

Children of the Resurrection



*Matthew 22:23-45; Luke
20:27-44*

*Year C Proper 27; Year A
Proper 25*

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Parts by scene

■ = large part ▲ = medium sized part ● = small part

		1	2	3
▲	Young Sadducee - An earnest young man who wants to help his colleagues with their challenge to Jesus but is very unsure of himself	▲	▲	●
▲	Sadducee #1 - The leader of the group, the savviest among them in the tactics of religious debate	▲	●	▲
▲	Sadducee #2 - The most combative and impatient member of the group	●		▲
▲	Sadducee #3 - The kindest and most thoughtful member of the group	▲		▲
▲	Jesus		■	
●	Peter - the most headstrong disciple, and the least afraid of a fight, but never the smartest person in the room		●	

Scene 1

Sadducee #1 , Sadducee #2 , Sadducee #3 , Young Sadducee

{Four Sadducees, a religious group that doesn't believe in the afterlife or the resurrection of bodies, are on their way to challenge Jesus on this doctrine.}

Young Sadducee

Wait, wait! I've forgotten my lines!

Sadducee #1

Again?

Sadducee #2

Why are we even bothering with this charade? We should just challenge him directly!

Sadducee #1

It's better this way. *[pointedly to Young Sadducee]* Assuming we get our lines right.

Sadducee #3

[encouragingly] Don't worry, he can do it. *[to Young Sadducee]* What part have you forgotten?

Young Sadducee The part after, "there were seven brothers."

Sadducee #2 Are you kidding us? Look, if we're going to do this, why doesn't one of you play the part?

Sadducee #1 It's better if he does it. He's the youngest. This "rabbi" is notorious for dodging questions, but he won't snub an earnest-looking inquirer.

Sadducee #3 *[patiently to Young Sadducee]* Okay, there were seven brothers. Do you remember anything else?

Young Sadducee One of them got married.

Sadducee #3 Right. Then what?

Young Sadducee He died.

Sadducee #1 No! He died *before they had any children*. You have to include that last part.

Young Sadducee Why?

Sadducee #2 Yeah, why? That part of it just complicates things, and he's sure to forget it, anyway.

Sadducee #1 We need to explain why the other brothers had to marry her as well!

Sadducee #3 But why do we need to bring that weird law into it? Nobody follows it any more. Some people in the crowd might not even know about it. Couldn't the brothers just marry the widow for reasons of their own?

Sadducee #1 No, no! Seven brothers all marrying the same woman one after the other? That's just absurd.

Sadducee #2 *[sarcastically]* Yeah, by all means let's avoid absurdity.

Young Sadducee *[trying to restore peace]* I'll remember! The man's brother marries his widow because of the commandment from Moses that says you have to marry the widow of your brother if he dies childless,

and then that brother dies, also childless, and so forth and so on.

**Sadducee
#3**

Good. Now what's your big question at the end?

**Young
Sadducee**

When they're all resurrected, whose wife will she be?

**Sadducee
#3**

See? You had it all along.

**Sadducee
#1**

Just don't forget it! And do your best to seem like you're asking it for real and not just reciting it.

**Young
Sadducee**

There's just one thing I still don't understand.

**Sadducee
#2**

[sarcastically] Naturally!

**Sadducee
#3**

What's that?

**Young
Sadducee**

The answer.

**Sadducee
#1**

What? What answer?

**Young
Sadducee**

The answer to the question. Who's wife will she be?

**Sadducee
#2**

Hah!

**Sadducee
#1**

[with barely contained impatience] There *is* no answer. That's the whole point. Joshua of Nazareth is a believer in the eternal soul and the resurrection of bodies. This story shows that that doctrine is absurd. Just like: what happens with a man whose body is burned to ashes? or a cannibal who eats another person's body and turns it into his own? Get it?

**Young
Sadducee**

But what do I say if he answers me?

**Sadducee
#3**

Just leave that to us. All you need to do is get him started. We'll jump in after that.

Sadducee #1 And don't let on that you're a Sadducee! Or that you're with us.

Sadducee #2 *[scornfully]* That should be easy. He's barely either as it is!

Scene 2

Jesus , Peter , Sadducee #1 , Young Sadducee

{Jesus is just finishing a sermon to a crowd.}

Jesus Before we end, does anybody have any questions?

Young Sadducee Yes! I do! *[taking a deep breath before beginning]* There were seven brothers and one of the got married, but then died. *[remembering]* Before he had any children. He died before he had any children. So one of his brothers married his widow, but he died, too.

Sadducee #1 *[from elsewhere in the crowd]* Ahem!

Young Sadducee *[remembering]* The brother married the widow because that's what Moses commanded, but then he died, too. And he didn't have any children, either, so the next brother married his widow, and so forth and so on, until the last brother -

Jesus *[interrupting]* Is this a true story or made up?

Young Sadducee *[in a panic]* Uh...um...it's...it's...

Jesus *[gently interrupting again]* Son? Tell me the truth...

Young Sadducee *[about to humbly confess]* Yes, sir. The truth is that -

Jesus *[interrupting]* Are *you* the youngest brother?

Young Sadducee *[flustered by not being exposed after all]* Huh? Oh! Um, yes, I am. Or I might be. Um...

Jesus Nobody follows that law any more, you know, as is the case with many of Moses' commandments which he gave in days when men's hearts were harder than we hope they are now. *[going into sermonizing mode, raising his voice to address the whole crowd]* But hear the greater truth that Moses wrote, which is that a man shall leave his mother and father and be joined to his wife, and the two

shall be one!

Sadducee #1 *[from elsewhere in the crowd] Ahem!*

Young Sadducee *[interrupting Jesus] Sir? Sir!*

Jesus Yes?

Young Sadducee That wasn't my question.

Jesus I'm sorry! Tell us your question.

Young Sadducee So all seven brothers ended up marrying her, one after the other. But after the last one dies, and then she does, and then the resurrection comes, whose wife will she be?

Jesus Ah! A *theological* question. *[to the crowd]* Here is an admirable young man! There are not many at any age who care about heavenly matters. *[to the Young Sadducee]* For your answer, I'll need some help from the crowd. *[looking out across the crowd and then addressing Sadducee #1]* You! Sir!

Sadducee #1 *[stunned at being singled out] What, me?*

Jesus Yes sir. Are you married?

Sadducee #1 *[suspiciously] Yes.*

Jesus And do you have children?

Sadducee #1 Yes.

Jesus And a job through which you contribute to our society?

Sadducee #1 Yes.

Jesus When you were a child, did you ever fantasize about being grown up, and perhaps even play pretend sometimes?

Sadducee #1 I suppose so.

Jesus And did your play and your imaginings completely and accurately take in all that being an adult involves?

Sadducee #1 Of course not! I was just a child.

Jesus Instead, I would guess that it caught the essence of certain aspects, some perhaps surprisingly well, but fell far short of many others, especially the day-to-day realities, and missed some important aspects entirely. Is that right?

Sadducee #1 *[still wondering where Jesus is going with this]* I suppose that's true of everybody.

Jesus Thank you, sir. Peter! Come up here for a minute. *[to the crowd]* This is one of my disciples, Peter. *[to Peter]* You were a fisherman before you joined me, weren't you?

Peter I sure was.

Jesus When you were a fisherman, did you ever think about what it was like to be a fish? Or did you ever wonder what the fish thought your life was like?

Peter *[with humor]* I suppose I thought the fish wanted to be eaten by me, and I suppose it thought of me as some kind of huge fish eating monster!

{The crowd laughs.}

Jesus Very good! Thank you! *[to the Young Sadducee and then to the crowd at large, in an increasingly sermonizing tone]* Our problem is that we can only think about the next life in terms of this one, but those deemed worthy to pass into that realm will be as incomprehensible to our present selves as an adult is to a child, or a fisher to a fish. All our most essential experiences - including marriage, including death! - are mere shadows of the realities they will know, for they will be the Children of the Resurrection, a new creation, angelic and eternal. *[a pause, and then in a normal voice to the Young Sadducee]* So, my advice to you would be to ignore both that particular law of Moses and any fish's fantasies of what the resurrection will be like, and decide for your own reasons whether to marry your late brother's widow.

Young Sadducee *[relieved to finally be done with this]* Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

Jesus *[to the crowd]* Does anybody have any further questions or

comments about this young man's situation? *[waits for a while]* Very well. In that case, I have one more teaching to give you, and for that, I'll need Peter again.

Peter Yes, rabbi!

Jesus Peter, could you repeat the question you asked me just the other day?

Peter *[not remembering any question]* Um, the question?

Jesus Yes, the theological question you asked me.

Peter *[even more flummoxed]* The *theological* question? That I asked you?

Jesus I'm sure you remember. It was about what Moses called God. *[pointedly]* Remember?

Peter *[finally getting it]* Oh! Yes, of course!

Jesus You asked me how Moses could call God "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" if those three patriarchs were dead now. Because God is the god of the living, you said quite rightly, not of the dead. Remember?

Peter Absolutely! *[getting into the spirit of it]* And I wish you'd finally answer me!

Jesus Well, I'm sorry for the delay, but here at last is your answer: the reason is that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are *not* dead, but alive. In this way, Moses himself showed that the dead do not perish forever, but live on. *[after a look around the crowd]* And now, if there are no more questions, we'll end for today.

Scene 3

Sadducee #1 , Sadducee #2 , Sadducee #3 , Young Sadducee

{The Sadducees walk back to town together.}

Sadducee #1 Well, that was unfortunate.

Sadducee #2 *[glumly]* A debacle is what it was!

Young Sadducee *[contritely]* I'm really sorry, guys.

Sadducee #3 *[kindly]* Sorry for what?

Young Sadducee For messing it up.

Sadducee #3 You did fine as far as I could tell. What do you think you did wrong?

Young Sadducee I don't know what it was, but I figured it had to be something. Otherwise, you guys would have jumped in like you were planning.

Sadducee #1 *[with disgust]* We didn't jump in because we had nothing to say. He really threw us for a loop.

Sadducee #2 *[defiantly]* Temporarily! We just need some time to work this out, and we'll have answers for him soon enough.

Sadducee #3 Are you sure about that? That was a pretty powerful argument he made.

Sadducee #2 He just surprised us, is all. Just because we didn't have an answer on the spot doesn't mean there isn't one.

Young Sadducee Are you talking about that stuff about God being the God of the living?

Sadducee #1 Yes. It was a argument I'd never heard before, and I wonder where he got it.

Young Sadducee I don't understand it.

Sadducee #1 Well it's pretty simple. God is the God of the living. But Moses wrote that he was the God of Abraham and the other Patriarchs. So that must mean they're alive.

Young Sadducee But that doesn't prove that bodies will be resurrected, does it?

Sadducee #2 *[harshly]* You do recall that we believe not just in no resurrection, but no afterlife, don't you?

Young Sadducee Yes, but I don't even see how that argument proves there's an afterlife.

Sadducee #3 It's because Moses counts them among the living. God is the God of the living, right?

Young Sadducee Why?

Sadducee #2 *[impatiently]* That's just a given!

Young Sadducee Given by who?

{The other three men fall suddenly silent.}

Sadducee #1 By...by...

Sadducee #3 *[slowly]* Oh my God...

Sadducee #1 He tricked us!

Sadducee #2 What? What is it?

Sadducee #3 He based his whole argument on a false premise.

Sadducee #1 Which he suckered us into accepting!

Sadducee #3 As our young associate here put it: who says God is the God *only* of the living? Where is it written?

Sadducee #2 Of course!

Sadducee #1 It sounds like a noble attribute - to be the God of the Living - while being the God of the dead *sounds* somehow distasteful, and so you naturally want to believe the first and not the last.

Sadducee #3 But God is the God of all. *That* is the truly noble attribution. He's the God of living people and dead people, of the animals and the rocks, of the birds of the air and empty air itself.

Sadducee #2 For that matter, God is the God not only of today, but yesterday, even though yesterday no longer exists. He's the

God of the Flood, for example, or the God of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, even though those things happened long in the past.

**Sadducee
#1**

We've got to go back! We have him!

**Sadducee
#3**

It's too late. Even if we caught up with him, the crowd's dispersed.

**Sadducee
#2**

We'll come back tomorrow!

**Sadducee
#1**

We'll have to find another young person to bait him into the same argument.

**Sadducee
#2**

This again?

**Sadducee
#1**

If he sees us coming, he'll be ready. He'll dodge the issue. He obviously recognized that I was the one behind the question.

**Sadducee
#3**

Okay, I agree. We'll find another young volunteer. What question should he ask?

**Sadducee
#1**

It can't be the seven brothers again. That'll give us away right from the start.

**Sadducee
#3**

But I never liked the cremation argument.

{A brief silence as they realize which story that leaves.}

**Sadducee
#2**

We are *not* using the cannibals!

**Sadducee
#1**

All right, all right. We'll work up another scenario. We could use some new material, anyway. Tomorrow, we catch him for sure!

*You can read my thoughts about this play and respond with your own at
www.WineskinProject.net/blog/sadducees*

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