

Discipleship in the Lectionary – 11/06/2022



A look at the week's lectionary through the lens of discipleship and disciple-making.

Revised Common Lectionary Year C

Sunday, November 6th

Luke 20:27-38

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Cleverer than God?

The long Travel Narrative detailing Jesus' journey to Jerusalem that featured many unique parables found only in Luke is now over. This week's text is the second and final attempt by the religious leaders to entrap Jesus as He teaches and preaches in the temple during His final week on earth in His physical body. While the finer differences in the beliefs of the different Jewish sects brought out in this text may not be very relevant to disciples of Jesus today, the way in which Jesus answered the challenge and what His response revealed is enough to cause us to ponder whether we have beliefs and assumptions that are more in line with the world than with the teachings of Christ - like what we believe about the Bible.

Luke 20:27-38

This week's Gospel lection follows the triumphal entry into Jerusalem and the cleansing of the temple. As Jesus was in the temple teaching the people and preaching the Gospel, His authority was challenged by the chief priests, the scribes, and elders. This week's Gospel lection follows the specific attempt by the scribes and the chief priests to trap Jesus by asking Him whether it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar. This week's text is the second and final entrapment attempt. This time Jesus is asked a question by the Sadducees which they think will refute the resurrection.

²⁷ There came to him some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection,

The Sadducees were a high-priestly party of worldly-minded aristocrats. They maintained their privileged status by cooperating with the Romans and thus nationalist and the pious Jews opposed them. Not much is known about them, and they disappeared after the destruction of the Temple. Unlike the Pharisees and most Jews, the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection.¹ This is the only mention of the Sadducees in Luke's Gospel. They are mentioned in Acts (4:1; 5:17; 23:6-8).

²⁸ and they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁹ Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and died without children. ³⁰ And the second ³¹ and

¹ L. Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 3 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 307.

the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. ³² Afterward the woman also died. ³³ In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife."

The Sadducees present Jesus with a well-thought-out hypothetical question designed to refute the resurrection. The challenge is based on the levirate marriage provision designed to prevent a man's name and family dying out (Deuteronomy 25:5f). If a man died childless, his brother was to marry the widow and raise up children to the deceased. The challenge by the Sadducees involves this situation happening to all seven brothers! So, whose wife would the woman be in the resurrection? A fair question for those who can only think in worldly terms and no doubt the Sadducees thought they were about to make Jesus look like a fool.

³⁴ And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, ³⁵ but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, ³⁶ for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. ³⁷ But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. ³⁸ Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him."

Jesus essentially challenges the Sadducees not to think about the coming age the same way they think about life on earth. He differentiates between now (sons of this age, cf. Luke 16:8) and the post bodily resurrection of the coming age when Christ returns (Romans 8:23; 1 Corinthians 15:53-54). Marriage is an earthly provision. Jesus supports his argument by a case everyone is familiar with: by pointing out how God referred to Himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Since God is not the God of the dead, this implies there must be a resurrection.

Reflections

The Sadducees no doubt thought the teaching about the resurrection of the body was ridiculous. It was something that they thought their own reasoning could refute. Sadly, many Christians alive today have a similar attitude about the Bible. By the standard of the age, more and more of what is written in the Bible seems ridiculous to many. Falling into the trap of the normalcy bias and assuming the coming age will be like the new age, it is easy to be enamored by higher criticism and begin to feel intellectually superior when we cease to believe in some more of the "ridiculous" in the Bible. Yet once we reject inerrancy of Scripture, we go down a path where yesterday's radical is always too orthodox for today. Whether it takes five or fifty years we reach the point where we realize we have placed human intellect at a higher level of authority than the Bible. At that point we are pretty much left with finding some worldly cause to attach our idea of Christianity to give it meaning and purpose.

We will do well to remember that Jesus embarrassed the Sadducees in this confrontation when they thought they were intellectually superior!

