

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for October 15, 2017

Resurrection Correction
Mark 12:18-27

I. The Sadducees' challenge (12:18-23)

A. The challengers behind the challenge (12:18)

18 And Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection.

- “And the Sadducees came to him”
 - Now the Sadducees want a shot at Jesus
 - After the chief priests, scribes, elders, Pharisees and Herodians all had their opportunity to challenge Jesus
 - What do we know about the Sadducees?
 - Sadducees are not mentioned anywhere else in Mark
 - Wealthy and influential Jewish sect
 - Normally associated with the priests
 - Acts 5:17 “But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees)...”
 - Normally located in Judea by the temple in Jerusalem
 - The beliefs and theology of the Sadducees
 - Only followed Torah (First five books of Old Testament), not the prophets and the writings
 - Did not believe in the spiritual realm
 - Did not believe in angels or demons
 - Did not believe in the resurrection or afterlife
 - Acts 23:8 “8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.”
 - Most significantly, Mark highlights the Sadducees’ failure to believe in the resurrection

B. The code related to the challenge (12:18-19)

And they asked him a question, saying, 19 “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.

- “And they asked him a question”

- This was the opportunity for the Sadducees to address the blossoming threat that Jesus had become to Jerusalem's authorities
- This was also the chance for the Sadducees to set themselves apart in their theology
- They begin their question by recalling a particular portion of the Torah
 - Specific command regarding levirate marriages
 - They state their paraphrase of the law whose origin is from Deuteronomy
 - Deuteronomy 25:5-6 "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 in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. 6 And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel."
 - Purpose of the law was to preserve the name of one's dead brother
- "Josephus expands the teaching of Deuteronomy in an interesting way: 'When a woman is left childless on her husband's death, the husband's brother shall marry her, and shall call the child that shall be born by the name of the deceased and rear him as heir to the estate; for this will at once be profitable to the public welfare, houses not dying out and property remaining with the relatives, and it will moreover bring the women an alleviation of their misfortune to live with the nearest kinsman of their former husband' (Ant. 4.8.23 §§254–55)."¹
 - Josephus notes the good of the family maintaining its property for the public welfare, rather than letting it go to waste or ruin
 - Josephus also notes the care that this practice extends to the widow
- This is the specific law code that the Sadducees chose to recall from the Torah

C. The case illustrating the challenge (12:20-22)

20 There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no offspring. 21 And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. 22 And the seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died.

- At this point, the Sadducees concocted this ridiculous hypothetical scenario

¹ Craig A. Evans, Mark 8:27–16:20, vol. 34B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2001), 253.

- The scenario begins with one brother taking a wife
 - Soon after they are married, he dies without any children
- So the next brother fulfills his responsibility to Deuteronomy 25:5-6 and marries his dead brother's wife, who is now a widow
- Tragically, the same thing happens to this second brother
 - He dies without having any children
- This cycle continues through every one of the seven brothers
- Finally, the scenario ends with the death of the widow

D. The consideration of the challenge (12:23)

23 In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife."

- Now, the Sadducees turned to the challenge behind their scenario
- They used the hypothetical situation as an opportunity to challenge the very concept of the resurrection
 - The Sadducees thought they had produced a certain dilemma for God
 - They are not arguing from any teaching in the Torah that there is no resurrection
 - They are arguing from what they believe is the silence of the Torah on the issue
 - In order to make their argument from silence "stronger" they have identified the law of levirate marriage as too complicated for the resurrection
 - Therefore, the Sadducees felt justified in their belief that there was no resurrection
 - Their argument is simply an argument based upon expediency or what is easiest
 - They must have felt that they had both stumped Jesus and made a name for themselves
 - They had taken a unique and rare practice of the levirate marriage, concocted an outrageous scenario, and then decided that it cannot be compatible with the concept of resurrection

II. The Messiah's correction (12:24-27)

A. The core of the correction (12:24)

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

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- “Jesus said to them, ‘Is this not the reason you are wrong’”
 - “You are wrong” could be translated “You are deceiving yourselves”
- “Because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?”
 - Jesus responds identifying their shortcomings in two areas
 - 1) Ignorance of Scripture
 - 2) Neglecting the power of God
- Jesus begins by addressing their neglect of God’s power first

B. The content of the correction (12:25-26)

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

- Jesus first addresses their neglect of God’s power in verse 25
- Their neglect of God’s power was clearly evident in the challenge they presented to Jesus
 - They formulated a ridiculous scenario and believed that it was justification for their unbelief regarding the resurrection
- The Sadducees were clearly lacking the willingness to believe that God could somehow work out the “dilemma” between a woman with seven husbands in the course of her life and how that plays out in the resurrection
- “They neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.”
 - In response to the Sadducees’ argument from silence, one could also say that Scripture does not indicate that *there will be* marriage in the resurrection
 - Additionally, Jesus now declares the truth that there is no marriage in heaven
 - Marriage had its purposes as delineated in Genesis (companionship and continuation of the human race on earth)
 - However, in the resurrection there is a whole new situation
 - There is no longer any need for companionship or propagation of the human race
 - Jesus explains instead, that people will be *like* angels in heaven
 - “they will not become angels but will be as angels in heaven, who now have a heavenly existence and are

deathless. The distinction between men and angels will remain.”²

- 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 “So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 43 It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.”
- 1 Corinthians 15:48-49 “As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.”
- 1 John 3:2 “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”
- “His questioners had thought of the resurrection life only in terms of present earthly conditions. They had failed to see that God’s power could make a new world in which the conditions of life were wholly different. His power in transforming the resurrection body no longer made marriage a necessary part of the future state. ‘By the power of the resurrection, marriage, sex and family relationships will be transcended by perfect communion with God and among persons.’ Therefore, their objection to the resurrection had no validity; the difficulty they envisioned did not apply to the resurrection life.”³
- Jesus then addresses their ignorance of Scripture in verse 26

26 And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’?

- Jesus could have defended the resurrection from passages found other places in the Old Testament
 - Isaiah 26:19 “Your dead shall live; their bodies 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.”
 - Psalm 16:9-10 “Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. 10 For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.”

² D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1994), 347.

³ *Ibid.*, 347.

- Job 19:26 “And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God,”
- Daniel 12:1-2 “At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. 2 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.”
- However, Jesus willingly addresses the Sadducees and the resurrection from the Torah
- He does so by referencing God’s interaction with Moses in Exodus 3
- Exodus 3:6 “And he said, ‘I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.”
- God spoke to Moses and identified Himself as the God of the dead patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
- However, Jesus notices the way in which God spoke to Moses
- God said, “I am the God of...” as opposed to “I was the God of...”
- What is the significance???
- Past tense would make sense when speaking about the deceased
- However, God uses the present tense
- This implies that the patriarchs are alive!
- Jesus humbles the Sadducees by making a simple reference to God’s title for Himself utilized often throughout the Torah and the rest of the Old Testament (Gen 28:13; Ex 4:5; 1 Kings 18:36)

C. The conclusion of the correction (12:27)

27 He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong. ”

- Thus, Jesus declares the obvious conclusion
- God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who are alive!
- Jesus ends by reminding them of their mistake
 - “You are quite wrong” or “You are deceived”
- Additionally, it must be mentioned that if God made covenant promises that the patriarchs never received in their lifetime, then the patriarchs are still awaiting their fulfillment
 - “Though not explicitly mentioning their names, b. Sanh. 90b appeals to God’s covenant promise in Exod. 6:4 to give ‘them’ (the

patriarchs) the land, which, if it is to be fulfilled, demands their resurrection.”⁴

⁴ Rikk E. Watts, “Mark,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 216.

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