

**Text: Luke 20: 27-38**

**Theme: Series-Prepare for the King: The Resurrection and Marriage**

**Sermon delivered by Reverend Dele Agbelusi during Service of the Word on 06/11/2016 at 10:30am**

It is sometimes hard for us to believe in the big things in life when we have so many little issues and struggles that we let take up lots of space in our lives. When we are obsessed with the little things in life, it's not easy for us to step back and understand life in eternity.

C.S. Lewis, who wrote "The Chronicles of Narnia", once told the story of a woman who was thrown into a dungeon. Her only light came from a barred window high above. She gave birth to a son, who had never seen the outside world. He couldn't reach the window to see outside, so his mother told him about green fields and waves crashing on the shore-but he couldn't imagine what she was describing. Eventually, she persuaded the guards to give her some paper and charcoal so she could draw pictures to show her son what the outside world was really like-but what the boy came to understand was that the outside world looked like black lines on a white piece of paper.

Our passage this morning is a big deal. The Sadducees' question is juvenile but the foundation behind it is far from being juvenile. Jesus was constantly reminding his disciples what was going to happen to him, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again." The belief in Resurrection would turn out to be the singular event that would transform heaven and earth. Christianity is utter foolishness and nonsense void of the Resurrection. Without the Resurrection, Jesus, his life, his ministry is insightful but in the long scheme of things they are ultimately meaningless. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:12-18

*12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 15 More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. 19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. (NIV)*

### **Who are the Sadducees and what do they stand for?**

The Sadducees did not believe in an afterlife at all. Their theological viewpoints differ greatly from the Pharisees. Whereas the Pharisees believed in the Law, the Prophets, the Writings and in Oral Tradition, the Sadducees only believed in what they called the words of Moses. In their minds, Moses did not teach about an afterlife, about angels and especially about any type of human resurrection. The Sadducees also did not believe that there was going to be any eternal reward or punishment. All that human beings could look forward to either good or bad was this life.

We must understand what is going on before we get to Jesus' answers. This is not just some question and answer session between Jesus and these Sadducees. This is a bunch of people steeped in the Torah, seen as the best of the best when it comes to being teachers of the Word telling Jesus that the thing he has put as his singular foundation - THAT GOD THE FATHER WILL RESURRECT GOD THE SON and therefore all mankind can be redeemed is all a bunch of nonsense.

So, let's get the picture. Jesus is right on the doorstep of fulfilling his life mission. Everything he has done on earth is getting ready to come to a conclusion. If he ever needed clarity and faith it was now. For over the next 48 hours his mind, his heart and his soul would be tested as it never had been before.

And like the serpent in the Garden, here were these Sadducees standing there in the corner nudging him - "THERE IS NO RESURRECTION". "THERE IS ONLY THIS MORTAL LIFE" "THERE IS NO EVERLASTING PROMISE OR HOPE" "ALL WE HAVE IS TODAY" "THERE IS NO ACCOUNTABILITY OR VINDICATION OR EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT OR REWARD" "THERE IS NO NEED FOR REDEMPTION". In other words, after the Cross Jesus you will simply be dead. All that you have preached will be dead. The total meaning of your life will mean nothing. You will have died in vain and nothing will be done through your death. There is no afterlife, no angels nor hope of any human resurrection.

The Sadducees really didn't want an answer. After all, they didn't even believe in the premise of their own question. If you don't believe in a resurrection or in an afterlife, then why in the world ask a question about it in the first place? All they were interested in was to get Jesus rattled, and sow seeds of doubt and confusion among his disciples and followers.

Jesus begins by telling them and by implication all of us that Resurrected Life is going to be different to our present mortal life.

**What we shall experience in heaven will be far different to what we experienced here on earth.** Here on earth we have to deal with all kinds of difficult issues: Issues revolving around the most intimate of human relationships, those involving marriage and family.

Our Mormon friends, for example, believe that marriage is for all eternity and that in heaven we will be given the opportunity to produce celestial children. It's a nice thought but it's not the truth. Our Muslim friends believe that if a man does the right thing for Allah then it is possible that once that person reaches heaven Allah will have 72 virgins waiting for him. The same deal is not for women just for men, how unjust! Jesus doesn't agree and His Heavenly Father has made no such provisions.

Jesus puts those kinds of human and sensuous thoughts to the side. He simply tells us that in Heaven resurrected humans will no longer be married or bear children. Marriage, sexual intimacy and childbirth are all a part of an earthly institution blessed by the Lord God Almighty. Those human relationships and activities will not be a part of our heavenly existence. The relationships that we enjoy in heaven will supersede those that we can now experience in marriage and in families. Sin will no longer cloud our minds and God will reveal to us a whole new way to relate to him.

That is great news. For it means also that other human institutions that we find on earth will also not be in heaven. There will be no social classes, no slavery or gender inequality. There will be no barrenness in heaven. Women will be equal to men. Slaves will be equal to their former owners. Poor will be equal to rich. Everyone who is redeemed will be one with the Father and with one another. The Great High Priestly Prayer of Jesus will be realized.

### **Jesus reminds everyone angels do exist**

While the Bible does not give us the precise time of the creation of angels; their existence is assumed from the very beginning. It is amazing that the Sadducees who prided themselves on knowing the Books of Moses (Torah) somehow missed all those passages in Genesis and Exodus that speak of angels. We have angels meeting with Abraham, Lot and Jacob. We have angels watching over the Children of Israel. The Torah and the rest of God's Word is full of stories and encounters with angels.

**But not everyone will be resurrected to New Life. Notice Jesus speaks of those "considered worthy of taking part in that age" (verse 35).** We must be careful here to understand that Jesus speaks of both New Life and a Second Death.

Resurrection Life therefore means that there will be a time of accountability that will result in a time of either reward or punishment.

Because the Sadducees refused to believe in an afterlife it did not matter to them how they lived here on earth. They were banking on their belief that there would not be an afterlife and therefore would not be a time of accountability, vindication or even everlasting reward or punishment. As far as they were concerned they were already at the top tier of society and financial wealth so why did they need Heaven? To achieve their high position most of them had already broken more than one commandment and if there was an afterlife then they might not fare so well, unless they repent and change their ways.

Jesus answers the Sadducees question in such a way as to help them realize that in just about a few days they would no longer be asking such silly questions, when he would have attested to the resurrection through his own experience.

This joyful message of Jesus declares that we will one day not only see our Lord Jesus Christ face to face, but will also spend eternity with all the saints, including our saved loved ones who have passed into eternity before us. There are many people, however, who are not sure or who do not believe in the resurrection from the dead. They find it incredible that God should raise the dead. But if God could take dust and breathe life into it to create a man, why would anyone think it incredible for this same God to raise someone from the dead?

Jesus now points to the proof of the resurrection (**v37-38**) in the words God spoke to Moses saying, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. This could only be possible if Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were still alive, because these words were spoken several hundred years after they had died.

If someone comes to you and says he or she was your father's or your mother's friend, it is either your parent is dead or there has been a change in their relationship. But if one comes to you and says he or she is your father's or your mother's friend, it conveys the existence of your parent and an ongoing relationship. God, in this threefold repetition is not only declaring the existence of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob but also His ongoing relationship with them. The writer of Hebrews tells us that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob knew that the covenant promises of God transcended earthly life and were eternal. Death did not separate the patriarchs from God and death will not separate the believer from God.

The problem with many people is that in their ignorance they try to compare the resurrection life to this present life. They cannot understand that the resurrection life belongs to a completely different realm, God's own realm of existence, the uncreated realm and involves a completely different mode of existence.

### **Conclusion**

Without the resurrection, death would be the end and our accountability to God would be limited only to this life and judgement and eternal life would be meaningless. The resurrection offers us a new existence where men and women would no longer be subject to suffering and death. **Heaven is not a continuation of life, as we now know it. It will be a different relationship to what we are used to but there will be one thing that will not change and that is worship.** Worship will still be central in this new relationship and that should make us place a great value on worship here on earth.

This life with so much suffering and pain cannot be our home. Our home is where Christ has prepared a place for all believers and it is a place of joy. Death is the vehicle that brings us into our new home. God is love and He has gone to great lengths to make it possible for us to spend eternity in His presence. It cost Him the life of His Son Jesus Christ. He lived a perfect life on earth and died a painful death to pay the penalty for our sin so that we could be reconciled to God. Jesus Christ was raised from the dead for our justification so that we could spend eternity with Him. This is only possible when we believe in Him as our Lord and Saviour. We can only do this in this life before our death.

Accepting Christ as Lord and Saviour determines where we spend eternity. Our relationship with Christ is the most important thing in life. If we learn to love and trust Christ now, we will be preparing for the age to come as our relationship with Christ results in godly attitudes and godly actions.

This relationship should draw us to His word, prayer, fellowship and service. It should make us sensitive to the real needs of people as we see them the way Jesus does. We must be sure of our relationship with Christ for it is this relationship that prepares us for the age to come and ensures our future. This relationship ensures that we experience the peace of God both in this life and the one to come.