

The Question of the Day

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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 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.”

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.”

39 Then some of the scribes answered, “Teacher, you have spoken well.”

40 For they no longer dared to ask him any question.

41 But he said to them, “How can they say that the Christ is [David’s son](#)?

42 For David himself says in the Book of Psalms,

 “ *The Lord said to my Lord,*
 “*Sit at my right hand,*

43 *until I make your enemies your footstool.*” ’

44 David thus calls him Lord, so how is **he his son?**”

45 And in the hearing of all the people he said to his disciples,

46 “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts,

47 who devour widows’ houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

21:1 Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box,
2 and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins.

3 And he said, “Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them.

4 For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”

Luke 20:27-21:4

The Greatest Question

Based on today’s passage, I decided to Google “**greatest questions ever asked.**” The first result, which of course appears to be paid and which leads to a great question in itself—*will we ever have a truly free internet again*, led a scientific page that asked **the following questions**: *What comes after Homo sapiens? What happens after you die? What is consciousness? Will we ever have a theory of everything? Is the universe deterministic? What is life? Do we have free will? What is reality?*¹

¹ I hate to cite it since they paid for the spot, but I guess I quoted it so here goes: “The Biggest Questions Ever Asked,” *New Scientist*, <https://www.newscientist.com/round-up/biggest-questions/>, as accessed Dec 19, 2023.

Thankfully, this page actually **hits the target** at least in one way that I think we need to shoot for here. For all of these questions are dealing with metaphysics and the **ultimate nature of reality and life after death**. Why are these questions so important? It is because the life we live right now is fleeting. You know, no matter how different we all may be, every single one of us shares this in common. We are all alive; none of us have died; and none of us knows what that is going to be like. As far as it concerns any of our experiences, this is a total mystery. It doesn't matter if you may still have quite a while left in this physical body and world or not so much. Everyone must face these questions sooner or later. It's best to do it sooner.

According to the Bible, **there is indeed life after death**. But not all go to the same place. Some go to be with the Lord in glory and will live with him forever doing things that are incomprehensible and inconceivable in their glory, even in the intermediate state, but certainly once we have **our resurrected bodies** and God makes all things new and without sin. Some, however, do not go here. Some will go to a place of torment and **judgment for the sins they have committed** in this life that were not forgiven in Christ. The Bible refers to

it as a place of outer darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth, Gehenna, the lake of fire—hell. Therefore, when you think of the greatest question you can ask, **you had probably better ask a good one**, if your eternal destiny is on the line. Sadly, none of the questions on this site go deep enough.

Luke 20:27-21:4 – Context and Structure

We will be looking at **Luke 20:27-21:4**. It contains **four separate episodes** that I think deserve to be discussed together. **The first (Luke 20:27-40)** introduces us for the first and only time in Luke's Gospel to a group called **the Sadducees**. Understanding who they are will be critical for grasping the reason this story has made it into the Gospels. Here is a brief biography of them from James Edwards:

Of the several parties and sects of Judaism in first-century Palestine, the **Pharisees** (see at 5:17) and **Sadducees** (see at 16:14) dominated Jewish life in general and the Sanhedrin in particular [the Sanhedrin was the supreme council and tribunal of Israel made up of the High Priest and seventy individuals, and which had religious, civil, and criminal jurisdiction]. **Pharisees and Sadducees evidently arose at roughly the**

same time during the Maccabean revolt against Seleucid tyranny (early second century b.c.). Despite their common origin, they differed greatly in outlook. Pharisees believed in divine sovereignty, while Sadducees affirmed human free will alone; Pharisees believed in angels and demons, both of which Sadducees denied; Pharisees affirmed an understanding of Scripture and revelation that included both written (Torah, Writings, Prophets) and oral traditions, whereas Sadducees accepted only the written Torah; and finally, as this story indicates, Pharisees affirmed the resurrection of the dead, which Sadducees expressly denied (v. 27; Acts 23:8). Sadducees denied angels, demons, and the afterlife because of their exclusive reliance on Torah, which does not set forth these doctrines. Sadducees were thus rationalistic and conservative in theology, whereas the fuller perspective of revelation characteristic of Pharisaism resulted in a more progressive theological outlook. Jesus stood in closer theological alignment with Pharisees than with Sadducees, which may account for his frequent association—and conflicts—with Pharisees, and his lack of association with Sadducees.²

My only quibble with how Edwards describes this is the idea that the Sadducees were conservative in theology while

² James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2015), 576.

the Pharisees were more progressive. That totally depends on how you look at it. From a rationalistic point of view, this could be true. However, rationalism in modern times really goes hand in hand with *liberal* theology in their **denial of the supernatural**. It is actually conservatives who hold to the supernatural against the liberals. As we will see from Jesus himself, it is hardly “progressive” to affirm the supernatural, even if all you have to work with is the five books of Moses. In this way, I find this particular spin on the Sadducees less than impressive. But other than that, it does help us see some important things that we will come back to in due time, especially the idea of **resurrection**, which we’ve now mentioned several times.

The second story comes after a series of stories where the leaders of Israel are questioning Jesus. The one with the Sadducees just happens to be the last. In this one, **Jesus turns the tables on them**. Ralph Martin sums up the significance of the moment: “**After a day of questions comes the question of the day.**”³ This then is where we find **one of the most important questions** a person can ask or be asked. The question itself deals with **David’s son**. As you look at these two stories, it is

³ **Ralph P. Martin**, *Where the Action Is: A Bible Commentary for Laymen on Mark* (Glendale: Regal Books, 1977), 106. Cited in Edwards, 582.

natural to ask **what might tie them together**. It is clearly the idea of “son.” For in the first story, Jesus talks about the “*sons of this age*” (34), “*sons of God*” and “*sons of the resurrection*” (36). In the second it is “*David’s son*” (41, 44). In this way, these first two stories are a pair that help us to interpret the other properly.

After this, Luke gives us **two more stories** that are clearly tied together through the theme of the “*widow*” (20:47, 21:2). In the first of this pair (i.e. **the third**), he tells the people to beware of the scribes **who devour widows**, among other things. It is in this story that the **judgment** comes front and center. Judgment for what? We will see how that question is related to both the second and the fourth stories. But needless to say now that it is related to what I brought up in the beginning.

The fourth story is an example of how **hypocritical** these religious leaders are, and how the very people they devour are often those God looks upon with the most concern and love. In this case, it is **the faith of a widow** that comes to the forefront, putting the capstone on our text, for in it we understand the biggest problem of all with the hypocrites and why they refuse to answer the Great Question.

One further point showing how connected these stories are, the end of the first, and the whole of the second and third all seem to be tied together by [a loose chiasm](#):

A.Scribes (39-40) [First story]

B.David's son (41) [Second Story]

C.Psalm 110 citation (42-43)

B'. David's Son (44)

A'. Scribes (45-47) [Third Story]

Couple this with the third and fourth both focusing on widows (we'll see one more has her too) and it means [they really are a unit of thought](#) and should be looked at simultaneously, all the more so when you realize that Luke decided to put the story of [the Greatest Commandment](#)—which falls between our first and second stories in Mark and Matthew—way back in [Luke 10:25-28](#) and he (along with Mark) essentially turns a 36 verse discourse on the evil Pharisees into a very short summary (Luke has a lot of that back in [11:39-51](#)). Clearly, he felt that those would have damaged his intended focus if he had left them in this part of the Gospel. So that means we get to go on [a little investigation](#) to try and figure out what he's doing different here than the other Gospels do, and when we understand that that is, we really are blown away.

The Sadducees Question Jesus

“There came to him some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection” (Luke 20:27). I’ve given you an introduction to this sect and we’ve seen that they in fact do deny the resurrection, but this is so important, the Gospel makes sure you understand it up front. They do not believe in the resurrection of the dead.

Luke is setting us up for the end of his Gospel and your own response to what will happen to Jesus. But that won’t be for a few more days. Another reason to bring up the resurrection is because, they believed, it wasn’t to be found in the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses, which is the only books they regarded as Scripture. Still a third reason is that the Sadducees were “the party of privilege, the ruling elite. Their priests held the majority in the seventy-one-member Sanhedrin.”⁴ Therefore, as Ryken says, “It hardly seems surprising that the Sadducees denied the resurrection, for they were wealthy men who enjoyed almost all the material comforts that this life has to offer. Or maybe the connection

⁴ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, vol. 2, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 375.

went the other way: because they denied eternal life, these men had nothing better to do than live for the present.”⁵

How difficult it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.

Like those who came before them that day, they set out to ask Jesus a question (28). It’s a good bet that they were trying to trap him as well. They asked, “Teacher ...” This is the same word (*didaskale*) in all three Gospels. They didn’t regard Jesus as anything more than that. Sounds a lot like the liberals of today who deny his deity. We’ve all heard it. It’s the *Time Magazine* line: “Jesus the great teacher.” That’s it.

“... 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” (28). Did you hear who just came up again? *The widow*! She’s actually in three of the four stories. At any rate, this comes from **Deuteronomy 25:5-10** and is called the **Law of Levirate Marriage**. “Levirate” comes from the Latin *levir* (*laevus vir*), “a husband’s brother.” “The purpose of the levirate marriage legislation was to continue the name of the deceased husband and to give him an ‘afterlife’ through the children that his wife and

⁵ Ibid., 376.

his brother would conceive.”⁶ This is as close to a resurrection as these men will come.

Luke basically focuses on vs. 5, but here’s the whole law:

5 “If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband’s brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her.

6 And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.

7 And if the man does not wish to take his brother’s wife, then his brother’s wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, ‘My husband’s brother *refuses to perpetuate his brother’s name in Israel*; he will not perform the duty of a husband’s brother to me.’

8 Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him, and if he persists, saying, ‘I do not wish to take her,’

9 then his brother’s wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face. And she shall answer and say, ‘So shall it be done to the man who does not *build up his brother’s house*.’

10 And the name of his house shall be called in Israel, ‘The house of him who had his sandal pulled off.’”

⁶ David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Luke,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 366.

This law is essentially what we see going on in the stories of Judah and Tamar in **Genesis 38:6-11**, which is fascinating since Judah lived hundreds of years before Moses,⁷ and Ruth and Boaz (**Ruth 3:9-4:10**).

Here's what the Sadducees do with it. They give him a test case. “How should we understand the following scenario, Jesus?” “Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and died without children. And the second and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died” (**Luke 20:29-31**). What are we to make of this test case? Commentators have called it a “made-up story,” an “absurdity,” “contrived,”⁸ and “bad question because it was not really a question at all.”⁹ But is that true? This case bears striking similarities to a story in the Apocryphal book of Tobit (200 BC; see **Tobit 3:7–17; 6:10–8:18**) “where seven husbands of a young woman named Sarah die before giving her children ... The grief-stricken woman eventually finds solace

⁷ Basically all of the ANE had a form of this law. Cf. **S. Belkin**, “Levirate and Agnate Marriage in Rabbinic and Cognate Literature,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 60.4 (1970): 284–322; **Millar Burrows**, “The Ancient Oriental Background of Hebrew Levirate Marriage,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 77 (1940): 2-15; **D. A. Leggett**, *The Levirate and Goel Institutions in the Old Testament with Special Attention to the Book of Ruth* (Cherry Hill, NJ: Mack, 1974); and **M. Tsevat**, “Marriage and Monarchical Legitimacy in Ugarit and Israel,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 3 (1958): 237–243.

⁸ All cited in **Peter G. Bolt**, “What Were the Sadducees Reading? An Enquiry Into the Literary Background of Mark 12:18-23,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 45.2 (1994): 370.

⁹ **Ryken**, 378.

through her marriage to Tobit's son Tobias, the closest relative in a levirate marriage."¹⁰ Curiously all of the men are killed by *the evil demon Asmodeus* (possibly meaning "demon of wrath"). It seems very possible that this story was being debated amongst the Pharisees and that the Sadducees were now using it to test Jesus.

There are some interesting things about this possibility. **First**, later rabbinic texts teach that **a woman who has been widowed repeatedly was considered to be dangerous**. Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi said that just twice sufficed to establish that she had killed her husband. Rabbi Simeon ben Gamaliel said that three dead husbands established the presumption, prohibiting a fourth marriage.¹¹ **Second**, the Sadducees do not believe in the supernatural or demons. So if that is in the background, it makes an already crazy story all the more bizarre to them. **Third**, if this is true, then it supercharges the atmosphere and everyone would have wanted to know what Jesus would say, since they were all already either arguing about it or mocking the whole idea.

In the case of the Sadducees, it is clear that they are mocking it. For they ask their question immediately after

¹⁰ **Strauss**, *Luke*, 474. See Bolt's article for the many connections.

¹¹ See texts in Pao, 366–367.

finishing the test case, “Afterward the woman also died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife” (Luke 20:32-33). How are they mocking it? Because the Sadducees don’t believe in the resurrection! So to ask him about what happens in this case in the resurrection is their “gotcha” moment. Their thinking seems to be that either the levirate law was here to perpetuate the man’s name on earth because there is no such thing as the resurrection or the resurrection makes the whole point of the law absurd because it leads to such a complex spider web of relationships in the afterlife that it makes a mockery of God. The Sadducees must have been particularly proud of themselves at this moment, since the Pharisees keep getting humiliated whenever they try to trap Jesus. “We’ll show them and him!”

It’s into this that we read, “Jesus said to them ‘The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, 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 for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.’” (34-36). As proud as the Sadducees must have been with

themselves, Jesus levels them to the ground with a single sentence.¹²

Luke is quite different here from Matthew or Mark. First, those two have the whole thing begin with Jesus saying, “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matt 22:29, Mark 12:24). Luke does not have this, instead he adds a whole discussion on the “sons” and “this age” and “that age” which are not found in the other two. Why? I think it is because he is using this to make a link with the next story. The effect seems to have the same end goal, but goes at it a different way. Perhaps Luke drops the “Scripture” and “power of God” bit because he is writing to a Gentile who might not be as interested in that as Jews would be.¹³ But someone has suggested that the whole point of saying this in the first place is because in doing so, “Jesus was indirectly pointing to himself ... No one understood! ... Jesus was exposing the basic reason for their misunderstanding which is that they could not comprehend Christ through the Scriptures and thus were unable

¹² It’s interesting that at least some of the Rabbis taught the same thing! For example *b. Ber. 17a*: “In the world-to-come there is no eating and drinking, or procreation and childbearing, or trade or business, or enmity and strife, but the righteous sit with crowns on their heads and enjoy the radiance of the Shekinah” (cf. *’Abot R. Nat. 1*; see Lachs 1987: 361). See Pao 368.

¹³ Anna Beresford, *Before You Were Born, I anointed You* (Wipf & Stock, 2022), 110. This was literally the only commentary I could find that even tried to give a reason for this.

to identify him as the one standing before them.”¹⁴ Luke gets exactly here, but via another route.

In bringing up “this age” and contrasting it to “that age,” Jesus is blowing a hole in the assumption of the Sadducees that everything in the next life would be identical to this one, if there actually were such a thing. But their assumption is wrong. Why? Two related reasons.

One, sonship is different in this age and the age to come. How? Because in this age, sonship [is supposed to] comes through marriage. This means that in the age to come, the main purpose of marriage ceases to exist. People fail to grasp that biblically speaking, God gave us marriage for bearing children and filling the earth with those made in God’s image. If we have eternal life and “cannot die anymore,” in the next age, then that function of marriage ceases.¹⁵ As Hendriksen said, “marriage with a view to the perpetuation of the race will not be necessary.”¹⁶

It’s at this point that we get a very strong allusion to **Genesis 6:1-4**. Jesus says we will be equal to “angels” as

¹⁴ Thomas Pulickal, *The Deep Things of God* vol. 1 (India: Notion Press, 2020), np.

¹⁵ Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, ed. Jeffrey Reimer, Elliot Ritzema, and Danielle Thevenaz, Awa Sarah, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 472.

¹⁶ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, vol. 11, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 906.

“sons of God.” How? In two ways. **We cannot die.** And, in **not marrying or being given in marriage.** Now, in the only ancient view of Genesis 6:1-4, the sons of God—heavenly beings, which the LXX translated as “angels” forsook their heavenly abode and came down to earth to produce offspring. Yes, they saw that the women were beautiful, but the ultimate purpose here was not simple lust. It was to create a seed, a seed which could destroy the Messiah by breeding humanity out of existence.¹⁷ But this was a sin and they were not supposed to do it. Why? Not because they *can't* do it, but because in heaven they do not marry. Now, this “sons of God” and Genesis 6 thing will become important again in the second story, but let's continue.

A **second allusion** to the OT now arises. **“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.”** This, of course, is found in **Exodus 3:6.** Jesus is saying that **this verse teaches the resurrection.** Clearly, Jesus would have flunked a modern hermeneutics class for this one, because we are taught that such ideas must be explicit, and I'm confident that if this story

¹⁷ On the allusion cf. **Strauss**, 474.

wasn't here, I would have flunked any course I took if I tried to make this argument from Exodus 3. But that's a shame on us, not Jesus. Because it is explicit, if you just read it. "I am" (*ego eimi*) is a present active verb! They are alive!

Why is it significant that we have allusions to Genesis and Exodus? Because they are the books of Moses, and the Sadducees only held these as authoritative. It wouldn't do him any good to quote Psalm 16 or Daniel 12 or Isaiah 53,¹⁸ because it would have held no power over the minds of these Sadducees. But in citing Moses, he shut them up. "Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him" (Luke 20:39).¹⁹ Then some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, you have spoken well." Those were probably Pharisees, because he just upheld the resurrection, which

¹⁸ Pao (369) gives a helpful list of Rabbinic arguments for the resurrection of the dead, citing: Ex 6:4; 15:1; Num 15:31; 18:28; Deut 4:4; 11:9; 31:16; 32:1, 39; 33:6; Josh 8:30; Job 19:26; Ps 16:9, 11; 50:4; 84:5; Song 7:10; Isa 26:19; Ezek 37:9; Dan 12:2; *b. Sanh.* 90b (baraita); 91b (baraita); 92a; *Sipre Num.* 15:31 (112); *Sipre Deut.* 32:2 (306) (see Str-B 1:893–95; TDNT 1:368–72).

¹⁹ An interesting parallel is found here: "Those who die for the sake of God live to God, as do Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the patriarchs" (4 Macc. 16:25; cf. 7:19).¹⁹

Pantes gar autō zōsin ("... for all live to him"). I really don't like translating *autō* as "to him" because it is too vague in English. Does this mean that we are really only alive in the sense that he sees everything as present? This would destroy the point of us actually being there in heaven and could deny an actual resurrection, the exact opposite point Jesus is making. It makes more sense to me to go with something like, "in him" (Tyndale 1536) or "before him" (NET). It's in the Dative Case, so we would have a Dative of Association: "with him," or a Dative of Manner (the manner in which the action of the verb is carried out): "with him," or a Locative Dative (the place or sphere in which something happens): "in him," that is in his presence.

they taught. Jesus is playing these evil men against one another! And at the end of it, “**They no longer dared to ask him any question**” (40). Yeah, because he made them all look like the fools they were every time they tried.

Jesus Questions Them All

At just this moment, **Jesus turns the tables on them**. All day long he has been fielding their trick questions and straw-men arguments. Now it’s his turn. “**But he said to them, ‘How can they say that the Christ is David’s son?’**” (41). I should point out here that Matthew says the “them” is specifically the Pharisees, which makes sense. Luke doesn’t seem to care who you think it was though.

Now, this **feels like it is a question that just comes out of the blue**, a complete and total change of subject. It’s difficult to understand the logic of Jesus doing that. This is where Luke’s brilliance shines forth, because in both Matthew and Mark, there is another story that goes here first. But not in Luke. In having **this story come right now** and in having Jesus **just talking about “sons,”** his question ties directly to the previous. But what is he going to do?

“David’s son” was a favorite title for Messiah in Jesus’ day and he turns to **Psalm 110**. “For David himself says in the Book of Psalms, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “*Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool*”’” (42-43). This is the most quoted text from the OT in the NT.²⁰ The Psalm is deeply messianic. Besides this verse, **vs. 4** is about the Lord swearing to Melchizedek that he is a priest forever. Melchizedek seems to be the same figure as the person in **vs. 1**. Also, **vs. 3** in the LXX has a completely different wording than in the Hebrew. It says, “*With you is dominion in the day of your power, in the splendor of your saints: I have begotten you from the womb before the morning.*”²¹ This is the only-begotten language of the OT.

In **vs. 1** we have two “Lords” with the same word in English and Greek, but *two words* in the Hebrew. The first is YHWH. The second is Adonai. This is like we find in **Psalm 2** where YHWH laughs in heaven (4) and pronounces (7) to Adonai (4) that he is his “*begotten son*” (7). Both are classic

²⁰ This note appears in **Edwards**, 583. “According to D. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973), 15, 45–47, Ps 110 is quoted or alluded to **thirty-three times** in the NT and seven times in early Christian authors. The most important quotations are 20:42; Matt 22:44; Mark 12:36; Acts 2:34; 1 Cor 15:25; Heb 1:13; and the most obvious allusions are 22:69; Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62; 16:19; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12.”

²¹ The Hebrew, “*Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours.*”

Two-Powers texts. What are two powers? It was a discussion going on in the first century about certain passages in our OT that appear to have two powers in heaven, “two gods” as Philo put it (*Questions on Genesis* 2.62), even though there is only one God! Listen to the Alexandrian Jew,

And even if there be not as yet any one who is worthy to be called a son of God, nevertheless let him labour earnestly to be adorned according to *his first-born logos, the eldest of his angels, as the great archangel of many names; for he is called, the authority, and the name of God, and the Word [logos], and man according to God’s image, and he who sees Israel ...* Even if we are not yet suitable to be called the sons of God, still we may deserve to be called the children of his eternal image, of his most sacred logos; for the image of God is his most ancient word [logos].”

(Philo, *Confusion of Tongues* 146)²²

Jesus’ point here is that you have **David singing to God**. He starts his song by reflecting on an amazing conversation between YHWH and his Lord (Adonai). David calls Adonai his Lord. Yet, Adonai is distinct from YHWH. It is to Adonai that YHWH swears the oaths. In this case, it is just the

²² See Alan Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven* (Boston: Brill, 1977), 174.

first one. Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool. To put this in Christian terms, **the Father is swearing to the Son** that he will sit at his right hand until all his enemies are subdued.

Believe it or not, this would not have been all that controversial, as a large minority of Jews held to teachings just like this, perhaps even on the same passage. What is so mind blowing is that Jesus now returns to the “son” language asking, “**If Jesus calls him Lord, how is he *his son*?**” **Mind-blower**. Sons are not lords of their fathers in any world. Except this one.

Now, I said there is a tie-in here to the previous story and that we would return to Genesis 6. Recall that **the angels are called “sons of God.”** This is a title that is given to the Second Person of the Trinity in **Psalm 2** when the Lord says, “**You are my Son; today I have begotten you.**” (And notice the “begotten” link with Psalm 110.)

It makes sense, because throughout the OT, **the Angel of the LORD** is the one who inherits Israel, just like the other sons of God inherit the other nations, to rule over them (**Deut 32:8-9; Ps 82:1, 6**; etc.). So God has a son, language that originates in Genesis 6 with the heavenly beings.

But now David has a son **and it's the same person!** Jesus says this is the OT teaching, remember!

In connecting these two stories as he does, **Luke is blowing our minds.** Not only does he destroy the smug Sadducees in a single sentence, now he is destroying them all because they have failed to believe the Scriptures that they are about himself, the very person standing in front of them, both Son of David and Son of God. They are full of evil and willful unbelief. They pride themselves on knowing the Scripture and they fail to realize that these are the things that speak about him.

Beware of the Scribes

In this way, the question of the day, **the great and ultimate question of questions,** must focus on Christ. How can David's Lord also be his son? Who does you say that I am? Who is Jesus? This is the great question. But they would have none of it. Luke ends this here, but Mark says, **"The great throng heard him gladly"** (**Mark 12:37**). Unlike the leaders, the people were eating it up. Matthew says, **"And**

no one was able to answer him word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions” (Matt 22:46).

In not saying anything like this, but moving on to the third story, Luke again shines a little differently. He immediately says, “Beware the scribes...” (Luke 20:46). Why? He will now unfold two brief stories that explain. At this point in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus unleashes an all-out verbal attack on the leaders. 36 verses of woes against the white-washed tombs, brood of vipers, hypocrites, and blind fools! But Luke condenses this to the essence.

First, “... who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts” (46). He’s talking here about the outward, external religion of the priests which expanded into various duties such as scribes and Pharisees and judicial Sadducees. For them, it’s about the pomp, it’s about the prestige, it’s about the power, it’s about the attention and glory they have simply because of what they are—and many of them were descendants of Levi.

It’s not that it was bad to walk around in long robes or go to marketplaces or sit in synagogues or at feasts. What was bad was that they did these things purely for themselves.

It was about pride and pretense. And, as Jesus scolds, “... who devour widow’s houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation” (Luke 20:47). They did these things at the expense of others.

Luke singles out here **the widows**. In fact, they are the only outcasts he mentions. He could have talked about eunuchs or tax-collectors or women in general or lepers or the blind or the poor, all of whom he has singled out before. But he talks about the widows alone. Why?

It’s because of **the fourth story**, which begins the next chapter in Luke. “Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box” (Luke 21:1). The way Luke puts it, the rich here are almost certainly those he has just denounced: **Pharisees and Sadducees**. But, of course, it doesn’t have to be limited to them. Mark in fact says “**Many rich people**” did this and has Jesus going from this spot and sitting down opposite the treasury and watching all the people. But Luke is much more abrupt. He’s connecting this story to the previous one intentionally. Jesus simply “**looks up.**”

They go into **the temple treasury** and proudly put their money into the box, presumably so that everyone will know

how good they are, how religious, how godly. But then “he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins” (2). Widows were often the poorest and most helpless people in Jewish society (see **Luke 18:3**). The coin she puts in it a **lepton**, the smallest coin in circulation in Palestine. It was worth 1/128 of a denarius, which was a day’s wage. If it is even possible to put this into any kind of perspective today with inflation what it is, let’s say you worked at McDonalds for **\$20/hr for eight hours**. That’s \$160. A tithe of that would be a tenth, or \$16. That was the requirement by the Law of Moses. She put in **\$3.00**.

Jesus then says, “Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on” (**21:3-4**). Now, you should know that what Jesus said here isn’t all that original. For example, Aristotle wrote that “**one’s generosity is to be evaluated in terms of one’s resources.... People who are truly generous give in proportion to what they actually have. It is possible, therefore, that a person who gives but little out of small resources is more**

generous than another.”²³ That isn’t the main point, though it is a good one and one that is lost on a lot of people, including all these rich people.

The point is, *she is a widow doing this*. Go back to how the scribes “devour widow’s houses.” The *Backgrounds Commentary* says, “This may refer to exploiting the estate of widows for whom they had been appointed guardians.”²⁴ In other words, *they were stealing from widows*, just like her. In fact, probably from her. This makes for a beautiful contrast to this poor widow. These men helped make her as poor as she is! So, they sit there and show everyone just how godly they are even as they exploit widows, meanwhile, the widow who has been completely taken advantage of by these “godly” men is given more than them all because she actually has almost nothing left to give in the first place. It’s amazing.

Now, let’s circle back to the first story, with the “widow” being *the one whose husbands keep dying*. She was presumed at the least “dangerous” by the rabbis, and even a murderer of her husbands. Same person—the widow.

²³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.1.19; cited by Danker, *Jesus and the New Age*, 328. Cf. Euripides, *Danaë* frg. 319. For a later Jewish parallel involving a widow see *Lev. Rab.* 3.5 on 1:7 (see comments on Mark 12:42). Cited in Strauss, 477.

²⁴ Strauss, 476.

Do you see what Jesus is doing? These stories are profoundly linked. So what's their ultimate point?

Blind men tried their damndest (I say that very intentionally) to trap Jesus, because they hated him. They wanted him dead. They use a pathetic husband-murdering widow this time around to spring their trap. But it didn't work, because these fools don't understand the Scripture or the one they are talking to.

Sons of God don't worry about such questions, because they understand the eternal state isn't like this one. They especially don't ask such questions to the Son of God who is also David's Son and who is standing right in front of their eyes. They are mocking God to his face. They don't understand the Scripture or the one they are talking to.

Beware such men, for they lay in wait for the unsuspecting in the halls of our religious institutions and cathedrals and sanctuaries, to take advantage of them even as everyone around them pats them on the back for how brilliantly godly they are. But they aren't godly. **They are sick.** And, as I used that word a moment ago for a reason, "**They will receive the greater condemnation,**" for that's what it means to be

damned. It is to be condemned, consigned to the outer darkness for all eternity. Hell. The lake of fire. All their efforts to prop themselves up even as they tear down the most abused and taken advantage of in society pay off—in hell.

Why? This is the heart of it: **Because they would not acknowledge Jesus.** It's the great question he put to them and its one of the most important you can ask yourself today. How can God also be David's son? And do you understand this means he is both God and man? Do you understand that it means you must have faith to see, because even when he stood there before their faces, they were **blinded by their sin.**

But the widow, she stands out. Because she is a sinner. She is poor. She is helpless. She has no social standing. She is a pariah, an outcast. She isn't important. But **her simple faith in God** allowed her to express what these men never could. She understood what they did not. God loved her so much that he sent his Son to come to her, and during his time on earth he spent it helping, healing, saving, and redeeming the likes of her.

What is your answer to this great question? You are going have to answer it some day, whether you like it or not.

For on that Great Day, every knee will bow. Answer the question today, so that your bowing will be out of gratitude rather than forced. You've seen two ways, two peoples, to alternatives presented to you by the Savior himself. If David, the very king of Israel, the most important, highest, most powerful man in their world called him Lord, how could he also be his son? The answer is the Good News, if you will believe it.

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Luke 20-21	Matthew 22-23	Mark 12
27 There came to him some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection,	23 The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection,	18 And Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection.
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.	and they asked him a question, 24 saying, "Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.'	And they asked him a question, saying, 19 "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, 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.	25 Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother.	20 There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no offspring.
30 And the second	26 So too the second	21 And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring.
31 and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died.	and third, down to the seventh.	And the third likewise. 22 And the seven left no offspring.
32 Afterward the woman also died.	27 After them all, the woman died.	Last of all the woman also died.
33 In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife."	28 In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her."	23 In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife."

34 And Jesus said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage,	29 But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage,	24 Jesus said to them, “Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? 25 For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor 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.	but are like angels in heaven.	but are like angels in heaven.
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.	31 And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: 32 ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.”	26 And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am 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.”		27 He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong.”
39 Then some of the scribes answered, “Teacher, you have spoken well.”	33 And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.	
40 For they no longer dared to ask him any question.		
41 But he said to them, “How can they say that the Christ is David’s son?	41 Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, 42 saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.”	35 And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, “How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?
42 For David himself says in the Book of Psalms, “ ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand,	43 He said to them, “How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, 44 “ ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand,	36 David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared, “ ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand,
43 until I make your enemies your footstool.” ’	until I put your enemies under your feet” ’?	until I put your enemies under your feet.” ’
44 David thus calls him Lord, so how is he his son?”	45 If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?” 46 And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.	37 David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?” And the great throng heard him gladly.

45 And in the hearing of all the people he said to his disciples,	23:1 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples,	38 And in his teaching he said,
46 "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts,	2 "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, 3 so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice ... 6 and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues 7 and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others ...	"Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces 39 and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts,
47 who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."		40 who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."
21:1 Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box,		41 And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums.
2 and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins.		42 And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny.
3 And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them.		43 And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box.
4 For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."		44 For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

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