

Mark 12:18-27

¹⁸ Then *some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection*, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: ¹⁹ "Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, and leaves *his* wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁰ Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. ²¹ And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. ²² So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. ²³ Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife." ²⁴ Jesus answered and said to them, "Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know 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 But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *burning bush passage*, how God spoke to him, saying, '*I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*'? ²⁷ He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken."

We are still on Wednesday in the week of Christ's death on the cross. Christ is two days away from His crucifixion.

Remember how we saw in the last sermon that the Jewish leadership had two goals to accomplish in a short period of time? They wanted to **set the common man against Christ**, and they wanted to **come up with a political charge** against Christ. And remember what we said about the questions Christ was being asked? In order to properly answer the questions, one must first address **the assumption** in the question. I used the example of the **yes/no** question- "Have you quit beating your wife yet?" Most men cannot answer that question with a yes or a no in a way that will convey a truthful answer because the assumption in the question is that the man was truly committing this awful behavior.

Brad might remember a meeting we were in a long time ago where the ministry in this church was being brought into question. The people who initiated the meeting were asking these kinds of questions, questions that clearly held assumptions that weren't true. And they were asking for yes/no answers. I got a chance to ask them a question, and that is the question I used to make my point. The point was that there are times you cannot wisely or truthfully answer the question the way it is framed.

We will see that again this morning. Jesus will not answer their question the way it is framed. In fact, it turns out to be a very ill informed question.

¹⁸ Then *some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection*, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying:

Now, the **Sadducees** only accepted the first 5 books of the Bible to be authoritative. There was some good in this, in that they saw themselves as the most Biblically conservative. The **Pharisees** relied on all kinds of books and traditions for guidance in what God wants. The **Sadducees** only accepted the first 5 books of the Bible as being authoritative. So they rejected all the garbage that the Pharisees taught and believed. But in one sense, they also threw out the baby with the bath water. They rejected passages from the rest of the Old Testament that clearly taught a resurrection from the dead.

Here are a few.

As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God; whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes will see and not another. (Job 19:25-27)

Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will dwell securely. For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever. (Ps. 16:9-11)

But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, for He will receive me. (Ps. 49:15)

With Your counsel You will guide me, and afterward receive me to glory. (Ps. 73:24)

If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. (Ps. 139:8)

Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. (Dan. 12:2)

The Sadducees would not accept these verses as being authoritative because they claimed the Pentateuch did not teach the resurrection, therefore the other books are not to be believed.

This resulted in a view that allowed these people to be **very proud** regarding their spirituality and **very evil** in their way of life. It was primarily the Sadducees that benefited from the fiasco of the temple money changers and sacrifice salesmen. They were not loved by the populace because they tended to be bedfellows with the Roman government.

OK, so these people do not believe in the resurrection. Now, think about that as you look at the question that they ask. They are going to ask a question about how a particular scenario **would work** in heaven. The million dollar question is,

why would a sincere person ask a question about something that they don't believe in at all?

That would be like me asking a modern day medium what my dad thinks about the purchase of my next car. It would be a nonsensical question because my beliefs will not allow me to accept the answer as truthful or helpful.

The fact that these men, who **do not believe** in the resurrection, are asking a question **about** the resurrection pretty much tells us all we need to know. This question is not seeking for an honest question in order to understand truth better. These are not sincere seekers and it is not a sincere question.

"Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, and leaves *his* wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother.

The Sadducee is quoting the Old Testament law. And it truly did teach such a thing. Duet 25:5-6 tells us about it.

Deuteronomy 25:5-6

⁵ **"If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be *married* to a stranger outside *the family*; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. ⁶ And it shall be *that* the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.**

Scholars call this levirate marriage. The purpose was to keep the dead brother's lineage going. This would keep the resources of the tribe in the tribe. And it would honor the dead brother by giving him a line.

Now let's take a look at the rest of the question. We are going to see an absurd situation being presented by the Sadducees.

²⁰ **Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. ²¹ And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. ²² So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. ²³ Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife."**

To the Sadducees, they think this imagined situation displays **the absurdity** of the idea of resurrection. Yet in the end, all the question does is displays the **ignorance of the questioner**. The **mockery** just displays the ignorance of **the mocker**. Ultimately that is the end result of all mockery of God and God's character and God's truth. It will display the ignorance and evil of the mocker. A person could have sincerely asked how marriage and the resurrection works. It would be a logical question. And Christ may have answered it with the same truth he reveals this morning. It isn't that the **question** is bad. It is the **assumption** that is wrong.

The same is true with most mockery. There are people who mock the idea that God could be **good** in light of all of the **suffering** on this planet. At the same time, there are Christians who wrestle with that same truth. We as Christians need to have an understanding of that apparent contradiction. We need an answer from God's Word. So one person will mock God and the other person will question God. And they are both looking at the same evidence.

There is also the question of the existence of God, or the question of creation. There are lots of questions that can be fuel for mockery or serious minded questions. We need to be careful not to assume that all questions are mockery. And we also should not be so **naïve** as to think that all **questions** and **questioners** are sincere. If we are to respond wisely, we will need to learn to discern how to best answer the questions. Jesus often **answered** questions by **asking** a question. We may do well in many situations to do the same.

Now the Sadducees think they have given Christ a situation that He cannot possibly make sense of. They think they, in all their cleverness, have put Christ in a corner. Let's see how Christ responds.

²⁴ **Jesus answered and said to them, "Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God?"**

Jesus responds to these guys and asks a rhetorical question. Isn't this the reason you ask this stupid question? Isn't this the reason you hold wrong assumptions? Why?

- 1- You don't know the scriptures and
- 2- You don't know the power of God

This word for "know" also means to understand. It means to perceive something and get the meaning from it.

Jesus is addressing the problem of faulty assumptions. He is piercing to the heart of the mocker. He is undermining the fuel of mockery. In the case of the Sadducees it came from wrong conclusions, wrong observations, wrong understanding of scriptures and of God.

Doesn't our own faithlessness often spring from the same sources? We don't really understand what scripture says. And we don't really expect God to display His power where He says He will display it.

We don't know what scripture says God will do and/or we don't believe that God will do it.

That is what these guys were guilty of. They didn't know what scripture said about what God **will** do, and therefore they didn't believe that God **would** do it. By their theology they created a god that didn't **intend** something good and wouldn't **do** something good.

What you believe, really believe about God is the most important thing about you. If you believe the truth about God, that will cause you to live in a way that

pleases God. And it will give you wisdom about life that the worldly sages will never have. And you will **expect God's power** in your life to do what the world around you can never do. You will expect God to fulfill His promises. And you will live in that hope.

If you disbelieve what God says He will do, no matter what **you say** you believe, if you don't really believe it, you will not live expecting God to do those things He promises to do in your life.

These Sadducees were living hopeless Godless lives. They were living for here and now, because they had accepted a promise-less theology and ended up with a powerless God. They are a wonderfully **bad example** for us to avoid like the plague. The cure- know and believe what **God promises** and live expecting for Him **to do for us** exactly what **He says** He will do.

Now Jesus takes the Sadducees to His seminary. He teaches them what is true. Some of it they should have known. Some of it I am not sure they could have known.

²⁵ **For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.**

Here Jesus addresses the ridiculous scenario they have just laid out to Christ. The whole problem **they created** in their minds is not a problem **that exists**. It does not exist because one of their assumptions is not true. The assumption is that, if there is a resurrection, it will be just a continuation of how things are now. People will not be fundamentally different.

Praise God that they are terribly wrong.

When you and I are raised from the dead, it will be to a different **reality** than what we are accustomed to. It will be a different **structure**. It will be a different **environment**. It won't equate with what we are used to. It will not be here and now extended. There will be a significant **transformation**.

There won't be marriage. *(We who are married do well to consider just how much jubilation we want display at this point. Too many "amens" at this point might not be received well by our current spouses.)* But it is true. There is no marriage in heaven. John Piper wrote a book called This Momentary Marriage. In it he talks about the temporary nature of marriage. He says that marriage is intended by God to display the relationship of Jesus Christ to His Church. But it is, at best, temporary.

This is good news for all of us, whether we like our married relationships or whether we don't. For those with difficult marriages, everything will be healed. For those with fulfilling marriages, everything will be better.

We might wonder how something that is so important **now** can be so unimportant **then**. Well think about marriage. Why is it so needed? Marriage is, to a large degree, for protection.

Marriage should protect women from sexual exploitation. It is the nature of our world to exploit women. And the most sinister thing about it **in our culture** is that most women have no clue that this is what is happening to them. Our culture has lost the concepts of honor and shame. Women are trained by our media to think that they are choosing to be loved when they are really choosing to be used. Marriage is designed to keep sexual expression in a safe, loving, lifetime environment. Marriage also provides **a man** to keep **a woman** safe from exploitation of **other** men.

Marriage is designed to protect children.

In marriage the logical outcome of sexual expression is offspring. And those children are best raised in God's design for a family. That is a **mother who nurtures** and a father **who provides** a platform of security. Marriage done God's way provides for that. And again, the father can protect the family against outside threats.

So the question has to be asked, what threats are there in heaven that people need protected from? The answer? None. Marriage is no longer needed for protection. There is no mention of births in heaven. It seems like that is what **this world** is for. God is preparing people **in this world** for the next. God is bringing people into existence **in this world** for the next. God's primary reason for allowing this world to continue in all of its sin is for creating **the next world's population**.

In eternal life we will be able to enjoy the best that this life has to offer without the need for the protection of marriage. Maybe there won't even be any sexual drive or expression. We don't know. But we do know that all of the evils that marriage is designed to protect us from will no longer exist. We will have intimacy without fear of harm. That is so very hard to imagine. But it is so wonderfully true. We will finally be safe in a world where Jesus is King. What an absolutely wonderful truth contained in this teaching of Christ. There will be no marriage in heaven.

Notice it says they will be **like angels in heaven**. This is one of those places where people have taken great liberties with the text. This is not intended to mean that people will turn into angels. Scripture tells us we will judge angels. So there is a clear distinction between people and angels in the next life. In one very specific way we will be like angels in heaven. They don't get married and we won't get married. That is the only similarity we can know for sure from the text.

So Christ has just undermined the idea that the Sadducees' mockery was based on. He has corrected the wrong assumption that the question held. There is not an issue of **whose wife this will** be because she will be **nobody's wife** since there is no marriage in heaven.

But there is more that Jesus wants to address here. Again, rarely does anyone get away with trying to spring a trap on Jesus where they don't have **themselves** exposed in the process. So Christ continues.

²⁶ **But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *burning bush passage*, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'?** ²⁷ **He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken."**

Remember what Christ had just told these guys?

- 1- You don't know the scriptures and
- 2- You don't know the power of God

Now He is applying the same thing to their core position about the resurrection. The Sadducees laid out a scenario to trick Christ that displayed that they **were wrong** about **marriage** in **the resurrection**. Now Christ is turning on them regarding their **whole view** of the resurrection itself. He first corrected their **hypothetical** error. Now he addresses their **true error** that they were absolutely committed to. There is nothing hypothetical here. He brings them face to face with themselves.

First Christ shows them what scripture says. And it is so interesting that Christ limits His use of scripture to those texts that the Sadducees say they believe. He shows them that even with **their false convictions** about **which scriptures** can be believed, they are still being hypocritical to take the stance they are taking. They are denying the scriptures they claim to be standing upon.

Now, how did Christ make His point?

Verb tense. Verb tense.

Have you ever heard someone say something like, I don't need to know theology, I just want to follow Jesus? This answer by Jesus should cause us to think twice about that kind of anti-theology mindset. These very religious guys had been pushing **nonsense** for years based on their limited reading of scripture. And all that time **the correction to their error was right in front** of them in a story they probably had all read a thousand times. In this case they missed the tree for the forest. They missed the isolated truth in the midst of the larger reading of scripture. In other words, they didn't do their homework on one isolated text. They did not pay attention to **the verb tense in a verse**. And as a result they had believed and taught error.

Now did their oversight happen **because** of their unbelief. Without a doubt it did. I wonder how many repented of their position on this day when Jesus pointed it out to them? I doubt there were many. They were steeped in unbelief and rebellion. But the point is, the answer was found in the verb tense in one passage.

The application to make here is never underestimate the importance of serious study of scripture. It is very good to read scripture. But sometimes we need to meditate on it and study it, word by word, to get the truth of what it is really saying. Never belittle that process in your mind. It is important.

Christ goes on.

'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'?²⁷ **He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken."**

This is very easy to illustrate.

If I say, "George was my dad's friend", what do you immediately understand? This relationship was in the past. And if you knew that my dad died you would naturally understand that this is the reason it was in the past. It cannot be present.

If I say, "George IS my dad's friend", what is your first thought? In another context you would probably think I must be speaking of a different dad. We simply would not speak in present tense about a past tense relationship. It would strike us as being very odd.

That is the point Christ is making. God would not say I AM the God of Isaac if Isaac was **past** tense. He would only say it if Isaac is **present** tense.

And Jesus lets these guys know, because you refused to do business with this one verb tense you refuse to believe the truth. But the truth was always there, right in front of your noses.

So again we see Jesus turn the tables on His enemies. They laid a trap for Him and **He exposed** their error and hypocrisy. And it was all based on a language rule. How's that for an encouragement to study your language?

So in application, we should obviously avoid the error the Sadducees show us here. We should know what scripture says that God will do and we should live expecting God to do exactly that. Where do we refuse to do that? Where will we not believe God's promise? Where do we, by what we do, call God a liar? Do we worry? Do we fear? Do we take revenge? Are we distraught? Are we impatient? Do we lose hope? These are all things that there are promises of God that we can depend upon. Where do we not rely upon God to do according to what He has promised.

Another application for us this morning is found in the wonderful truth Jesus has just laid on the crowd. I would like to close by reading what John MacArthur said. **For believers, the truth of the resurrection is a comforting reality. The sorrow, suffering, and sin that marks this present life will end. We will one day receive a glorified body, perfect in every way, when God "transform[s] the body of our**

humble state into conformity with the body of [Christ's] glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself" ([Phil. 3:21](#)). We will perfectly love God and each other, and be able to worship God in holy perfection. We will have perfect knowledge: "Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known" ([1 Cor. 13:12](#)). We will be perfectly motivated to do perfect service, rendering perfect obedience. The redeemed will never be weary, tired, bored, discouraged, or disappointed but will experience eternally undiminished joy, unmarred by any sadness or sorrow, because God "will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away" ([Rev. 21:4](#); cf. [Isa. 25:8](#)).

That is what God promises He will do. And He will do it. We, as believers, should be empowered by this belief. It is this that makes any faithfulness worthwhile. God promises to make it worth it. And what He says He will do.