

## HEAVENLY LIVING

**THESIS:** Let Us Know

**TEXT:** Matthew 22:23-33

**OPEN:** In **Matthew 22:23-33** let's discover what Heavenly living is like and know the Scripture and God's power.

*Matthew 22:23-24* “**That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. <sup>24</sup>‘Teacher,’ they said, ‘Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him.’**”

*Historical:* The scenario here references levirate marriage. Levirate is Latin for “husband’s brother.” Levirate marriage was so that lineage and inheritances under the Old Covenant could be kept intact. If a man dies, having no children, his brother as next of kin shall marry his wife, and raise an offspring to his brother (*Deuteronomy 25:5-6*).

**Acts 23:6-8** “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 trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead.’ When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and 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.)”

*Historical:* Most of the Sadducees were members of priestly families. After the coming of the Roman Empire, they encouraged collaboration with the ruling power for political expediency. Being guided by secular considerations, they were in favor of adopting Greek customs. The Sadducees proclaimed to accept only the first five books of the Old Testament (known as “the law of Moses”). They did not believe in resurrection, angels, or anything of the afterlife.

*Matthew 22:25-28* “**Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. <sup>26</sup>The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. <sup>27</sup>Finally, the woman died. <sup>28</sup>Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?**”

*Insight from John MacArthur:* “If all eight would appear in the resurrection exactly in the condition and circumstances in which they had died—how could their marriage relationships possibly be reconciled? To the Sadducees that dilemma proved the idea of resurrection to be (ridiculously false), as they supposed Jesus would now be forced to admit, by His silence if not His words” (*MacArthur N.T Commentary, Matthew 16-23*, p. 331).

*Insight from Craig L. Blomberg:* “The Sadducees could have made their point just as easily with the story of a woman who had had only two husbands, but they want to make the situation look absurd. So they pose the question, ‘who will be married to whom when the woman and all seven men have new bodies in this supposed resurrection life?’” (*The New American Commentary, Matthew*, p. 333).

**Illustration:** Television show *X-Files* creator Chris Carter is a modern-day version of the Sadducees. He’s skeptically written episodes depicting resurrection as returning as you once were—and in the process of degrading. He does not know the Scriptures or the power of God.

**Matthew 22:29** “*You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.*”

- **Error** (Greek: *planao*) means to be deceived, deluded, or to wander off.

Why were the Sadducees in error about the realities of resurrection from the dead? It’s the same as to why anyone is wrong about God and His abilities: 1) They did not recognize the Scriptures. 2) They did not perceive the power of the Lord. Not knowing Scripture or the power of God are connected to one another.

**Philippians 1:9-10** “And this is my prayer that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ...”

1. Let’s be powerful in God’s word and work by studying Scripture.
  - A. It’s not just that there are blessings that come from it, but to study & obey His Word *is* a blessing in of itself.
    1. **Philippians 2:12-13, 15** “...as you have always obeyed—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose...you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life”
      - a. Ask as you read through the Bible: “What am I to obey so God may work in my life?”
  2. Let’s be powerful in God’s word and work by praying to honor Him.
    - A. It’s not just that there are blessings from it, but to pray to Him to honor Him *is* a blessing.
      1. **Ezra 8:21-23** “By the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask Him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions. I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us from enemies on the road, because we had told the king, ‘The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to Him, but His great anger is against all who forsake Him.’ So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and He answered our prayer.”
        - a. Ask before asking of God: “What has the Lord to gain from answering my prayer?”
    3. Let’s be powerful in God’s word and work by faithfully serving Him.
      - A. It’s not just that there are blessings from it, but ministering for Christ *is* a blessing.
        1. **1 Peter 4:10** “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.”
          - a. Ask in relation to helping people for the Lord: “How am I adding value to others? What is God gaining from His investment in me?”

**Matthew 22:30** “*At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in Heaven.*”

Did Jesus say at the resurrection that we will become angels in Heaven? No, He says “we will *be like* the angels in Heaven.” How is that?

**Luke 20:35-36** “But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels.”

**Illustration:** In false religion—angels are depicted in various ways. For example, the Hinduism word for angel is synonymous with “deva” (i.e. celestial being, not a woman)...Mormonism and the Baha’i faith teach that angels are former humans or eventual ones...Swedish writer Emanuel Swedenborg wrote a couple of centuries ago that a soul of a man and a soul of a woman who are

happily united in marriage enter Heaven and become an angel. He believed that this could be a married couple on earth or a couple that met after their earthly deaths. Don't like to disappoint Mr. Swedenborg, but Jesus says, "At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage"

(*Mtt 22:30*)... Theosophy says that angels are colored flames about the size of a human. They are "observed when the third eye is activated" and may be gnomes, sylphs, salamanders, and fairies (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angel>).

We're *not* going to be turned into angels at the resurrection. Scripture compares our eternal state to theirs in that we can no longer die. Why is that? Certainly because Jesus says so, but He does because there'll be no sin in the Heavenly existence. The Bible teaches that death came to all because all sinned (*Romans 5:12*).

**1 Peter 5:4** "When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the *crown of glory* that will never fade away."

***Historical:*** In Biblical days a crown of leaves was a prize for winning athletes. It indicated their triumph over their opponents. In Revelation 2:10 faithful believers are pictured as wearing crowns in the contest of life because through faith in Christ we triumph over sin and death. Our reward or "crown" is eternal life. **Eternal** (Greek: *aidos*) means immeasurable and uninterrupted time—permanence. **Life** (Greek: *zoe*) signifies a vitality and not just mere existence. Regarding Heaven, life (quality) is eternal (quantity) because there is complete absence of sin.

**Crown** (Greek: *stephanos*) denotes the symbol of triumph; hence a reward or prize; a token of public honor for distinguished service, nuptial joy, or festal gladness.

1. **1 Corinthians 9:25** "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a *crown that will last forever*."
2. **2 Timothy 4:7-8** "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the *crown of righteousness*, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing."
  - A. **Righteousness** (Greek: *dikaiosyne*) means the character or quality of being just and straight; upstanding and honorable or moral behavior (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old & NT Words*, p. 298).
3. **James 1:12** "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the *crown of life* that God has promised to those who love Him."
4. **Revelation 2:10b** "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the *crown of life*."

"For they are like the angels" also means there will not be procreation in Heaven and no need for the exclusive relationship of marriage. Since there will be "no more death or mourning or crying or pain" in Paradise (*Rev 21:4*) we will still completely enjoy knowing those who are there whether we knew them before or not.

**Isaiah 65:17-18a** "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create..."

**2 Corinthians 12:2-4** “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven...And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—was caught up to Paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.”

Should the Sadducees have known the first five books of the Old Testament (i.e. “The Law of Moses”) speak about resurrection and the afterlife? Let’s see what Jesus says about it.

**Matthew 22:31-33** “*But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, <sup>32</sup>‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? <sup>33</sup>He is not the God of the dead but of the living.’* When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.”

Regarding resurrection and eternal life Jesus quotes Moses from *Exodus 3:6*. Christ corrects and rebukes the Sadducees from the second book of the Law of Moses which they professed to believe in! No wonder the people were beside themselves or overwhelmed at His doctrine. Perhaps they never heard it taught from that verse before.

Later, in his letter to the churches in Galatia, the Apostle Paul reveals “The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator” (*Galatians 3:19*). There is resurrection, angels, spirits, and the afterlife. Just because someone or a lot of somebodies do not believe something does not render it invalid or untrue especially when it comes to the Bible.

**Insight from theologian Richard Keyes:** “Skeptics and critics try to undermine the gospel by saying things like ‘If Christ’s miracles really happened then where are the reports by historians of that era? We only have the biased claims of Christ’s supporters.’ But who was truly biased? Can we count on those who rejected Jesus to have been unbiased? Why? Those closest to the events had high stakes in trying to protect their power base. The reports of Jesus’ followers actually gain a certain authority because of their willingness to die for their witness to the resurrection.”

**Acts 2:32-39** “God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, He has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to Heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for your feet.’ Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.’ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.’”

**CLOSE:** Let us know the Scriptures and the power of God because it leads to Heavenly living.