

Matthew 22C

- Welcome to our virtual observance of Easter, the day we remember our Lord raised from the dead
 - The Bible says Jesus was raised before dawn on the first day of the week, which is Sunday on the Jewish calendar just as it is for us today
 - For that reason Christians everywhere celebrate Jesus' resurrection on the first Sunday after the Jewish Passover
 - This year Passover occurred this past Thursday, which was the same day Passover fell upon during the week Jesus died
 - So as it turns out, this week is following the same pattern as the original Passion week
 - We will continue studying more about the events of that week as we progress through Matthew
 - But today is Easter, and typically I take a break from the verse-by-verse study I'm currently moving through on this day to acknowledge the day
 - I usually pause to preach a message on the significance of the resurrection of Jesus
 - Because Easter is all about resurrection, about Jesus' dead body returning to life and walking out of the tomb
 - But in the providence of God, we happen to find ourselves today in a passage in Matthew that fits the topic of Easter perfectly
 - So instead of venturing away from our regular study, I'm going to continue forward with our study exactly as God planned
 - Because the topic the Lord prepared for us in Chapter 22 of Matthew today is...resurrection
- Let's return to the scene in Matthew 22, on the Tuesday before Jesus dies, Jesus is teaching in the temple and being challenged by various religious leaders
 - They are intent on discrediting Him and they've been coming at Jesus in waves, one group after another trying to trap Him
 - Last week we studied a trap set by the Pharisees and Herodians who brought a question about paying the poll tax to Caesar

- They tried to lead Jesus to say that either Jews shouldn't pay the tax, which would have upset the Romans
- Or else Jesus might say that Jews should pay the tribute to Caesar, in which case the people would have been upset at Him
- But Jesus sidesteps the trap by explaining that the tax could be paid without risk of idolatry because the denarius was worthless to Jews
 - Since the Roman coin had no value to Pharisees and only had value to Caesar, Jesus said give back to Caesar what is his
 - Giving something away that you don't value can't be considered a tribute because you aren't making a sacrifice
- But then Jesus added that these men should also give God what is His, meaning they had been missing the forest for the trees
 - They were worried about giving Caesar too much honor, meanwhile they weren't honoring God at all
 - When their Messiah came to them, they conspired to kill Him
- So Jesus won Round 2 in this battle, and now it's time for Round 3, and the topic for Round 3 on this Easter morning is...resurrection

[Matt. 22:23](#) On that day some Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) came to Jesus and questioned Him,

[Matt. 22:24](#) asking, "Teacher, Moses said, 'IF A MAN DIES HAVING NO CHILDREN, HIS BROTHER AS NEXT OF KIN SHALL MARRY HIS WIFE, AND RAISE UP CHILDREN FOR HIS BROTHER.'

[Matt. 22:25](#) "Now there were seven brothers with us; and the first married and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother;

[Matt. 22:26](#) so also the second, and the third, down to the seventh.

[Matt. 22:27](#) "Last of all, the woman died.

[Matt. 22:28](#) "In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had married her."

- The Sadducees have returned to take a second shot at Jesus and Matthew introduces them with a parenthetical comment
 - In v.23 Matthew explains that the Sadducees were those who said there was no resurrection

- The Sadducees taught that the notion of a future bodily resurrection was nothing more than a fairy tale
- And to understand what they said specifically, we first need to understand what resurrection is and what it is not
- Resurrection is NOT the spirit of a person rising up from their dead body into Heaven like a ghost in a cartoon
 - Resurrection is a dead body returning to life, as when Jesus' body came back to life after 3 days
 - Or in the case of Lazarus in John 11 when Jesus raised his dead body back to life after 3 days in the tomb
- But in the case of our resurrection, we won't receive back our original bodies
 - When we die our physical bodies go into the grave and eventually return to dust never to be seen again
 - From that moment, we exist in Heaven in the form of spirit only waiting for our resurrection day
 - Then in a day to come the Bible says the Lord will give to all saints a new eternal body for our life in the Kingdom
 - That is resurrection, when we will live again on this earth in a new glorified body
- Now the Sadducees didn't believe in resurrection, which means they didn't believe that God gives saints new physical bodies
 - Instead, Sadducees taught that the saints remain eternally, in spirit form only, in Heaven with the God
 - And for that reason, they also didn't believe in a literal physical Kingdom on earth
 - For Sadducees, this life on earth was the only one we receive, and afterward we live in an etherial state with God
 - This view was very different than the Pharisees, who taught a literal resurrection and a literal physical Kingdom to come
 - So this question had become a major debate between the two parties in Israel

- Sadducees maintained there was no resurrection in our future, while Pharisees taught that there was a literal resurrection
- So to prove their point and embarrass Jesus, the Sadducees contrived this ridiculous scenario to make the idea of resurrection seem foolish
 - Their scenario was built upon a provision in the Law of Moses (Deut 25:5) for a childless widow to carry on the family name
 - The law said if a woman's husband died before she produced a male heir, then one of his unmarried brothers must marry her
 - And the first son born to that couple would be considered the son of the dead man, thus continuing his family name
 - And Sadducees viewed this requirement in the Law as proof that the concept of resurrection was unworkable in practice
- In their example, they imagine a woman who is widowed and then enters into a Levirate marriage with the dead man's brother
 - But then her second husband dies also, so she marries another brother and this continues a total of six times
 - Each time the next brother in the family steps up to marry her and later dies, resulting in seven marriages altogether
 - Eventually she dies and all are reunited in physical bodies after the resurrection
 - So then the Sadducees ask Jesus, which of those brothers would be her true husband after the resurrection?
 - They were mocking the idea that people returned to physical bodies and picked up life again where they left off
 - Under such circumstances, we would inevitably encounter serious problems, they assumed, especially in the area of marriage
 - They expected to see resurrected ex-spouses together in the Kingdom trying to figure out who was married to whom...it would be chaos!
 - For the Sadducees, such a scenario seemed to make the reality of a literal, physical resurrection impossible
 - And they assumed this scenario would make Jesus look foolish as He tried to untangle the conflicts

- They then could turn to the crowds and say Jesus was teaching wrong and silly ideas about God and Heaven
- And as a bonus, they could embarrass their rivals, the Pharisees, who also believed in resurrection
- Now before we look at Jesus' response, we might be tempted to ask what's the big deal here? This sounds like an academic debate
 - It's like theologians sitting around asking how many angels fit on the head of a pin, or can God make a rock so large that He can't lift it?
 - But in reality this was a critically important question
 - And in fact there is no single issue in all the New Testament more important than the topic of resurrection
 - Your entire faith and salvation depends on this question, depends on the literal truth of resurrection
 - Or as the Bible often calls it, our "hope"
 - You have no doubt read in the New Testament about the Christian hope?
 - Paul uses the word hope 44 times in his letters, including telling us that in hope we've been saved and hope doesn't disappoint
 - Consider these other statements by Paul:

[Gal. 5:5](#) For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the **hope** of righteousness.

[Col. 1:27](#) to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the **hope** of glory.

[1Th. 4:13](#) But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no **hope**.

- Did you know in all these cases and many more, when Paul refers to our "hope" he's speaking specifically of our hope of resurrection
 - The hope of the Christian faith is our expectation that we will rise from the dead into a new physical body and live on earth again

- In Galatians 5:5 Paul calls resurrection the hope of righteousness, because it is the outcome for those who are righteous by faith
- In Colossians 1:27 Paul says that resurrection is our hope of glory, because at our resurrection we receive a new glorified body
- And in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 Paul says we ought not grieve for dead believers as those who have no expectation of resurrection
- Your faith is in Jesus Christ, and that faith leads to your hope for resurrection
 - We are not yet in our eternal, glorified bodies, which is why it's called a hope, but we anticipate that day
 - And our expectation for resurrection is not a senseless hope
 - On the contrary, our hope in a future resurrection is sensible, rational and well-founded
 - Why so? Because of Jesus' own resurrection on the first Easter
 - When you place your faith in Jesus Christ, you testify that you believe His claims, and what did He claim?

John 5:21 "For just as the Father **raises** the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.

John 6:40 "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will **raise** him up on the last day."

- In these two quotes, Jesus claims to have the power to raise people from the dead, meaning to give people new living bodies
 - Jesus promised that those who place their faith in Him would be resurrected on the last day
 - So in a time to come Jesus says He will perform a mass resurrection for all His followers just prior to the Kingdom
- Now those are bold claims, and words are cheap, so how do we know Jesus truly has the power He claimed?
 - First, during His earthly ministry Jesus performed several resurrections including Lazarus, which I mentioned earlier

- But His ultimate proof came when He foretold His own resurrection

[Luke 9:22](#) saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be **raised** up on the third day.”

- Jesus said He would die and later be resurrected, but if Jesus dies, who will resurrect Him?

[John 10:17](#) “For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again.

[John 10:18](#) “No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.”

- Jesus promised He would resurrect Himself, which He referred to as taking His life up again
 - Now that’s an audacious claim! Many people over the centuries have claimed to have the power to raise *others* from the dead
 - And a few have truly possessed that power, include the apostles who were granted power to raise the dead at times
 - But no one to my knowledge has ever promised to raise himself from the dead and then actually performed it...except Jesus
 - Jesus promised to have this power, and He settled all doubts when He walked out of the grave before dawn on Sunday
 - Now why is this so important? Because the hope of the Christian faith is knowing we live again in a body on this earth, that death is not the end
 - Death is merely a transition, and when that “day” of resurrection comes, we will have put death behind us forever
 - You will one day live inside a new body, one similar to the one you have now except this new one will never die again
 - And it will never get sick, never suffer, never know disappointment or heartache...and most of all it has no sin
 - In that day when you receive your new body and again walk on this earth, you will enjoy all the things you once knew

- You will hold someone's hand again, you will see your face in the mirror and this time it will never age again
- You will go for a walk, swim in the ocean, eat a meal, sing a song, and you will never worry that things will be taken from you again
- That's our hope...it's a hope in resurrection, a hope of escaping the fleeting life we know now to embrace an eternal life with Jesus
- And that hope is based in something real and rational...it's not a hope in a fairy tale
 - And we know this because Jesus raised Himself from the dead to give us confidence
 - His resurrection is perhaps the best documented event of ancient history
 - Jesus' crucifixion was witnessed by hundreds so there was no doubt He died
 - And His resurrection appearances were witnessed by hundreds more over weeks of time
 - The four Gospels are accounts written by men who lived at that time and witnessed the risen Lord and testified to what they saw
 - And if Jesus had not proven His claims...if He had died and stayed dead, then there would be no reason to place faith in Him
 - If someone says they can give us the gift of eternal life but they can't even give that gift to themselves, don't believe it
 - Why place your hope for resurrection in someone who can't even resurrect himself?
 - Or as Paul says:

[1Cor. 15:19](#) If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

[1Cor. 15:20](#) But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

- Paul says if Christianity was merely a hope that Christ would give us our best life now, then Paul says we are a sad bunch

- We should be pitied more than anyone else, because we denied ourselves the pleasures of this world with nothing to show for it
- No, Paul says that's not our situation, because Christ was raised from the dead, and the fact of His resurrection means our hope is justified
 - He does have the power to give us a new living body after this one is gone, and because we trust Him to do it, we will have it
 - That's why Jesus' resurrection is so important, and it's why this question posed by the Sadducees is so important to us
 - If the Sadducees were right and resurrection was just a joke, our faith is a cruel joke and our hope is a farce
- So how does Jesus deal with this question? He shows how these religious leaders had again misunderstood Scripture

[Matt. 22:29](#) But Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God.

[Matt. 22:30](#) "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

[Matt. 22:31](#) "But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God:

[Matt. 22:32](#) 'I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

[Matt. 22:33](#) When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.

- Jesus states plainly that these men were mistaken, because they assumed too much about life in the Kingdom and assumed too little about the power of God
 - First, they misunderstood how resurrection worked because they assumed too much about what life in the Kingdom will be like
 - The Sadducees assumed that after we are resurrected we will just pick up in the Kingdom life right where we left off in this life
 - They thought our present world was the pattern for how life in the Kingdom will go, and in many ways it is a pattern
 - We still have our identity and enjoy daily life in similar ways, the Bible says

- But many details of life will be different in the resurrected life in the Kingdom, not the least of which will be the complete absence of sin in us
 - By the way, we're studying those differences now in Revelation and I encourage every believer to learn about their future
 - That's why God told us so much about it in His word, so that we would anticipate it and give Him thanks for it
- But Jesus says one of the key difference between life now and life in the Kingdom will be the elimination of the institution of marriage
 - In the Kingdom, we will no longer have husband-wife relationships nor desire such attachments
 - We will be like angels Jesus says, and we know God created angels to live and serve Him without other attachments
 - Angels are all devoted to the Lord, and they are completely satisfied in that relationship as we will be too
- So the Sadducees' trick question was just nonsense, because they had imagined a problem that simply won't exist in the Kingdom
 - That woman and all those men in their scenario will simply be brothers and sister in Christ after the resurrection
 - Their marriage relationships will be a thing of the past and so their scenario was not proof that resurrection was foolish
 - It was proof that the Sadducees were foolish
- Isn't it amazing how wrong assumptions about God and the Bible can lead us to ridiculous conclusions?
 - These men assumed marriage existed in the Kingdom, and on that basis alone they dismissed with one of the most important truths in the Bible
 - That's a good example of the danger of interpreting the Bible based on our assumptions and failing to take it for what it says
 - The scriptures said that resurrection was coming, but they said it couldn't be true because they couldn't imagine how it worked
 - But here's a simple rule of Bible study: when what the Bible tells you is something you don't understand, accept it without understanding it

- It's ok to know that something *is* true even if you don't know *why* or *how* it's true
- Don't dismiss it and certainly don't change it just so you can feel better that you understand it...let God be God
- Which leads us to the second mistake the Sadducees made: they didn't understand the power of God
 - God has the power to do literally anything you can imagine and a whole lot of things you can't even imagine
 - So when the Bible says that there is a Kingdom coming for us with a real and amazing life, you can believe it
 - And in the meantime, we will have questions about how and why and when and what will it be like, etc.
 - One day those questions will be answered, and many of those answers will amaze us as we see the power of God on display
 - But never underestimate what God can do, because when you underestimate God you will eventually misunderstand the Bible
 - Like the Sadducees you will assume that the rules we live under are rules that limit God too
 - But remember, God wrote the laws of the Universe, and He can change them whenever He wants
 - The rules of our world say a man can't walk on water, but Jesus did
 - And our rules say you can't make water turn to wine or multiply fishes and loaves, but Jesus did
 - And in our world dead things don't come back to life, but in Jesus' power dead things are raised again
 - And we know these things because the word of God tells us these things
 - The Bible says an ark saved man and animals, the Red Sea was parted, the sun stood still in the sky for hours, a virgin gave birth
 - To understand the Bible properly, we have to acknowledge God's power to do anything, especially things that aren't possible for us

- So you can't force God to operate according to the limits of this world, because He was the One Who established those limits
- And therefore He can break them when He desires, and knowing that means we can take His word at face value
- But the Sadducees interpreted the Bible according to what they already understood or could imagine, and so they didn't understand God
 - In v.31 Jesus concludes by saying even Moses testified that resurrection was true
 - Jesus then quotes from Exodus 3:6 where the Lord identifies Himself to Moses as the God of three men
 - The Lord said He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the patriarchs of Israel
 - By that time, those three men had long since passed away, yet God said He "is" the God of these men, not that He "was" their God
 - So Jesus says God is a God of the living, not the dead
 - So if God was still calling Himself the God of these three men after they died, then clearly those men had not ceased to exist
 - They continued to live even after their bodies died, and so God was still calling Himself their God even in Moses' day
 - But how does God's claim to be their God prove the reality of resurrection?
 - We know those men weren't resurrected by Moses' time, and they haven't even been resurrected today
 - The answer comes from the special meaning that Jews attached to those three names together
 - Whenever Jews say "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" together, they are in reference to a covenant God gave those men
 - We call this covenant the Abrahamic Covenant, because it was given to Abraham first and later repeated to Isaac and Jacob
 - This covenant is the basis for all of Israel's blessings, and in this covenant there are promises to Abraham and his descendants

- And in particular, the Lord promised Abraham he and his descendants would live securely in an inheritance of land

[Gen. 17:8](#) "I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

- So Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all received this promise, and yet none of these men ever saw that promise fulfilled in their lifetimes
 - They died without having received that promised inheritance of land, so if God is to be faithful to His promise, then He must resurrect them
 - They must live again if they are ever to receive the land that God promised to give them
 - And not only will they need to be resurrected, but so will all Jews who are of faith for they too were all promised the inheritance
 - So Jesus points back to these men and the covenant they received to show the Sadducees that even Moses knew that resurrection was true
 - For in his day God said that He was the God who promised to bring those men back from the dead to enjoy their promises
 - And the writer of Hebrews reminds us of that truth

[Heb. 11:13](#) All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

- So with that Jesus not only proves the truth of resurrection, but He also showed the foolishness of the Sadducees
 - They didn't understand Scripture and they didn't understand the power of God
 - Scripture shows that God has planned from the beginning to keep His promises to Israel and to us in the Kingdom
 - And if so, then it means we all must be there together in physical bodies so we can enjoy our inheritance
- It means that resurrection is true and necessary, and Jesus' own death and resurrection is your proof that these things will happen

- Easter is God's annual reminder that He will raise you from the dead and He will keep His promises to you
- Easter is your proof that Jesus wasn't lying and your faith isn't in a fairy tale
- Easter is the assurance of your hope, the Christian hope of our coming resurrection
- How do you receive this hope? How can you know that your death will not be the end of your joy and life on this earth?
 - It's very simple...all that God asks of anyone is that we believe in His Son
 - Believe that Jesus is your Savior, the One Who paid for your sin by dying in your place
 - Believe Jesus' death on a cross was a payment for your sin, and if you believe that and accept the payment, God forgives you of all your sins...all of them
 - Paul says it this way:

[Rom. 10:9](#) that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

[Rom. 10:10](#) for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation

- Believing in Jesus is all about believing in His resurrection
- Because it's the difference between believing in fairy tales and believing in the Living God