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Date: August 9, 2009
Topic: The Resurrection
Text: Mark 12:18-27
Series: Who Jesus Is & Why He Matters
Section: Jesus on Mission in Jerusalem
Title: How to Know the Truth about Life after Death
Short Title: How to Know the Truth

Mark 12:18-27

- 18 Some Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection) came to Jesus, and began questioning Him, saying, []
- 19 "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that [Dt 25:5-10]
IF A MAN'S BROTHER DIES
and leaves behind a wife
AND LEAVES NO CHILD,
HIS BROTHER SHOULD MARRY THE WIFE
AND RAISE UP CHILDREN TO HIS BROTHER.
- 20 "There were seven brothers; [Hypothetical situation designed to mock and disprove resurrection and catch Jesus in His words]
and the first took a wife, and died leaving no children.
- 21 "The second one married her, and died leaving behind no children;
and the third likewise;
- 22 and so all seven left no children.
Last of all the woman died also.
- 23 "In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one's wife will she be? [Now they get to their real interest.]
For all seven had married her." []
- 24 Jesus said to them,
"Is this not the reason you are mistaken, [Implicit declaration they are mistaken re: their view on no resurrection. (cf. 27)]
that you do not understand the Scriptures [Lack of knowledge of Scriptures causes misunderstanding of life after death]
orⁱ the power of God? [Lack of knowledge of the power of God causes the same]
- 25 "For when they rise from the dead, [Rising from the dead taken as a given]

26 they neither marry nor are given in marriage, [No marriage in heaven? "Married to Jesus?"]
but are like angels in heaven. [Apparently angels don't marry, therefore their question is nonsensical.]
26 "But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, [Jesus declares as "fact" the resurrection of the dead]
have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, [Ouch!]
how God spoke to him, saying, []
'I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, [Not, "When they were living I WAS..." But, even now I AM...]
AND THE GOD OF ISAAC,
and the God of Jacob'? [Abraham, Isaac and Jacob = the Patriarchs through who God promised to restore creation]
27 "He is not the God of the dead, [The patriarch had been dead for 100's of years when God said this to Moses]
but of the living; [Implication: the patriarchs are alive after their death]
you are greatly mistaken." [Your view of their not being a resurrection is wrong!]

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Indentation, [bracketed blue notes] and endnotes from Johnny Potter

NOTE: With NASB right-justified notes above from Johnny Potter

Exegetical/Main Point of Passage

Confronted with another in a series of questions designed by the religious leaders to catch Him in His words, Jesus identifies two errors that cause people to be mistaken about spiritual truth; then demonstrating the correct approach to discovering truth, He teaches the hope engendering truth about life after death.

Homiletical Idea

Jesus identifies two errors we can make in our attempts to know spiritual truth; then, in the course of answering the question raised about the resurrection, He demonstrates what it takes to rightly discern truth, teaching the hopeful reality of life after death.

Subject & Compliments

How to Know the Truth about Life after Death

Intro: Know, 'To Err is Human', and You are Human

- Know The Scripture
- Know the Power of God
- Know What Jesus Taught (both the content and that He is the divine interpreter of Scripture and the ultimate authority on the meaning of the word of God)

Conclusion: Hope – Knowing the truth of the resurrection (its reality and its meaning) gives us hope!

Goals of Message

The goal of this message is twofold:

1. **to encourage careful study of God's word as a lifestyle;**
2. **to instill and activate the legitimate hope rightly produced by the reality and meaning of the resurrection.**

Transformation Card

This page provides an overview of the message and resources for individual and group study.

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Message Outline

How to Know the Truth about Life after Death

- I. Know the **Scripture**
- II. Know the **Power of God**
- III. Know **What Jesus Taught**

Related Scripture

1. Luke 20:20-26
2. Deut 25:5-10
3. Exodus 3
4. 1 Cor 15 (esp. 1-8 and 20-23)
5. Acts 23:6-8

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. Who were the Sadducees and what were some of their distinctives?
2. How would you describe the genuineness of the Sadducees question?
3. If their question was disingenuous, what was their likely motive?
4. What were their two errors identified by Jesus?
5. How can we avoid those same errors?
6. What did Jesus teach on the resurrection?
7. What legitimate hope should this provoke in us and how can we be so provoked?

Memory and Meditation Verse

Jesus said to them,
**"Is this not the reason you are mistaken,
that you do not understand
the Scriptures or the power of God?**

Mark 12:24 NASB

How to Know the Truth about Life after Death

INTRODUCTION

Alexander Pope, the English poet said, 'To err is human; to forgive is divine.' The first part of that is experientially inarguable: To err is human. Let me add another inarguable: We are all human. Those two 'inarguables' put together leaves us with the fact that we all err. Where this touches down in our life of faith is that we all err in some of our understandings about God and how we should live in relation to Him. We are all wrong about some of the stuff we think we are right about.

To combat our errant understandings, we must give ourselves to continued learning. If we think we know it all and don't have any refining to do we are condemning ourselves to living our lives based on things that, at the very least, are not completely true.

How sad for the lover who understood that she was to meet the man of her dreams on 6th and Main at 7:00PM, when in fact she was supposed to meet him at 7th and Main at 6:00 PM. Compound that tragedy if she held fast to her errant belief when she could have just read again his letter here he had poured out his love and told her and said, "If you love me in return meet me at 7th and Main at 6:00PM..."

The Sadducees were a group of Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day. One of their distinctives was their understanding that there was no resurrection. When you die, you die and that is that. They held the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, to be particularly authoritative, placing less value on the rest of Scripture. They stood as opponents to the Pharisees who did believe in the resurrection. It is this issue of the resurrection which the Sadducees bring before Jesus in our passage this morning. Mark 12: 18-27.

At the time of Jesus the truth about the resurrection was debated. Some clearly held it existed, while others not. The resurrection in debate would have been not so much the bringing back to life of someone who had died so that they could live out a longer life in this present world, which could be classified more as a healing; but the bringing back to life unto eternal life. The Sadducees, like many in our own time, appeared to have thought the idea of some of these supernatural concepts silly, perhaps beneath their refined level of thinking.

You can hear this in the tone of their question to Jesus. It is their turn to try to stump Jesus and catch Him in His words that they might discredit Him and show themselves the wiser. They were third in the line-up of team Anti-Jesus, who had been at bat this inning. First the chief priests, scribes and elders had questioned His authority; then the Pharisees and Herodians teemed up to catch Him on a question about paying taxes to Caesar; now the Sadducees are up to bat. They step up to the plate thinking they are going to score a home run off of this new up-start pitcher with His silly ideas about things that "thinking people" know can't be true.

Let's read Mark 12:18-27. As we read, in addition to simply listening to the story; ask, if you had grown up a Sadducee, how could you have refined your understanding of life after death and come out of this inning the wiser for having encountered Jesus?

Mark 12:18-27

How can We Know the Truth about Life after Death

In general, how do we sharpen our understanding and let go of misunderstandings and come to know the true truth? I would like to give you three things that we can do to start us off on refining our understanding of the truth. These can be applied in our general pursuit of truth and they can also be applied in particular regarding the question of the resurrection. If we are to know the truth about the things of God we must first...

I. Know the Scripture

A. Not by just catching bits and pieces from others

This is what our Christian culture permits. If you are caught in this current, today I call you away from this practice to reading the Bible for yourself.

B. Not even by just a quick read for ourselves

Even further, what this text argues for is not just a quick or casual read of God's word. If you give the Old Testament passage that Jesus quoted in Mark 12:26 a quick or casual read you would not see what Jesus expected the Sadducees of His day to have seen. Therefore, today I call you away from a casual approach to the Scriptures where you read them from time to time, and to the only posture that is appropriate for what the Scriptures actually are. What are they? They are the inspired words of God. As a whole, they make up God's intended revelation of Himself to us. This means that the appropriate way to handle such a valuable trust is with great care and attention.

C. But Only by Paying Careful Attention to All God Has Said as a Lifestyle

One of the core values of this church is God's Word as recorded in the Scriptures. If you truly hold this value it will lead to the conviction that we must pay careful attention to all God has revealed to us in the Scriptures, and we must do so as a lifestyle pattern. Developing a lifestyle of paying careful attention to the word of God in the Bible won't happen in a week or even a month. The activity itself is a life long pursuit. Be life long learners! Make it the pattern of your life to daily pay careful attention to the Word of God. Really what we are after is hearing God's voice in the pages of Scripture everyday of our lives.

II. Know the Power of God

A. They did NOT understand the power of God.

In not understanding the resurrection to be true they way underestimated the power of God. He may have been to them the one who could create, and the one who could deliver the Israelites from the hands of foreign oppressors, but evidently they thought Him impotent to defeat the enemy of death. Jesus simply says, "...you do not understand ... the power of God." In just a few days He Himself will be the irrefutable living proof of the resurrection power of God.

B. How We Can Know the Power of God

Learn of His power in the Scriptures. Live depending on that power in what He has called you to.

We must give ourselves to understanding the Scriptures and the power of God. Moving from the general to the particular, if we are to refine our understanding of the resurrection, i.e., if we are to know the truth of the issue before us today we must pay careful attention to the passages referenced.

III. Know What Jesus Taught

A. Know Mark 12:18-27 by Paying Careful Attention to It

1. The Sadducees Set Their Question Up by Quoting Moses

- They quote an accurate summary in v. 19 of Dt 25:5-10

2. The Hypothetical Situation (21-23)

- Then they put forth a silly hypothetical situation related to Dt 25 so they can get Jesus to hang Himself by talking about the resurrection.
- Mk 12:21-23

3. Jesus' Answer

a) Verse 24

- Right off the bat Jesus let's them know that **they are mistaken**
- Then he does them and us, if we have ears to hear, a wonderful service by identifying the **reasons why they were mistaken** about this spiritual truth:
 1. **They did NOT understand the Scriptures.** We don't need to unpack this too much, let's just take it at face value. They did not believe in the resurrection but according to Jesus they did not understand the very body of knowledge that should inform their understanding of that topic. I have seen this time and time again in people I have run into. They believe what they believe about a topic of faith but do not understand the Scriptures that should be the very basis for those same understandings. Really, I don't need to look at others I can see this behavior in myself just as easily. To one degree or another we all fall into this trap. Why do we believe what we believe? We don't know. Somewhere along the line we have just come to have the understandings we have. Watch out! This can bite us if we hold misunderstandings about important truths and start making decisions based on things that aren't true – remember the lover who missed her meeting.
 2. **They did NOT understand the power of God.** We have already shared a little bit on this. Suffice it to say here that misunderstanding the power of God caused them to misunderstand the resurrection and to live with a whole lot less hope than they would have otherwise.
- They were mistaken because they did not understand the Scriptures or the power of God.
- I pray our ears are perking up listening to how you we can avoid being mistaken. There is truth for us in the Scriptures that will bring us into greater understanding. There is power beyond what we practically acknowledge in the person of our God.

b) Verse 25

- In v. 25 Jesus gives a one verse teaching on **the nature of life after death.** “When they rise from the dead...”
 - “...they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.” I suppose you might be able to read this as no new marriage relationships will be formed. But I believe it best to understand Jesus as teaching that there will be no renewing of marriage relationships as we knew them in our temporal existence. He is drawing our attention to the fact that the resurrection life is altogether different from this one. Garland says, “The resurrected are transfigured into a new dimension of life that we have never experienced (see 9:2-3; Reve 7:9-17).” P. 470. Whereas in this life very much centers around the marriage relationship, the center of our resurrected life will be God and not our spouses. To which some of you dear people will say, “Oh, that’s sad.” And perhaps more will say, “Thank God!”
 - We will not be entirely different. The resurrected Christ was recognizable to His disciples, He had a body the non-resurrected could touch, He knew who He knew in His pre-resurrection life. But the focus of resurrected life will be different. Lane says of it, “Its great purpose and center is communion with God.” P. 428

c) Verse 26

- In verse 26 Jesus turns to “the fact that the dead rise again”
 - Quoting Moses, (the same person they had quoted), Jesus asks, “...have you not read...how God spoke to him, saying, “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”?”

(1) Ex 3:6 -- “I am...” NOT “I was...”

- A careful look at the scripture allows us to see that God’s relationship as God of His people does not end at the physical death of those people. 400 Years after the physical death of Abraham, God said, “**I am** the God of Abraham...”. He did not say, while they were living **I was** the God of Abraham...
- We need to read the Bible so carefully that we note even the tense of the verbs used.
- But even more significantly than tense is what the quote should have brought to mind. There are certain select phrases that bring to mind a larger chunk of information without having to explicitly state that larger truth.
 - What do you think of when you hear the words, “I pledge allegiance...”? You think of the whole pledge you learned as a child around the flag pole. And you are probably able to easily recall at least the next few words: I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic of which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

- How about the phrase, “We the people...”ⁱⁱ? Most would recognize those words as the first phrase in our Constitution. We probably would be less successful in getting the next words but we understand that the constitution was the founding document of our nation.
- Likewise, “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob...” would have brought to mind the promise and covenant God had made with the Patriarchs of Israel -- a promise that was itself a development of an earlier promise God had made to Adam, and a promise that would ultimately be fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.
- Let’s look at the verse Jesus gives as proof of the resurrection first in its original context and then in its greater context.

(2) Ex 3:6 in Its Context – Burning Bush, God was going to deliver Israel from Egypt using Moses

- Very briefly, God had allowed the people of Israel to be preserved from famine by providing a safe haven for them in Egypt, but that safe haven had turned with the passing of time and the changes in Egyptian leaders into a place of enslavement. In His time, God determined to deliver Israel from the hands of the Egyptians who had become their oppressors and had led the nation of Israel away from their devotion to Him. He chose Moses to bring them out of Egypt into Canaan the land that He had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob hundreds of years earlier. It was to be a place where God and His people would dwell together. So He manifested Himself in a burning bush and introduced Himself to Moses using this introductory phrase which would speak volumes to Moses. Specifically it would say that the same God who had promised to bless Abraham and all the families of the earth through Him (Gen 12:3) and to give him and his descendents the land of Canaan was now planning on delivering Israel through him!
- This would have been an overwhelming moment for Moses! But how does it serve Jesus’ argument for the resurrection? How does knowing that the God who commissioned Moses to deliver His people and who introduced Himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob argue for “the fact that the dead rise again”?
- The answer is in the nature of the covenant God had made to Abraham and his descendants. That covenant began as a promise in Gen 12:3 where God said to Abraham,

“And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”
- What we have seen in our Sacred Space study is that a careful reading of Scripture shows that this promise to Abraham, later ratified into a formal covenant (Gen 15) was a development of the initial promise God had made to Adam after the Fall.
- In Genesis 3:15 God said to the serpent who had deceived Eve,

And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel."

- Although this promise is given in the midst of a curse it forms the starting point of God's promise to restore the creation that was damaged in the fall. There would be a time when the curse and all the imperfections surrounding the fall would be removed and God's perfect order would be restored. **Death** was one of the consequences of the fall. **Life** is God's original and final plan. The resurrection is found in germinal form in Gen 3:15. It is the deliverance from the curse -- the **death** of estrangement from God -- into the **life** of communion with Him.
- God's plan of redemption and restoration has its first statement in Gen 3:15. Then in Genesis 12:3 it has a development and clarification, and then another in Genesis 15, and in 22 and really throughout the Old Testament up until the time of Christ in whom all the former developments culminate. He is the ultimate promise and covenant to which all the others have only spoken of.
- What Jesus was doing when He quoted Ex 3:6 to the Sadducees was setting an anchor in this promise turned covenant God had made with His people to restore all things from the death they lived in to the life marked by communion, peace and rest. He was directing the Sadducees not only to the close context of God's delivering His people out of the "death" of Egypt into the "life" of the promised land through Moses, but He was also urging them to see in His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob an early indication of His intention to restore His people from the **death** they lived in to the **life** He had intended.
- Jesus was telling them, the resurrection is implicit in the covenant God had made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is the God who introduced Himself to Moses as this God. He is the God who would deliver His people from Egypt by the prophet Moses who they quoted. He is the God who pictured for the careful reader of Scripture in that very same deliverance how He would ultimately deliver all who would join themselves to Him through faith in Jesus. It was Jesus whose resurrection would pave the way and provide for the future resurrection of all who believe.
- In the coming of that Jesus, the resurrection of the dead (which was everywhere up until this time implied but nowhere directly taught) became an irrefutable reality.

d) Verse 27

- Jesus closes with the definitive authoritative statement about God and the truth of the resurrection and the clear dismissal of the Sadducees view as erroneous.

- “He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; you are greatly mistaken.”

We are to know what Jesus taught first by paying careful attention to his teachings, but we will also benefit by remembering who Jesus is. Knowing who He is will give us incentive to listen all the more carefully to Him

B. Know Him as the Divine Interpreter of the Divine Message and thus the Ultimate Authority on the Scriptures

- God has revealed Himself progressively (with increasing clarity) over the course of history. Jesus is the clearest revelation of God.
- The writer of the book of Hebrews says it like this in chapter 1:
 - 1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. 3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.
- **John Says it like this:**
[John 1:18](#)
 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God (Jesus) who is in the bosom of the Father, **He has explained Him.**
- **In the Sermon on the Mount** Jesus repeatedly says, you have heard it said... “but I say to you...” He was not nullifying what God had said before in the Old Testament, but was further interpreting it and clarifying God’s truth so as to improve our understanding.

C. Know Him

In the end the type of knowledge we are looking for is not greater clarity of facts but closer communion with Jesus. It is not about knowing about God; it is about knowing Him. And He has revealed Himself both in Scriptures and in the person of Jesus.

Conclusion

Hope! This passage instills hope in me.

In the general truths surfaced I take great hope that understanding the Scriptures and the power of God will produce in me a better knowledge of God and His ways with man. It calls me to a more thoughtful and a lifetime of listening to Him in the pages of Scripture.

In the particular truth of the resurrection we have looked at this morning I find huge hope for my life and for yours.

When we die, it is **not** the end of our life. We will be resurrected!

1 Corinthians 15
 The Fact of Christ's Resurrection

1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; 7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. 11 Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. 12 Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; 14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. 15 Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; 17 and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

The Order of Resurrection

20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. 21 For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,

Jesus Christ was the first fruits of the resurrection, and we who are in Christ have the resurrection to look forward to! There is hope! There is hope now in that now we are new creations in Christ already. There is hope that there is life beyond the grave.

1 Thess 4

Those Who Died in Christ

- 13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.
- 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.
- 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.
- 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.
- 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

Misc. Notes

Life-after-death in the OT:

(see Psa. 16:9-11; Job 14:14, 19:25-27; also Psa. 17:15, 73:24-26; Isa. 26:19, etc.).

Is 26:19

¹⁹Your dead will live;
 Their corpses will rise
 You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy,
 For your dew is as the dew of the dawn,
 And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.

Dan 12:2

²¹Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

1 Kings 17:23

²³Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house and gave him to his mother; and Elijah said, "See, your son is alive."

2 Kings 4:36

³⁶He called Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite." So he called her. And when she came in to him, he said, "Take up your son."

Heb 11 esp. 16, 19, 35

David expected to go to his deceased son.

Ps 49:15

¹⁵But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol,
 For He will receive me. Selah.

Endnotes

ⁱ Is it that they did not know both, i.e., that they knew neither the Scriptures, nor the power of God; or that they either did not know one or the other? NKJV: "you do not know...nor..." indicating the former.

ⁱⁱ Preamble: "We the people of United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

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