

Mark 12:18-27
The God of the Living

¹⁸ And Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection. 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^[a] must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁰ There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no offspring. ²¹ And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. ²² And the seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died. ²³ In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife.”

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, but are like angels in heaven. 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’? ²⁷ He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong.”

Let us pray:

Thank you, heavenly Father, in your wisdom and provision for the needs of your people, you provided the Holy Scriptures so we could learn about you and learn about the Lord Jesus, and we could be enlightened in our ignorance about the things of God. We thank you for this great text today and we ask for the guidance and enlightenment of your Holy Spirit that we might understand it aright, and thus grow in the knowledge of our holy faith, we pray in Jesus precious name. Amen.

Religious conflict has always been alive and well among humans. Recently some 41 Methodist Churches in the Dallas area voted to leave the United Methodist Church because of growing liberalism in that denomination.

In Jesus' day there was also a big conflict between the two major religious parties among the Jews: the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The former were the conservative party, holding to the entire OT as their authority; while the Sadducees only accept as fully authoritative the Torah – the first 5 books of the OT.

The Pharisees did not believe there was going to be a future resurrection of the body, nor did they believe in angels. They were sort of like the liberals of their day. They also tended to be rich and prosperous and were cozily comfortable with their Roman overloads. The apostle Paul was not a Sadducees, but instead was a devout Pharisee. He believed in the resurrection of the dead; he just didn't believe Jesus of Nazareth had been resurrected until he appeared to him one day as Paul approached Damascus. Of course, from then on Paul knew Christ had resurrected and he was not bashful to proclaim that.

I. The Sadducees Disparaged Belief in the Resurrection - v. 18-23

What we see in this passage is that one day a group of Sadducees had come up with a scheme to try and make belief in the resurrection of the dead look ridiculous, and also to trip up Jesus, and make him look ridiculous. They failed on both counts.

So here's the situation that the Pharisees put before Jesus. first of all, hey pulled a text out of the Torah, from Deut. 25:5-6, which reads:

⁵ (B) "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 (C) 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 (D) his name may not be blotted out of Israel.

So the Law of Moses stated here that if a man who is married dies before bearing any sons, then his brother is to marry his widow and if she has a son, then that son shall carry the name of the first husband so that that line of descendants of the first husband would not perish from the nation of Israel.

So launching from this text, this group of Sadducees constructed this situation and put it before Jesus... if the first brother dies and his brother marries the widow and he dies before bearing a son...and the third brother then marries the widow and so forth the woman ends up marrying all seven brothers and none of the seven marriages produces a son – then when they all get to heaven, which of the seven brothers will be her husband?

The Pharisees were gleefully confident that this situation would throw Jesus into a quandary – he wouldn't know how to answer them. So he would look stupid and the whole idea of resurrection and the supposed marriages in heaven would be laughable.

II. The Sadducees Were Wrong on Several Counts – v. 24

²⁴ Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.

A. They didn't know the Scriptures

Discounted the Resurrection in such texts as:

Psalm 16:9-11

Therefore my heart is glad, and my (A) whole being^[a] rejoices;
my flesh also dwells secure.

¹⁰ For you will not abandon my soul to (B) Sheol,
(C) or let your (D) holy one see (E) corruption.^[b]

¹¹ You make known to me (F) the path of life;
in your presence there is (G) fullness of joy;
at your right hand are (H) pleasures forevermore.

Dan. 12:1-2

But at that time your people shall be delivered, (C)everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. ² And many of those who (D)sleep in (E)the dust of the earth shall (E)awake, (G)some to everlasting life, and (H)some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Job 19:25-27

For I (A)know that my (B)Redeemer lives,
and at the last he will stand upon the (C)earth.^[a]
²⁶ And after my skin has been thus destroyed,
yet in^[b] my flesh I shall (D)see God,
²⁷ whom I shall see for myself,
and my eyes shall behold, and not (E)another.
My heart (E)faints within me!

Psa. 73:24-26

You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will receive me to glory.
²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you?
And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.
²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength^[a] of my heart and my portion forever.

B. They didn't know the power of God (to overcome death)

C. They didn't understand that life in the world to come is not the same as this one.

Marriage will not exist; no longer needed to carry on the human race.

See Luke 20:34-36

⁴ 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^[a] of the resurrection.

In the Age to Come:

No marriage

No death

No births

No need to produce children – all that is ended.

III. Jesus Showed them the Resurrection from the Dead in their own text

Exo. 3:4-6 –

⁴ When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵ Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." ⁶ And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

He is still in active relationship with each of (“the God of...the God of...”) the patriarchs.

He is the personal God of each man.

He does not say, “I was the God” but “I am the God of Abraham...” I am their God, they are submitted to me, they worship me as their God, I watch over them, I guide them, I help them, I communicate with them – there is active personal relationship between each of these 3 patriarchs and myself. There is fellowship between us. It is not a past fellowship but a present fellowship. It is not a dead fellowship but a living fellowship.

Why didn’t the Sadducees see that? They were predisposed to discount the possibility of a resurrection from the dead – they were blind to that – and when it stared them in the face they couldn’t see it.

III. The nature of humanity, the nature of God, and God’s relationship with men point to their ongoing lives and ultimate resurrection

A. The nature of humanity’s creation is not temporary

Gen. 1:26

⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man[♂] in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

This is not physical image.

It is spiritual, relational, moral – a spiritual reality that is not subject to death.

Psalm 139:7-10

Where shall I go from your Spirit?

Or where shall I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there!

If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

⁹ If I take the wings of the morning

and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me,

and your right hand shall hold me.

In life and in death one cannot escape the presence of God.

Positively – in life and even in death the presence of God is with his people.

Psalm 16:9-11

Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being^[a] rejoices;
my flesh also dwells secure.

¹⁰ For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.^[b]

¹¹ You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

– Christ is the first fruit of the R'n of the dead
-Since Christ arose, his people will follow.
-he is the forerunner
-he is the anchor

B. God's nature is that of steadfast love and faithfulness

Exo. 34:6-7

⁶ The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands,^[a] forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty.

Two chief attributes of God: steadfast love and faithfulness

These attributes are exercised within himself as Trinity but also in relation to his people. In relation to his people, they have no meaning unless that relationship continues. If my body and soul is annihilated (to destroy utterly; obliterate) when I die, what use or meaning or relevance is it if God is the God of steadfast love and faithfulness?

Some religions such as 7th Day Adventist, teach that the soul is annihilated at death. There is no possibility of ongoing relationship between the believer and God.

C. God's relationship with his people is not temporary

Psalm 4:3

But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself;
the Lord hears when I call to him.

Psalm 28:9

Oh, save your people and bless your heritage!
Be their shepherd and carry them forever.

Psalm 73:24-26

You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will receive me to glory.

²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you?

And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail,

but God is the strength^a of my heart and my portion forever.

Dan. 9:4

⁴ I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments

Luke 20:35-36 –

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^a of the resurrection.

"sons of God" = exalted term which would not terminate

The never dying relationship between the believer and God:

Cranfield

Origen: "It would be absurd to say that to say that God is the God of men who have no existence at all...so these 3 patriarchs are alive and are conscious of God and of his grace"...if they were still alive at the time of Moses , we may be confident that at the last God will also raise up their bodies, so they may share the final blessedness. The kernel of the argument is the faithfulness of God." p. 376

Barclay

"In the end Jesus based his conviction of the resurrection on the fact that the relationship between God and a good man is one that nothing can break. God was the friend of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when they lived. That friendship could not cease with death."p. 292

RC Sproul

"To prove that there will be a future resurrection, Jesus simply argued that God would not speak of Himself in this way were Abe, Isaac, and Jacob not alive beyond the graves. Their lives were and are in the hand of the God of the living, who does not let death end our personal existence." P. 314

W.N. Clarke (1881)

God could not have called himself the God of the patriarchs if their existence was transient, temporary. The argument is that the relationships that God enters with men implies their ongoing existence.

He is the God of the living.

IV. Applications

- A. We must not be charged with "You do not know the scriptures."
Not pick and choose which section of scripture we ascribe to.
- B. We should not doubt God's power to resurrect the dead.
- C. We should understand something about the nature of life in the world to come.
- D. We should be confident that even death, as we await the resurrection, will not separate **the believer from an active relationship with Christ.**
 - "Today you'll be with me in paradise"
 - "I desire to depart and be with Christ"
 - Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham

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March 12, 2023