It's one thing to know the facts and the words, but it's still another to dig down deep to see and trust them. *[pause]*

The Sadducees show us people who knew the Bible, but didn't truly and deeply know and trust it.

And I wonder how many people grew up getting rewards for Bible memorization and have won all of the Sunday School Bible trivia contests, but they don't truly know the Scriptures? *[pauseeee]*

Do you actually believe and trust in God and His Word? That's the question. *[pauseeee]*

After telling the Sadducees that they were wrong about the resurrection, He proves it next.

He says in verse 30, "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven." *[pauseee]*

By saying this, Christ is showing that *the power of God attests to the resurrection.* *[pauseeee]*

The Sadducees were all about the here-and-now and that's it.

And their assumption was that, "If there's a resurrection, it will have to just continue the same kind of existence as this one." *[pause]*

They didn't look beyond the present life circumstances and consider what God could do.

They didn't truly know the power of God, and how He can do anything.

They didn't truly believe that God could miraculously change what life is like in the resurrection. *[pauseeee]*

Doesn't this sound like a lot of people today?

They look around and just consider that all that exists is what you can see, and do not consider what God can do. *[pauseeee]*

Many unbelievers do not believe in the supernatural.

Their mind cannot fathom what God can do, for they only believe what their eyes can see.

They say, "Just show me a sign that I can see with my eyes, and then I'll believe." *[pauseeeee]*

It's said that Thomas Jefferson cut out all of the supernatural verses in the Bible to craft his own Bible.⁴

He cut out everything that went against reason and the laws of nature, for it just wasn't believable to him and his mind. *[pause]*

That's a prime example of today's world -- they do not know the great power of God, but only the small power of man.

But Jesus is showing us that if you trust that God is all-powerful and can do anything, then you realize that He can raise up our dead bodies and create a different kind of life, fit for eternity.

For God's power will create a kind of life in the resurrection, one in which there will no longer be marriage. *[pauseeeee]*

Our lives now are fit for earth, for it's fit for us to marry and give birth to children.

But in the resurrection, there will be a new kind of life, fit for eternity. *[pause]*

As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, "So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.

It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power."⁵ *[pause]*

There is certainly some continuity, but there's also something new and different and better! *[pauseeee]*

The power of God reminds us that He can raise up our bodies and change the way things will be.

So if you deny a resurrection, you are denying that God is powerful and can do that. *[pauseeee]*

But also, *Scripture attests to the resurrection.* *[pause]*

⁴ <https://www.history.com/news/thomas-jefferson-bible-religious-beliefs>.

⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:42–43.

Jesus says in verse 31, “And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.” *[pauseee]*

The Sadducees only accepted the first five books of the Old Testament, so it’s like Jesus is saying, “OK, if you’re going to have that stance, then I’ll just prove the resurrection using Exodus.” *[pauseee]*

He goes all the way back to Exodus 3:6, which is where God is talking to Moses out of the burning bush.

And there God says, “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” *[pauseee]*

Jesus is noting how God says, “I *am* the God of those men, not I *was* their God.” *[pause]*

So the question is, “How could He still be the God of those patriarchs, who were dead and gone?”

And the answer is that they were still living!

God is not God of the dead, but of the living! *[pauseee]*

The Lord had established a relationship with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that would last.

And His relationship with them was a *continuing* relationship, not just a past one. *[pause]*

Would He really just give them temporary, earthly blessings and then just stop when they physically died?

Wouldn’t that mean He was no longer their God, if they ceased to exist?

Would He really fail to deliver from the greatest enemy: death?

What would that say about God? *[pauseee]*

No, God made covenants with His people that would last.

God is an eternal God, who makes eternal promises to those who will live eternally with Him. *[pauseeee]*

Jesus was showing them that they didn’t actually believe the Scriptures that they had, and if you don’t believe the Scriptures, you won’t believe in a resurrection.

So the call is to believe the Scriptures! *[pause]*

Believe what it shows us about the resurrection!

It's true! It's real! It's going to happen!

What a glorious hope for those who serve and follow the living God, for those who trust Him will live forever with Him! *[pauseeeee]*

So we saw that the power of God and Scripture both attest to the resurrection of the body, yet these same things also show us that...

II. The resurrection of Christ is true!

Today is Easter, and it naturally leads us to think about the resurrection of Jesus. *[pauseeee]*

So what can this text about our bodily resurrection remind us about Jesus' resurrection? *[pause]*

Well the same things that prove our bodily resurrection prove Jesus' resurrection! *[pause]*

The power of God was displayed in the resurrection of Jesus. [pause]

1 Corinthians 6:14 says, "And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up *by his power.*" *[pause]*

Ephesians 1 talks about something similar, for just listen to this:

Paul wants us to know, "what is the *immeasurable greatness of his power* toward us who believe, according to the working of *his great might* that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead..."⁶ *[pauseeee]*

It was the power of God that raised Jesus, and that same power will raise us up! *[pauseeee]*

That is our hope, we hope in the power of God that raised Christ. *[pauseeee]*

God's power is not some abstract idea, but His power has been manifested in clear, compelling ways.

He has exercised His power in Jesus' resurrection. *[pauseeee]*

This is what we celebrate and remember today!

God has shown off his power in history by raising Christ from the dead.

And if God through Christ can conquer death, then what great power He has! *[pauseeee]*

If you ever forget about the power of God, just remember the resurrection, for what a significant demonstration of power!

Christ died, but then 3 days later rose again!

⁶ Ephesians 1:19-20 (italics is mine).

God's strong arm was on display, as He raised Christ from the dead, showing us, "Look at what I can do! Even death is not powerful enough." [pauseeee]

Whenever you think of the resurrection of Jesus, you can think of the power of God.

And that means that if you deny the resurrection of Jesus, you do not truly know the power of God. [pause]

Like Thomas Jefferson's mind couldn't fathom things beyond reason and human power, so those who deny the resurrection are saying, "I don't think God could do that." [pause]

But He can and *He did* by raising Christ from the dead! [pauseeee]

Not only does the power of God attest to the resurrection of Jesus, but so does Scripture. [pauseeee]

It's no coincidence that all four of the Gospels attest to the fact that Jesus was raised. [pause]

The New Testament epistles are *saturated* with references to Christ's resurrection.

And the preaching of the apostles in Acts is often climaxed with pointing to how God raised up Jesus from the dead.⁷ [pauseeee]

You cannot get around this fact: the New Testament Scriptures are abundantly clear -- Jesus rose from the dead.

And that means that if you deny the resurrection of Jesus, you do not know the Scriptures and you err from the truth. [pauseeee]

The Scriptures, without a shadow of a doubt, testify to the resurrection, so the question is, 'Will you believe the clear, abundant teaching of Scripture or not?' [pause]

Will Jesus say of you, "You are wrong, because you know [not] the Scriptures"?

Or will you trust the truth of God's Word by faith? [pauseeee]

This is not some small, inconsequential truth.

This is the eternal, momentous truth of who Jesus is, how He was raised to life, and the life you can find in Him.

It eternally matters what you believe about Jesus' resurrection. [pauseeee]

Jesus shows us here that...

Scripture and the power of God attest to the resurrection of the dead! [pause]

⁷ Acts 2:24, 2:32, 3:15, 3:26, 4:10, 5:30, 10:40, 13:30, 13:34 are just *some* of the examples!

Scripture tells us that He was raised, and the power of God attests to the fact that God did raise Him up through His mighty power.

And because of our connection to Christ: this same God, this same power, will raise us up, for Scripture has promised it. *[pauseeee]*

So the question is this: do you believe the Scriptures?

Do you truly trust in the power of God? [pause]

If you genuinely and truly trust and believe in the power of God and the Scriptures, you will believe in the resurrection of Christ and our future resurrection as well. *[pause]*

So for those who don't trust yet, I call you to trust His Word and His power now.

Turn from your sins and be saved, trusting in Jesus' work on the Cross, for He died for you, and trust that He rose victorious from the grave.

You do this, and you are saved, and what hope you will have! [pause]

And for us who believe, let's cling to our precious, living hope⁸...

Christ was raised through God's power and is attested to by the Scriptures.

And that same power and those same Scriptures promise our bodily resurrection someday because we simply trust in Jesus Christ alone. *[pause]*

What a glorious, blessed, living hope we have in Jesus!

⁸ A reference to 1 Peter 1:3.