

Mark 12:18-27

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Date: 26 October 2014

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[0 : 00] We continue our verse-by-verse exposition through the Gospel according to Mark.! We find ourselves in the last week of Jesus' earthly ministry.! This is the week most often called Passion Week.

! He leaves, comes back, cleanses the temple.

And now he's back in the temple. He's established some authority in this place. And he's now being questioned. The Sadducees, the Pharisees, etc. are coming to him and wondering how it is that he has this authority.

And they're now beginning to work on discrediting him. As we come to this text, I was really thankful this morning to hear the song on Jordan's stormy banks.

As we live in this life, a life full of trouble, and we stand on the banks, so to speak, metaphorically of the Jordan, looking to the promise of God in Christ.

[1 : 11] I feel that way a bit in our text together. I want to rush to the great work of Jesus on our behalf on the cross and then his resurrection.

It's going to take us some months to get to that point. And I feel in my own soul kind of attention for this as we preach through it. The last couple of weeks, we've been in Wednesday of Passion Week and we'll be there a bit longer still.

I hope that you feel that way this morning. We've now experienced the redemptive work of Christ on our behalf. He has accomplished this thing, this great climax of redemptive history.

And we're waiting for the next great event in redemptive history. And that is his return where he's brought in the kingdom of God. He's now going to bring it to a full culmination one day.

And there should be a longing in our hearts for such a thing to come to pass. But in the midst of that, we come to these small stories. These, at first glance, maybe even insignificant stories in light of the thing that's going to happen in just a few days in the life of Christ, which has such a massive effect on the world and on us as well.

[2 : 27] But it's important that we pause and we take a careful look at these things. We saw last week in verses 13 through 17 an interaction that he has with the Pharisees and the Herodians with a religious group and a political group.

They've come together and they worked a question in such a way they believed it was so incredibly brilliant that they would trap him with both this political and theological question.

And today we're going to see the Sadducees, another group, another religious group, and they're going to take a turn and take a stab at discrediting Jesus Christ. So I'm going to read to you in Mark 12, beginning in verse 18.

So follow along as I read. And Sadducees came to him who say that there is no resurrection. And they asked him a question, saying, 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.

There were seven brothers. The first took a wife and when he died left no offspring. And the second took her and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. And the seven left no offspring.

[3 : 45] Last of all, the woman also died. In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife.

Jesus said to them, Is this not the reason you are wrong? Because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

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.

He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong. This is God's word to us. It was written for his glory and our good.

We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. Let's pray together. Father God, for the preaching of your gospel, who is sufficient for such a thing? [4 : 54] Surely not I. And none of us are sufficient for the proper application of these words to our minds and our hearts. And so we would pray this morning, by your Spirit, that you would illuminate our minds and our hearts, that you would help us to rightly understand and rightly apply these words of truth.

We recognize that your word is authoritative, that it is inerrant, that it is sufficient, that it has something to say to us in this day, and we expect that, Lord, for your name's sake.

So use me as a vessel. Surely you can accomplish good things in my speaking. Work to the great end of your people looking more like Christ, proclaiming your name in greater and more radical ways to your glory.

And we pray all this in Jesus' precious name. Amen. So we have this new group that comes to Jesus, a group that's not mentioned all that often in the Scriptures, and so we must first ask the question, who were these Sadducees?

Who are they? They're not so much a religious party, an established religious party, but this is rather a label given them, a people with a particular Judaic theological viewpoint.

[6 : 13] Now, it contained within it a number of variances, a number of discrepancies between what they and the Pharisees believed, and in fact, we could spend the entire time together just talking about that, the things that they believed versus what the Pharisees believed.

In fact, this text has a lot of things we could spend a lot of time on, and it doesn't it? The nature of resurrection, we could talk about angels and our relation to them, but we're going to focus primarily on this question and this challenge, right?

The context is driving us to Friday, to Jesus' judgment, his death, and then his subsequent resurrection. So we're going to stay in that realm. So these Sadduceean views were espoused by most of the priestly families in this day, so that most of the ruling class, those in the temple, the Sanhedrin, the court that was held, most of them were Sadducees, right?

This belief system was held by most of those in power, right? Now, in one sense, and you've heard me say this over and over again, they were liberals.

The Pharisees tended to be the more fundamental, the more conservative in that regard, in their practice of the law, their strict adherence to the law. It was the Pharisees that had added to the law of God, the hedge laws.

[7 : 31] They had heaped upon the law of God extra laws to keep you from ever breaking. So you might break the hedge laws, but to ever keep from breaking the law of God, which of course they all did, and they just didn't recognize it.

They were hypocrites, whitewashed tombs, very unaware of their inability to keep the law. The Sadducees were a bit more liberal in that case, a little less concerned about strict adherence to the law.

But in another, they were very conservative, and that was that they did not accept oral tradition. In this day, there was something called oral tradition. It exists in some denominations today, which was a passing down of teaching.

They would listen to the teachings of a rabbi, rabbinical teachings, and they would apply those teachings and understand the scriptures by them, in many cases, elevating them even to the degree of scripture.

The Sadducees did not do this. They totally rejected the oral tradition, and they held just to the scriptures. Now, interestingly, they held almost exclusively to the Pentateuch, to the books of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Levitas, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

[8 : 40] They highly elevated the writings of Moses. They didn't deny the rest of the Jewish scriptures, which we would have as our Old Testament. They didn't deny them as the word of God, but those were always subservient to the Pentateuch.

So, if something was taught in the rest of our Old Testament and their scriptures of the day that they couldn't find proof for in the Pentateuch and the writings of Moses, they would disregard it altogether.

And the resurrection is one of those cases, right? In fact, it was a rather major one in this day. This was a common theological debate that took place between the Sadducees and the Pharisees. It was something that was talked about often. Is there a resurrection? Is there an afterlife? It would seem, and it's my belief, that the Sadducees were what we would call annihilationists.

They believed that at the end of your life, you died and nothing happened beyond. You just were gone. There was no eternal joy. There was no eternal punishment. You were simply gone.

[9 : 46] Now, the Old Testament does teach about resurrection, but in some of these, in their minds, lesser books, like in Isaiah 26, 19. Your dead shall live, their body shall rise.

You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy. For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead. Daniel 12, 2 also.

Possibly, with some hindsight, knowing what we know now, you can look back at some other texts and see this idea of resurrection, although in their day it would have been challenging. For further study, Psalm 16, 9-11, Psalm 49, 15, 73, 23-26, Job 19, 25-26.

There are some places that it's spoken of, but it wasn't so explicit in this case. So the only two explicit examples we have is Isaiah 26, 19 and Daniel 12, 2.

Now the Pharisees tried, although they failed, to make a case from the Pentateuch for the resurrection, and the Sadducees just were not convinced of this.

[10 : 53] Now Jesus believed in resurrection. Praise God. I'm really glad that He did. We see some examples of that in the Gospel of Mark already. So turn back a few chapters to Mark 8, verse 31.

Chapter 8, chapter 9, chapter 10, we see predictions of what's about to happen. He's teaching the disciples what's coming. We're headed on a journey. We're going towards Jerusalem. Let me tell you what's going to happen in this Passion Week.

Verse 31 says, And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes. Isn't that what's happening on this Wednesday in this interaction?

And be killed. And after three days, rise again. Chapter 9, verse 31, For He was teaching His disciples, saying to them, The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him.

And when He is killed, after three days, He will rise. Chapter 10, verse 33 and 34, See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him over to the Gentiles, and they will mock Him and spit on Him and flog Him and kill Him.

[12 : 07] And after three days, He will rise. This is the great hope and the suffering that Jesus was going to experience is that He would, in fact, one day, three days, in fact, after His death, rise again.

Jesus certainly believed in raising from the dead as He had raised Lazarus from the dead. It's not recorded in the Gospel of Mark, but it is elsewhere that Lazarus had come back to life by the words of Jesus Christ.

So, the Sadducees come to Him with this question knowing this of Him. They have placed Him in this category with the Pharisees, and they mean to humiliate Him by this question.

Because this question, by their attempt, is a *reductio ad absurdum*, which is Latin for reduction to absurdity. They're essentially saying to Him, how can you possibly believe in such a thing as a resurrection from the dead?

Let us give you this insane situation that makes it just seem that it would be impossible. It's not a genuine question. They're not coming to Him with teachable hearts, wanting to know from the Lord of Lords what the answer to this question is.

[13 : 18] They're coming to Him to trick Him, to humiliate Him, as He, they suppose, would not be able to give an answer to such a question. They obviously didn't know who they were talking to.

So they set up this scenario for Him. You see in verse 19, they say, Teacher, Moses wrote for us. And they're quoting directly after this from Deuteronomy 25, 5, and 6.

Let me read that to you. 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 into her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. And the first son who she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.

So this was a command, a way in which the brother's lineage was maintained that an unmarried brother living in the home would step into the role of the husband, would become the husband, and the first son would carry on the name of his brother.

[14:25] And there's some extreme examples and some severe punishments that go on beyond that you're welcome to read in Deuteronomy 25 at a later time. So they set up a scenario for him where there are seven brothers living in a house together.

The first one's married and they go through this process of death and remarriage and death and remarriage and death and remarriage and none of them have a child. There's never a child. There's never a child to carry on the posterity and they finally wrap all this up in the resurrection.

So if this thing called resurrection is true, if it happens, if there's life after this, whose wife will she be? Oh, what are you going to do with that, Jesus? Whose wife is she going to be?

She had seven husbands. What are we going to do? And Jesus answers in the great wisdom that he always does. Right? A double indictment.

And you see that he says in verse 24, you are wrong. And at the end of verse 27, he says again, you are quite wrong because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God.

[15:31] You do not know the scriptures. This would have been an incredible statement to say to these men in this day. These were the leaders.

These were the guys that knew the scriptures. These were the guys in positions of religious authority. These are the guys that spent their days studying the scriptures.

In fact, this particular group were the guys that said, we're not even going to listen to oral traditions.

We're going to stay honed in on the scriptures. More than that, Moses is our great father.

We're going to really, really apply ourselves to those books, to the Pentateuch, to those five. Right?

This would have been shocking to them. You do not know the scriptures.

They had no clear understanding of the scriptures at all. In fact, if they had, they would be leading Israel in a much different way. Jesus is going to continue to establish this for us and show us the way of God rather than the way of apostate Judaism.

[16:31] Right? Jews in this day, by and large, didn't follow the ways of God. They followed some set-up religion that they had formed. It had kind of come out of the law of God. But they had formulated it and thought that they were in right standing with Him because of the things that they did rather than the condition of their heart.

Right? You do not know the scriptures. And this God that they claimed to worship, they apparently had no real understanding of His character because He also says nor the power of God, the God that can, in fact, raise someone from the dead.

You don't understand either of these things. And we see so often it would seem with the Pharisees that they worshipped the right God wrongly. In the case of the Sadducees, it seems that they were worshipping the wrong God wrongly altogether.

Jesus goes on to explain what He means. Verse 25, For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels in heaven.

Now here He's introducing some additional theological information to the scene of this day. I looked and looked. I thought for sure He had to have been quoting something in the Old Testament.

[17:45] Showing these men how they really should have known and really should have understood their Scriptures and known this. That there was no marriage after. There's not. That I could tell.

Someone please tell me if I'm wrong about that later. Not at this moment. But He's introducing some new theological information to the scene. But we know now what marriage is for.

What is marriage meant to do? Why marriage? Marriage. We find out from Ephesians chapter 5 that marriage is prefigurative. It's a shadow.

It's something meant to point to a greater thing. And that is our union with Christ. Imperfect people joining together to be made more perfect, to procreate.

There are certainly some other, some subservient purposes for marriage. But the major purpose, the major reason that we are joined in union with one another is to show this picture of this relationship between Christ and the church.

[18:45] Let me read to you Ephesians 5 beginning in verse 31. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

We get to have a very clear understanding of this on this side. There's no need for marriage anymore once we're raised from the dead because we don't need it any longer. It's meant to be a picture, a snapshot of the real thing.

Once we have the real thing, it's no longer necessary to be married. Now let's read a little bit more about resurrection. I mentioned Daniel 12, 2 to you.

Let me read to you Daniel 12, 2 and verse 3. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above. And those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever. So catch here the connection he's making as he's drawing this out for us.

[19 : 55] What marriage is meant for and that we are going to be like angels in heaven. From Daniel 12, 2 there, when we rise from the dead, we shall shine like the brightness of the sky above and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

And in the Old Testament when brightness is talked about, it's speaking of, it's referring to, it's referencing the glory of God. So when we rise, we'll be made perfect and glorify God forever. This is how we will be like the angels in heaven. The angels in heaven versus the angels not in heaven, those who were cast down, which are actually mentioned as stars, a third of the stars being cast down out of heaven.

But the angels in heaven worship God perfectly forever. And this will be us. Nehemiah 9, 6 says, You are the Lord, you alone.

This is Israel's prayer of repentance found right in the middle of it. You have made heaven the heavens of heaven with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them.

[21 : 02] And you preserve all of them and the host of heaven worships you, the angels in heaven forever and ever and ever. So there's this new theological information introduced to the scene to help us better understand.

And Jesus is saying to them, you don't understand the scriptures and you don't know the power of God for resurrection. He more explicitly addresses it and brilliantly now uses their very text to make his points.

And so now he quotes from the Pentateuch. 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, this is from Exodus chapter 3, I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.

Verse 27, He is not God of the dead but of the living. You see, as God is saying this to Moses, He's saying, I am and they are. I'm not worshipped by corpses.

I am God. I am the God of Abraham. Abraham worships me. Abraham lives and he worships me. I am the God of Isaac. Isaac lives and he worships me. And I am the God of Jacob who lives and he worships me.

[22 : 12] I am and they are. Not that they were but that they are. So he is the God not of the dead but of the living.

He totally deconstructs their entire idea of resurrection and what that means now for their lives. Totally destroys it. They come to humiliate him and he flips it around this double indictment and humiliates them in return.

So what do we gain from a little story like this? A pericope. I have learned I was mispronouncing that as of recent. Not a pericope. A pericope.

This little story. What is the application? What does it mean for us today? If the scriptures were written for this day and for us in this day what does this story mean for us?

Three things I want to address. Firstly do not be like the Sadducees. Do not be like the Sadducees.

[23 : 13] Not knowing your scriptures or the power of God. We live in a very scripture rich environment. I don't know all of you in the room.

In fact we have a number of guests with us today. I don't know if you have ever placed believing faith in Jesus Christ but it is likely it is most likely that you have heard the gospel. That you have had a copy of the scriptures.

That you may have actually read the scriptures themselves. Don't be like the Sadducees. God himself has spoken. He has given us a book that we might know him and know the way of holiness. That we might turn from sin and pursue him. Do not be like the Sadducees. Having some degree of mental assent. Some understanding of it. And not allowing it to work into your heart.

The Sadducees misunderstood the resurrection altogether. Christians understand it. We understand it to be true. And in fact if it's not true as the Sadducees believed we are people to be most pitied.

[24 : 19] Paul says this in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 For if the dead are not raised not even Christ has been raised. The Sadducees were right. If the dead aren't raised not even Christ has been raised.

And if Christ has not been raised your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. The Sadducees were right.

They're gone. If in Christ we have hope in this life only we are of all people most to be pitied. If our faith only means something for us now in this life and it does certainly but if that's it for us we are to be pitied as Christians if the resurrection is not true.

Don't be like the Sadducees. Place believing faith in Christ. Believe in the resurrection. Believe that in Him there is life. Secondly if you have been saved if you have placed saving faith in Christ you have been saved by grace alone through faith alone do not be like the Sadducees.

If you are a Christian do not be like the Sadducees. I'm afraid that we live in a biblically illiterate time.

[25 : 37] Copies of God's Word everywhere. I've got a hard copy of it here in front of me. I can pull up on my iPad every single translation imaginable in a matter of moments. I've got so many tools practical tools at my fingertips.

So much is access to us. We have so much of the Word of God but it seems that so many of us know it very little.

Just really don't understand the scriptures. It's a travesty as Christians that we wouldn't know the Word of God. We're a people of the Word. We came to saving faith by the Word of God preached to us.

This is the way in which God has chosen to communicate to us. Why would we not pour over this? Why would we not know every bit of it? So that we can be obedient to it.

It's a massive travesty. On Facebook the other day, a very good friend of mine from the past and been around him that much as of late attends one of the monolithic places south of us wrote a little thing he realized and learned about prayer and I was glad that he did I praised God for the fact that he realized the fact that he came to some understanding of what prayer is and what it does in the life of a Christian glad that he had but this young guy had grown up in the church this young guy volunteers to a high degree in the place that he currently attends and had totally missed it had not been taught these things at all and it just saddened me for the state of the church that a Christian of his age as long as he had been a believer was just now understanding how it was that prayer works in the life of a Christian just made me sad how has he functioned in this world how has he had any hope at all that

[27 : 31] God hears him and uses his prayers to accomplish anything whatsoever I don't know what a travesty what a travesty that is my wife was at a yard sale yesterday and took a photo of a little knick knack you know older people like knick knacks in their house things that have to be dusted and it was one of those like a little placard thing like a rock that had words engraved into it and said this God could not be everywhere so he created grandfathers oh that's so sweet right it's heresy right it's absolute heresy this is not a thing in fact in retrospect I kind of wish I had gotten her to buy it so we could have gotten away from anybody else and destroyed such a thing God could not be everywhere God poor little God little pitiful God had to get the grandpas to help him out in this thing this item was produced and it was sold and given as a gift and hung around somebody actually had this thing and had kept this thing right biblical illiteracy right we live in a culture of consumption we live in a day and age where we just want to sit back and be fed information just give me what I need to know just tell me what

I need to know and I'll tell you right now beloved Sunday mornings are not enough for you know God and know him by his word it is not enough for you to come and hear a sermon on Sunday morning as much as I like to pack in on a Sunday morning if you guys would permit me to preach for hours on a Sunday morning it still wouldn't be enough for me to give to you everything from the word of God you need to live a holy life you need it daily you need to be enriched by it constantly this is called the bread of life right feast upon it right you need to be taking it in all the time so many of you are famished because you have a meal of some sort I hope you're even paying attention and taking it in and then you go away and you come back a week later and you do it again and it's not

having any real effect in your life because you're!
you're! some of you might listen to some supplemental sermons in between that's not enough either open the word of God get on your knees and ask the Lord to work in you if you're a Christian you have the spirit of God which can illuminate the scriptures to you can make it clear to you it's an important biblical doctrine the clarity of scripture you can understand this part of the reason that I out loud about how I arrived at the position that I hold is because I want you to see that it's not that hard I'm not brilliant look at the context I go isn't that an interesting statement seems confusing at first you hear me say things like that because I know that happens to you when you open up the scriptures you go what in the world I do it all the time often the things many times but I never had to preach I never had to stand up with any authority and tell you what it means and I just honestly can't say you need to be doing the same you need to be constantly in the Bible consuming it 2 Timothy 3 16 17 Paul writes all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable it's profitable it's good for us for teaching for reproof for correction and for training and righteousness that the man of God or woman of God may be complete equipped for every good work if you're finding that there's not fruit in your life and you desire that you want to see God use your efforts in this world you need to be equipped by the word of God to that great end be equipped for every good work it's my great task on faithful and you come every Sunday that's only 52 chances I get to do that it's not enough and most of you don't make it that often to our meetings together so don't be like the Pharisees as a Christian know the scriptures you can do it start now I'm still working it out right I'm never going to arrive at a complete understanding of them but you can begin to let God by the father to speak to people in terms they will understand it's really important for us to remember every time we behold the brilliance of Jesus Christ that it was ultimately the brilliance of God Jesus did not stop being God when he came to earth and became a man he didn't lay aside his deity he was still fully God fully man but he submitted!

[32 : 34] And in John 20 21 he says as the father has sent me even so I am sending you so Jesus as a man he knew his scriptures he had studied his scriptures we find him at the age of 12 in the synagogue teaching the teachers of the synagogue he is actually telling them what the scriptures mean because he understood them we can do this we can gain a knowledge of the scriptures and by his spirit we can speak we can submit our authority to his authority and speak well to people and we have to understand Jesus was a master of this and we should take example from him he understood who the Sadducees were he got it right when they came!

asking! the question that they quote from the very writings that they esteemed so highly to make his point and we should do the same doesn't mean that we become these master tacticians these wonderful orders that we study and study and we pour ourselves into apologetics and all these things although they have their place and their value but simply that we empty ourselves or fill with spirit we ask that he would work through us ask that he would help us to understand people and where they're coming from their viewpoints so that we can speak to their viewpoints I would love to see that the summation of this story is that all the Sadducees that came to him realized they're wrong repented turned to him that's not the case in fact it was the Sadducees that were part of!

!! We have such a precious gift in the scriptures if you're not a believer the gospel is in the scriptures the power of God unto salvation if you are a believer oh how we need to hear that story over and over and over again many of the songs we sing on Sunday morning if you're not very familiar with the scriptures you wouldn't know this but many of them are saturated with Old Testament and New Testament quotations just carried through I so often want to preach little sermons in between songs just to tie it all together for you and they talk about our pre-Christ experience the actual conversion and beyond that it's why most hymns we should sing the verses because it's a complete gospel presentation in those things oftentimes first third and fifth just doesn't quite cover it for us and and sometimes

I go man this song feels like it's getting really long but if you're really paying attention to the words are so necessary and Wes is so careful to do that for us that we see this entire expression of that in our songs together beloved we need the gospel we need it every day we need to be reminded of God's goodness to us in Christ let's pray!