

Who's wife is she is one of the more interesting and ridiculous questions found in the Bible. It's a question I've been asked. Who are you here with? Who do you belong to? Pastor Brittany and I get these question at meetings of pastors – whose wife are you? We're actually here because we're pastors. Huh, interesting. You just watch confusion on their faces as if the Assemblies of God has not been ordaining women for ministry since its inception in 1914. But, that's a different sermon.

Who's wife is she was the question originally asked by the Sadducees to Jesus a very long time ago. Marriage, singleness, relationships both here and in the future have long been a thing of curiosity. We're more familiar with the Pharisees who were the legalistic folks of Jesus day intent on ensuring the Law of Moses was followed without sometimes truly understanding its purpose. The Sadducees were a similar group who were mostly concerned with matters connected to the Temple. One huge difference between the 2 groups, and the one of importance to us this morning, was their beliefs regarding a future resurrection from the dead. The Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead and the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. My favorite Sunday School joke must be told here – that is why they are sad, you see.

In Matthew 22, the Sadducees come to Jesus with an absurd story – they could have asked their question about the resurrection without this silliness, but because of their silliness everyone in the place, including Jesus recognized the trap they are laying. If you remember a few weeks ago Pastor Brian preached on the story of Ruth. He explained about the kinsman redeemer – the idea is from Deuteronomy 25 and it went like this. If a man died without leaving an heir his brother should marry the dead brother's wife and have a child who can inherit the land of the dead man and thereby continue to pass on the blessings of

God tied to the land. Remember, we've been saying for weeks children are the way to pass on blessing and the marriage covenant is God's prescribed way for this union to occur and be blessed. Children, in death, are how one left a legacy and passed on the blessings tied to the land – the land which God had given His people. If there is no heir there is no legacy so the kinsman redeemer, or in legal terms the Levirate Marriage, was God's contingency plan. The Sadducees story is about a family with 7 brothers. The first brother married and died without any children so the next brother married the woman and died and so on and so forth with all 7 brothers marrying the same woman. Finally, the woman died too – exhausted as she was from having gotten involved with this family in the first place. Just kidding – that was an added line to the Scripture. **Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her? Matthew 22:28**

It seemed like a good question except that it's not and once again Jesus uses it for His favorite segment – Adventures in Missing the Point. They have actually asked a ridiculous question that has no logical answer. If Jesus gives an answer as to which brother is the husband He would basically be saying that polygamous relationships were okay and that is against the Law of Moses. But the Sadducees know Jesus isn't going to speak in favor of sexual relationships that are outside of one man and one woman in covenant marriage. So they aren't really looking for an answer to the question about whose wife this woman is – they knew even in Jesus day this was a dumb question. What they really want is for Jesus to be forced into saying, well, guys, you got me there. There is no resurrection of the dead so that's why I can't answer you. They want Jesus to side with them on this issue because it's their big political issue of the day. It's what ultimately separates them from the Pharisees. Except, the Sadducees were trying to get Jesus to weigh in on an issue that was based on

the rules of their day without understanding that through Jesus the age to come would be remade in an entirely new and different way. Heaven doesn't play by the rules of earth.

Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven." Matthew 22:29-30

Errors of the Sadducees we can't afford to make:

1. They didn't know the Scripture

We have to know the story of Scripture – not just ideas based on the Bible. I read a whole thread on facebook this week with person after person quoting that great verse where Jesus said to come as you are to Him. That's lovely. Except that's not a verse. That's not a quote. Is it true? Yes. Does it need a bit more explanation – also true. Is it derived from Scripture? Yes. All who are weary, come, all who are thirsty come to the water. Whoever will call on the name of the Lord. You could use all those verses to explain it. But, you know what this really goes back to? A hymn written in 1835 by Charlotte Elliott and made popular during Billy Graham revivals of the last century. Just as I am ... O Lamb of God I come. We must know the Scripture for ourselves. Otherwise we are content to simply spout ideas compiled from the Bible without actually knowing the full story.

The Sadducees didn't know what the Scripture said about the age to come. They were concerned only about this life. Without a belief in the resurrection there is no belief in heaven and without a belief in heaven then all you care about is the here and now. The Sadducees were a political group – politics is life when you don't believe in the resurrection and the age to come. The Apostle Paul would later say if we're concerned only about this life we will be most miserable. This life is not all there is. There is an age to come – the age

to come is what Revelation describes as the new heaven and the new earth. When the old passes away and Jesus dries every tear from our eyes and we dwell with God forever. But too few of us live in light of eternity. We make our choices based on what will make us happy here and now. What will set us up well for health and wealth in a few years, but are we considering what type of treasures we're storing up for eternity? The Scripture makes clear there is an age to come, a future day where we will dwell with Christ for eternity – but do we know the Scripture well enough to live in light of that truth?

2. They didn't know the power of God

They didn't even realize who they were speaking with that day. The Son of God was standing in front of them. They had no knowledge that soon He would die and be resurrected to life in 3 days becoming the first fruits of all who have believed in His name and who will then be raised to new life. They didn't know that Jesus has the power to remake all things or that He had already begun to reimagine the new family of God.

3. They didn't know the purpose of marriage

They didn't get that marriage was needed on earth, first of all, because only through marriage did God intend for children to enter the world so how else would the world continue and secondly, because marriage was communicating a message of how God loved His people and Christ loved His church. This is what we talked about last week. But that's the metaphor we need on earth – not in heaven. On earth we need a constant reminder of the way Christ loves His church. On earth, right now we need a picture to look at to see the love of Christ reflected in the way a husband cares for the needs of his wife and the way a wife desires only her husband. Right now we need to attend weddings and be reminded that there is a huge wedding ahead for all of us who love Jesus when we the bride will be

forever united to the bridegroom, Jesus. We need marriage on earth. But, in heaven, the metaphor is over, the picture complete, the marriage between Christ and the church will have taken place. In heaven, marriage will not be needed because it will have served its purpose. We won't need marriage pointing us towards the return of the bridegroom because He will have returned for us and had the wedding. The Sadducees were asking the wrong question. She won't be anyone's wife in the resurrection.

The Sadducees lack of understanding of marriage also shows that they didn't have a theology of singleness. They didn't understand the purpose of singleness because it is interconnected with marriage in the resurrection. I mentioned last week and I want to reiterate again today the purpose of Christian celibate singleness and the portrait it paints.

- **The sufficiency of Christ in all things**
- **This life is not all there is**

The single life portrays the sufficiency of Christ to meet every need we have, while at the same time pointing us forward to the day in the future – the day when we'll be in heaven with our Saviour, Jesus, and no longer have any need at all. This is the day when the sufficiency of Christ will be completely and fully known by every person – those married on earth or single in this life. Christ will BE all we need and IN all we have. We won't need the sun or the moon because the glory of God and the Lamb will give us the light. We won't need seasons because the trees will bear fruit month after month. Literally everything will change and be changed because Jesus will be all we need and will provide for anything and everything we could even think about. The single life keeps us pointed towards this future day and existence. It keeps the church living in light of eternity and the truth that there is still more to come. A life forever lived in the presence of the Lord. With this in mind the

Sadducees would know the woman wouldn't be anyone's wife because she would be in the presence of Jesus, resurrected to new life, living every day in a place where Christ is sufficient for all things – where all the blessings that should have come from the child she never had would now be fully realized, the need she had for protection, safety, purpose, fulfillment, shelter, companionship, and relationship would all be found totally and completely and forever in Jesus.

4. They didn't know their own purpose in serving God

Remember, Jesus has just said to them people won't marry or be given in marriage; they'll be like the angels in heaven. Now to be clear Jesus did not say they'll become angels or that people who aren't married are angelic, although I don't know why He couldn't have added that – it seems accurate. Over the years there's been some terrible theology built off this verse about guardian angels being people who have already died who look after you. That is not at all what this verse is saying. Remember the response Jesus is giving is regarding who the woman would be married to in heaven. We'll be like the angels in that the angels don't get married. Here's one big answer for why angels do not need to get married - because the angels don't die. They don't need to multiply themselves, they don't need to pass on blessing to a new generation, they don't need to leave a lasting legacy or build a dynasty. They don't need to populate heaven either – that's what the church will do. This is why it's on us to make disciples – to multiply ourselves in those we introduce to Jesus, those we teach to follow Him, those we send out to go and make more disciples. Heaven gets bigger each time a person chooses to follow Jesus and does so sincerely and wholeheartedly – not when you hear a bell ring and an angel gets their wings. That's not Scripture. That's error number 1!

But, the angels do have a purpose and a role to play. **“God in heaven is surrounded by hosts and hosts of angels, to whom he gives tasks and from whom he receives advice...whose role is to serve God, to worship him and to help him carry out his tasks as divine king and judge.”** Paula Gooder The Sadducees had gotten distracted and forgotten their role as God’s people was to serve and worship God, the true King.

Sometimes the church has become a matchmaking service – we do our best to marry everyone off and ensure everyone has a spouse. But, the purpose of the church is to make disciples. Again I say, making more disciples of Jesus is how we populate heaven. This is what we’re called to do. Finding a spouse in church is a bonus – a gift on top of a gift – but it’s not the purpose of the church. The purpose and mission of the church is to make disciples – to reach others, and to form a new family of God.

5. They didn’t know their relationship to the Father

Luke records for us this same conversation between Jesus and the Sadducees. He adds one extra point, **They are God’s children, since they are children of the resurrection. Luke 20:36** Those in heaven are those Luke says, ... **are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead... Luke 20:35** The question that started all of this was whose wife will she be? Christopher Yuan says, **“A wife is first a daughter of God. Being a wife is of this world only, while being a child of God is eternal.”** –

Christopher Yuan The most important relationship and the most important identity we all have is with God as our Father. And that relationship, as a child of the Father God informs every other relationship we have within the church. God having adopted into His family those led by the Spirit to be His sons and daughters are now co-heirs with Christ and this means the primary identifier of those members of God’s family is that of sister and brother.

Those of us in the church who love Jesus – we’re brothers and sisters. This is the language Jesus uses of all of those who “do God’s will.” In the book of Mark, Jesus is sitting in a circle with a crowd of people when His mother, Mary, and His brothers arrived to see Him.

Someone whispers to Jesus – hey your family are here for you. Jesus looks at the people around Him and says – **here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother. Mark 3:34-35** He’s not neglecting His “family” or even rejecting His family so much as He is expanding His family by redefining who His brothers and sisters are. If we’re God’s children, then that makes all of us related to Jesus. This also means if we understand our relationship with God as Father then our church family are our brothers and sisters. If we truly believe that then it impacts the way we treat each other, speak to each other and about each other. It means we fight for each other not with each other, we pray for each other, encourage each other, and believe the best about each other. In recent years we’ve stopped a long held church practice to call everyone brother and sister. When I was a kid everyone was Sis. and Bro. I was never sure what age you had to be to begin being called Sis. Taylor and I was quite sure it made me sound really old – but given that I’ve recently discovered I’m middle aged I guess this would be my moment. We stopped calling each other that and I’m not really suggesting we bring it back but what it did was keep the most important relationship between us front and center. It’s harder to talk bad about a person you just addressed as your sister or brother.

We stopped reminding ourselves we were family and now we divide ourselves by colors like blue and red, by news channels we watch, we make assumptions about those people over there or those people on the other side. We’ve made enemies of people who are actually our brothers and sisters. We forgot that we were related and connected and it

suddenly became okay to gossip about your sister and say rude things about your brother. It's possible we've made the error of the Sadducees and forgotten our relationship to the Father.

Church family is so important and I am so thankful for mine. A healthy, diverse, generational church is one who sees their relationships to each other in light of their relationship to the same Father, God, the same Christ over them all, and the same Holy Spirit living in each of them. What results is that single people find community and God sits them into families, young people find parents and grandparents, married people find friendships. The importance of community and family within the church cannot be overstated.

Jesus can be seen in the Bible forming a community and redefining what family looks like. We were made for community and made to be in relationship with other people. **"If humankind is made in the image and likeness of God, then the need to exist within community shall be reflected in all people."** - Simon Gibbes Single persons within the church exhibit this inherent need to exist and live in community. The community to be found looks like a family formed not with biological ties but with spiritual ones. Brothers and sisters because we're all co-heirs with Christ. It is this spiritual family which creates relational dynamics that last into eternity.

6. They didn't know the eternal life on offer

The end of the conversation with the Sadducees goes like this, **But about the resurrection of the dead – have you not read what God said to you, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob?" He is not the God of the dead but of the living.**

Matthew 22:31-32 In other words God didn't say I was the God of Abraham when he was

alive – no, God is still currently the God of Abraham because to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord where we will be more alive than we've ever been before.

Abundant life here in this age and eternal life in the age to come that's what is meant when Jesus declares He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is the God of the living. Once again though, this life is not all there is. We live in light of eternity where life goes on forever.

These are the errors the Sadducees made in interpreting the made up story about the woman who married seven brothers. They didn't know the scriptures or the power of God or the purpose of marriage and singleness or their own purpose. They didn't know the relationship they could have with the Father or the offer of eternal life. But, we do. Or at least we can. We can know God as our Father by accepting His Son. Through Jesus we can have abundant life here and eternal life after that. I hope through this series you've come to know and could correct some of the other errors of the Sadducees.

Here's what I want you to take away from this series:

- **The Bible is the authority for our lives; therefore, we must know what it says.**
- **Jesus came to fulfill all the law and the prophets, and through His death on the cross He did.**
- **There are no exclusions – anyone who calls upon the Lord and obeys His commands – is brought into the new kingdom Jesus has established.**
- **Jesus affirmed both marriage and singleness and requires fidelity and purity within each.**
- **To tell the story of Scripture we need marriage showing us the love of Christ for His church AND singleness showing us the sufficiency of Christ.**

- **Singleness reminds the church this life is not all there is, and bears witness to the age to come.**
- **We need each other.**

– single people, married people, kids and middle aged people, retired folks and teenagers, twenty somethings and ninety somethings – we need all of us here, as a church family, bearing each other’s burdens, caring for each other, remaining faithful to the Word of God and the mission of the church to make more disciples. We need married couples staying faithful to the covenant they’ve made to God and each other and singles living pure lives while testifying to the sufficiency and faithfulness of Jesus in their lives. We need each other to hold us accountable to keep our eyes on Jesus. We are a family and a community of folks who have all been saved by grace. When Jesus ascended to heaven He didn’t leave behind a church building or a massive congregation – He left the community of brothers and sisters He’d formed. That’s who we are – we are Carbondale. A place of healing, hope, laughter, and peace to all who walk through our doors.

Let’s pray.