

# When God is Your God

Mark 12:18-27

*Halifax: 2 August 2020*

## **Introduction:**

When God says, “I am your God,” what does that mean to you?

- This is the way God describes Himself in relation to the people He has redeemed.
  - Of course He is the God of every person because He made us, but that is not the way He uses this designation.
  - When He says that He is someone’s God, He means a lot more than simply “I am your creator, lawgiver, and judge.”
- The Bible teaches us that our sins have separated us from God so that we have made ourselves His enemies.
  - We make up lies about God and end up with idols—our lying versions of God that we have constructed in our own minds.
  - They can be friendly idols or hostile idols, but they are not God.
- But when He comes to us to redeem us—as He did to Abraham, He comes and tells us that He will be our God.
  - He comes to restore our relationship with Him as the true and living God.
  - You can see this when God establishes His covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17:7. He says: **“And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.”**
  - It is on the basis of this promise that, as we saw in our reading of Exodus 3 today, God comes to Moses, who is among Abraham’s descendants, and says:
    - Exodus 3:6: **“I *am* the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”**
    - And then He refers to Moses and all the descendants of Abraham’s son Jacob as “my people” and declares Himself to be their God who is calling them out of Egypt to serve Him.
  - God continues to refer to Himself in this way to the people of Israel, and then in the New Testament, He declares that those who believe and are baptised from any nation are also His people.
    - In Galatians 3:26-29, His apostle says, **“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup> For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if you *are* Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”**
  - At the end when God brings everything to its final destiny, John describes that there will be a great announcement that God will continue to be our God:

- Rev. 21:3: **And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God.”**

Since God has made so much of calling Himself the God of all of you who are redeemed, it is important for you to often think about what this means to us.

- And if you are not redeemed, it is also important for you to understand what this means so that you will see what you are missing out on.

In our passage from Mark today, we find Jesus highlighting God’s declaration that He is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob (as God did in Exodus 3:6) to prove the resurrection.

- As we shall see, the Sadducees come to Him, as the Pharisees and Herodians have already done, to challenge Him with questions that they hope will discredit Him in the eyes of the people.
- Their hope is that they can stump Him with their question, but Jesus is not stumped and in response to them, He presents the rich import of the gracious words that God is our God.

Listen as I read this passage to you.

- It is Mark 12:18-27.
- This is the Word of God, so give reverent attention to it, for it is His gracious revelation to us, breathed out by Him for us.

**Mark 12:18-27: Then *some* Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: <sup>19</sup> “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. <sup>20</sup> Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. <sup>21</sup> And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. <sup>22</sup> So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. <sup>23</sup> Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven**

**had her as wife.” <sup>24</sup> Jesus answered and said to them, “Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? <sup>25</sup> For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. <sup>26</sup> 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’? <sup>27</sup> He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.”**

May the Lord add His blessing to this reading and may He help us to understand how it applies to us through His appointed ordinance of preaching.

**I. Here we have men, the likes of which are found in every age of the church, who sneer at the things we believers believe.**

- A. In verse 18, they are referred to as “the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection.”

1. They were a sect or a party that is thought to have formed around the same time the Pharisees did—when the Jews were rebelling against the Greeks (150 BC).
    - The Sadducees were associated with the high priests, as best as we can tell, and were wealthy and politically powerful.
    - They were known to be arrogant and to look with disdain on the common people.
  2. They were conservative, in an aristocratic way, and in way that looked at religion more as tool for political control than a matter of faith.
    - They were quite well educated in the scriptures and would have taken pride in their letters—much that way a professor of religious studies in a modern university would today.
    - They would sneer at the masses who actually believed in angels, the resurrection, and that God was sovereign and actually directed history.
      - Such beliefs were to them quite childish and simplistic.
        - They were like those in liberal churches today who make sport of those who believe in a literal virgin birth or a literal resurrection.
      - To them, the important thing was how society was to be shaped by the important traditions and laws that were set forth in the Bible.
      - The ceremonies and rituals of the temple were very important to them—as I said, they were associated with the high priests and other aristocrats.
- B. Like the Pharisees and the Herodians, though for different reasons, they were very displeased with the upstart prophet from Nazareth who was called Jesus.
1. They were displeased
    - that He had ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey, receiving honour from the masses as if He were the Messiah.
    - They were offended that He had taken it upon Himself to drive out those who were selling animals in the temple courts for sacrifice and those who had set up tables to exchange currency there.
    - It was especially troubling to them that He seemed to be gaining a following.
  2. We can be pretty sure that they were among those of the Sanhedrin who had come to Jesus (as recorded in Mark 11) to inquire by what authority He did these things.
    - Jesus' exposure of the hypocrisy of that delegation must have infuriated them all the more—for they were very proud men.
    - They had likely seen how the Pharisees and the Herodians had asked Jesus about whether it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar—and how Jesus instead of siding with one party or the other had confronted both with their duty to God and to Caesar.
    - Now these Sadducees, in all their arrogance, were ready to take Jesus on with their own question.
- C. They come as you would expect men like this to come.

1. They come to ridicule Jesus for actually believing, as many of the common people and the Pharisees did, in the resurrection.
  - You will notice, that unlike the Herodians and the Pharisees, they do not resort to flattery, saying things like “we know that you teach the way of God in truth.”
  - These men were much too arrogant to say anything like that.
    - They approach Jesus with the disdain of superiors—speaking to one that they considered to be an ignorant and uneducated man who was vastly inferior to them.
2. Their approach is to show Him how absurd it is to believe in the resurrection at the last day, which indeed, most of the Jews did believe in at this time.
  - Look again at our text and you can see what they say (Mark 12:18-23): **Then *some* Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: <sup>19</sup> “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. <sup>20</sup> Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. <sup>21</sup> And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. <sup>22</sup> So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. <sup>23</sup> Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.”**
    - They expected that Jesus would start to stammer and stutter the way faithful Christians sometimes do when they are asked how there can be birth defects in God’s world if God is good, or how they can justify God’s command to kill all the Canaanites, or how the apostles allowed church members to own slaves, or how there could be enough water to cover the whole earth in the flood.
    - Their goal was to stump Jesus and make Him look foolish and to discredit Him in the eyes of the people for believing the truth.
3. This is a favourite tactic of proud unbelievers.
  - They want to make you look foolish for believing God’s word in a literal way.
    - They want to make you out as an unlearned simpleton—to make you embarrassed about what you believe.
  - It may be that you will not always have a ready answer like Jesus did, but don’t let this make you ashamed to declare your confidence in God’s word.
    - I have certainly had things in the time of my pilgrimage that I had no answer for, but I have been thankful that in every case, I have not been disappointed from holding on to the truth.
    - In every case, answers have come in time that were clear and satisfying in time, and the exercise has helped me grow and has strengthened my faith in the end.

TRANS> Jesus, of course, who is the wisdom of God, is never without answers.

- Each of His challengers is discovering that, as every challenger will.
- Jesus is not the least bit intimidated by these arrogant aristocrats.

## II. It is the way of Jesus to expose the ignorance of all who challenge the truth.

A. What a reversal there will be when the proud stand before Him on the day of judgment.

1. You see them now—swollen up with their pride, mocking the faithful who believe the word of God.
  - They are full of hubris and pride.
  - But how ashamed they will be when they meet the Lord.
  - Their own consciences will testify against them, and all the shame and the ridicule will fall upon them.
    - It won't be doubtful.
    - All their folly in denying the truth will be exposed under the glorious light of Christ.
2. Here in our text, we are given a foretaste of what Jesus will do on judgment day.
  - Just as with Jesus in His earthly pilgrimage, we are given a foretaste of His healing power that will be fully revealed on the day of judgment, so here we are given a foretaste of how He will bring truth detractors to shame.
  - Do not be intimidated by anyone who ridicules the truth.
    - You should rather pity them.
    - The greater their pride is now, the greater their shame will be then.
3. These men had come with all their learning and disdain to make Jesus look foolish and ignorant, but instead He declares how ignorant they are.
  - He does not deal gently with these men—pride does not call for that.
    - In response to their little marriage illustration, He says (v. 24): **“Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God?”**
      - The word “mistaken” translates the Greek word *plan-ah-o* from which we get the word “planet” referring to that which wanders—or goes astray.
      - In verse 27, at the end of His conversation with them, He uses the same word again, only this time He says, “You are greatly mistaken.”
    - Telling these specialists in scripture that they don't know scripture is, as one man put it, like telling the people on Wall Street that they know nothing about finances.
      - These men were used to making people squirm.
      - Jesus does not squirm at all.
      - These men were used to telling others that *they* were greatly mistaken.
      - They were not used to anyone saying such a thing to them.

B. Jesus does not just tell them that they are in error, either. He exposes their error.

- He validates His claim that they do not know the scriptures or the power of God.
1. First, He dismisses their silly question about marriage.

- a. To be sure, when the Sadducees raised this question about marriage, it would have been hard to answer.
    - They had likely put this question to some of the Pharisees who believe in the resurrection and made them squirm.
  - b. Jesus, being the Son of God, had insight beyond what is written and was able to declare with certainty that there would not be marriage as we have it, but that, in that regard, we would be like the angels who don't have marriage...
    - They do not bring forth children like we do, but were all created at once.
    - What level of intimacy we will have and how it will be shown, He does not say.
    - What kind of social order we will have, He does not say...
      - But certainly marriage as we know it here, as wonderful as it is to us, will not continue—the social structure will be different.
  - c. But again, even if someone asks you a question like that and you are unable to answer it—
    - it is no matter.
    - It would be very foolish to overthrow a well-established doctrine (like the resurrection) because of an objection related to it that you can't answer.
      - There have been those who rejected Biblical morality because they could not answer where Cain got his wife—since it is obvious that he married his sister and they did not want to say so.
      - The simple answer is that God had not prohibited such marriages at that point in history.
- But now He turns to the real issue.
2. Jesus reveals how their denial of the resurrection betrays their extreme ignorance of the scriptures and the power of God.
    - In verse 26, He says: **“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’? <sup>27</sup> He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.”**
      - These men certainly knew this verse—they know almost every verse in the Pentateuch, but they completely missed the rich meaning!
  - a. When God is your God, it means that He is committed to you. They did not understand this at all.
    - It means that He is your protector, your provider, your guide, your Saviour.
    - He means that His divine power and wisdom are engaged for you.
    - It means that He will bless you and be faithful to you forever.
  - b. Of course there is life after death (something the Sadducees denied).
    - God does not abandon His people.

- He will be faithful to them through death.
  - He will conquer and overcome all their enemies.
  - He will fulfil His promises to them personally... not just to their children for their sake.
  - He will be God not only to the spirits, but also to their bodies that first go to the grave.
- What kind of God would He be if the blessing of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was only in this world?
    - If that is true, Esau made a better choice than Jacob because he had more riches and honour and power than Jacob did.
  - And what was Moses thinking when he forsook Egypt, supposing that it would be better to serve God in the wilderness with a bunch of rebellious people than to live in a palace in Egypt?
    - The lives of the Patriarchs make no sense if this life is all there is.
    - Don't give me that rot that they suffered for the sake of their children—Abraham was told that his children would be for Egypt in 400 years and would be slaves before God gave them the land.
      - Would you serve a God who told you that after 400 years of suffering He would deliver them when until then, most of them would live and die with no inheritance?
      - In Hebrews, God says that He would be ashamed to be called their God if there was no reward beyond this life for His people.
- c. As Jesus says in verse 27, He is not the God of the dead but of the living. That means that His people will always live.
- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and all the rest of them are still alive and their bodies also will stand again.
  - As a preacher named D. Marion Clark put it, God is not a cemetery keeper.
    - He does not walk around in the cemetery and say, “Ah, there lies dear Abraham. He was such a good friend of mine. I miss him so much. I just wish I could see him again.
    - “And there’s Jacob’s tomb. He was such scoundrel, but after a very hard life when I brought him back to his son, he realised that he could trust me. I guess it was a bit late for him since he had to escape famine by going to Egypt, but at least he got to know that Joseph was alive.
    - “And Moses. He was so faithful—he spent his whole life in the wilderness and never even got to enter the land... you see, I got angry with him when he disrespected me and refused to let him in go in. Poor fellow. All those years with nothing to show for it.”
- d. Truly, the Sadducees knew nothing about the character of God if they thought this life was the end!

- Only wealthy aristocrats living in luxury and looking down on the masses could hold to such a view of God.
- If God is your God, He is yours forever.
  - The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord (that is, the promise of God to us) endures forever.
  - His faithfulness to His people reaches into eternity.
    - If you think His reward is only in this world, you know nothing of Him at all.
    - These Sadducees were greatly mistaken.
      - And so are the modern day Old Testament scholars—and believe me, there are many—who think the Old Testament people had no hope beyond the grave!
    - It is true that there were many who were unregenerate, but all those who were true most certainly did have hope beyond the grave.
      - God was their God forever.

### **III. But what does all of this mean to you?**

- A. First of all, do you know that God is your God? It is very important to be sure of this.
1. As we saw in Galatians 3, He tells us that we are His through faith in Jesus Christ.
    - From the beginning when we fell, God has proclaimed to us that He is the One who saves.
      - We must look to God to save us instead of trying to save ourselves.
      - We are sinners, and only God can cleanse us from our sin.
      - To do that, He sent Jesus, His only Son, to become flesh and to die on the cross for us.
        - He promises that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life.
        - Put yourself into His hands, looking to Him to save you.
        - Look to Him to wash away your sins as shown by the sign of baptism in His name.
  2. You do not want to be unsure about this.
    - Jesus has been appointed to be the judge of all at the last day.
    - He tells us in John 5 that we will all be raised up from the grave, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt.
      - The difference will be if we have come to Christ, God's Son whom He sent to save us.
    - Don't question the fairness of God sending Him to Israel and others not having heard.
      - We all come from the root of Noah, and the reason so many serve idols is because their fathers rejected God for idols—little by little they turned the truth of God into a lie.



- The only reason the truth remained with Israel was because God kept sending them prophets and punishing them and calling them back to Him as their God.
  - If He had not done that, they would have rejected Him like the other nations.
  - None of us, therefore, deserve to hear of Christ, but when we do, we should come with delight that we might return to God as our God.
    - His mercy is great toward all that call upon His name.

TRANS> And for you who have God as your God... what does this mean to you?

B. It means that you have eternal life.

- It means that you will most certainly be blessed, not because of your faithfulness but because of God's faithfulness.
- He knows how to bless you and He will.
- He will never forsake you—He will guide you through death and on the last day, He will raise you up to live with Him forever—with Him as your faithful God.
  - He will wipe away every tear.
  - He will heal you of every infirmity.
  - He will perfect you in holiness and service forever.
  - He will perfect all that concerns you.

C. All this means, if God is your God, that you have an eternal perspective.

1. A kingdom perspective in which you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.
  - Where you look to lead others to Jesus that they might not perish but have eternal life—your friends, your loved ones, all people.
2. It means that you have a this-life-for-that-life perspective.
  - You are not so concerned about what happens to you in this world as you are about how it will affect you in the life to come.
  - You know that God, being your God, is at work in you to prepare you for glory and you know that that will involve suffering in this world.
  - You know that because God is faithful and all powerful and wise, that He will not fail regarding His work in you to prepare you for glory.
  - It means that you will prepare for the life to come by obedience to all of God's commands.
    - You will look to Him in prayer and faith to work in you that you might love as He loved and serve as He served.
    - You will not continue in the things that you know are displeasing to Him.
3. I ask you—do you have an eternal perspective?
  - Are you living for eternity?
  - What needs to change? What needs to go? What needs to be added?
    - He is your God forever so you will live forever.

- D. And having God as your God also means that you can delight in Him!
1. You will delight in His power, goodness, faithfulness, truth, holiness, mercy—because as your God all that He is is yours...
    - not that you can control Him to do whatever you want...
    - but that as your God He is with you to bless you forever.
    - You are thrilled to belong to Him.
  2. And how you will delight in God's Son if God is your God.
    - Jesus the Son is the One who not only promises life and resurrection to us, but who is Himself the resurrection and the life.
    - He is God's faithfulness embodied to be God with us forever.
    - He is God's faithfulness embodied to bless us and to guide us into eternity.
      - Even when we die, our spirits go immediately to Him and our bodies rest in Him until the day that He raises them up.