

A Confrontation about Resurrection

Mark 12: 18-27

Those who embrace Jesus as the Christ, having received Him as Lord and Savior, all agree on an essential element of His existence – His glorious resurrection. Had He not risen from the grave, He would have been like all who came before Him. We would all yet be in our sin and have no hope of eternal life or acceptance of God in heaven. Having risen triumphantly from the grave, Jesus conquered sin and hell; and He also conquered the last enemy we shall face – death.

This eternal and essential truth regarding Jesus Christ is not embraced by all people. While most people around the world, regardless of their social or religious tendencies believe in some form of life in an after world, all do not embrace the resurrection. Most assume when they pass from this life, they will enter some form of utopia beyond the grave. Archaeological evidence of ancient civilizations reveals this belief has been held for centuries. Many cultures buried their dead with items believed to be necessary for life beyond the grave. While these expected a continued existence, few embraced the doctrine of resurrection in Christ.

Jesus also dealt with those who were confused about the resurrection. We have read of one such group in our text today. As we discuss the [insights](#) conveyed in the text, I want to consider: [A Confrontation about Resurrection](#).

I. The Question of the Sadducees (18-23) – The opening verses reveal that Jesus was approached and questioned by the Sadducees regarding the resurrection. Consider:

A. Their Identification (18) – [Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection.](#)

Jesus had just finished answering a question by the Pharisees and Herodians regarding whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Caesar, and their question was immediately followed by a question from the Sadducees. The Sadducees are not mentioned as often in Scripture as the Pharisees, but they were a very well-known and influential group. Even though they were a minority among the Jews, the Sadducees possessed great authority. They controlled the priesthood among the Jewish people, with all the high priests and chief priests being Sadducees. They held a majority within the Sanhedrin, the ruling council among the Jews. They controlled the commerce within the Temple, regulating what was bought and sold within the Temple grounds. The Sadducees were very wealthy and they also were favorable to the Roman authorities. Along with the Pharisees and Herodians, the Sadducees hated Jesus and wanted to destroy Him.

- The Sadducees may have enjoyed great wealth and authority, but they did not have the favor or approval of the common Jew. The common people viewed them as arrogant, rude, and

condescending to the general public. The Sadducees and the majority of Jewish people also disagreed on many points of doctrine. That brings us to the next point. Consider:

B. Their Inclination (18) – Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection.

The Sadducees rejected the doctrine of resurrection. We will discover that their question was motivated by their disagreement with the teaching of Jesus in this fundamental doctrine. The Sadducees were very liberal in their theology, being in sharp contrast to the Pharisees who were very conservative in their theology. While both erred greatly, at least the Pharisees held the Scriptures in high regard. The Sadducees only embraced the Pentateuch – the first five books of the Bible. They held the idea that true doctrine could not be based upon what the prophets or other writers of the Old Testament had written.

- I hope you realize the danger in such thinking and manner of doctrine. Paul declared the inspiration and benefit of all Scripture. [2 Tim.3:16-17 – All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:](#) ^[17] [That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.](#) An approach such as the Sadducees to Scripture is always dangerous, leading to false doctrine being believed and promoted. I have dealt with those who neglect everything except the words of Christ. I have dealt with those who reject everything for the church today expect the writings of the apostle Paul. We must consider the Word of God in its entirety, studying the whole counsel of God, in order to fully comprehend biblical doctrine.

- Consider the thoughts of Dr. Alan Carr regarding the doctrinal beliefs of the Sadducees: *They believed in the existence of God, but they rejected everything else that was of a supernatural nature. They did not believe in demons, angels or the devil, they did not believe in miracles. They did not believe in Heaven or Hell. They did not believe in a future judgment. They did not believe in life after death, nor did they believe in the resurrection of the dead. That's why they were "Sad-you-see". They could not find these doctrines in their reading of the Pentateuch, so they rejected them out of hand.* ⁱ

- Such doctrine and philosophy on life and death affected their way of life. The Sadducees adopted the philosophy of the Epicureans – *eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you may die.* Such an attitude continues to permeate modern society. Our world is filled with those who do not believe in God, nor do they regard His Word. They view this life as all there is, with no connection between life here and the hereafter.

C. Their Inquiry (19-23) – Having discussed the doctrines held by the Sadducees and their rejection of the resurrection, one better understands the question they posed. They came to Jesus

with a hypothetical scenario, hoping to find reason to accuse Him and reject His teaching. Like the Pharisees and the Herodians, they came addressing Jesus as Master, but they did not regard Him as such. This was all done for vain show, hoping to be seen by those who heard their question. They described a scenario where a man married a wife and died having no children. According to the Law of Moses, which they held in high regard, the man's brother was obligated to marry the woman and raise children in his name. The man who died in their scenario had six brothers. When the first husband died, another brother married the woman, but he also died, leaving no children. Supposedly this scenario was repeated by all the brothers marrying the woman, and yet leaving no children. Not believing in the resurrection, they thought they had inquired about a situation that would be impossible to answer. Since she had been married to her first husband, and his six brothers, having no children by either, whose wife would she be in heaven, following the resurrection? As we consider Jesus' response, we must remember the motivation in their question. This was not asked to seek knowledge or gain a better understanding of the doctrine of resurrection. They sought to prove themselves superior to Jesus in word and doctrine.

II. The Explanation of the Savior (24-27) – Here we discover how Jesus responded to such an absurd question. Notice:

A. The Admonition (24) – **And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?** Rather than immediately addressing their question, Jesus declared the error in their thinking. He proclaimed they clearly did not know the Scriptures or the power of God. They used the portions of Scripture that agreed with their desires for life and ignored the rest. They believed God was able to create the world and all it contains but denied Him having any supernatural ability in relation to the lives and needs of His creation. (As we have discussed, it is dangerous to build doctrines when the whole counsel of God is not considered. Through isolating passages or pulling verses out of context, one could build a doctrine for almost any belief.)

B. The Clarification (25) – **For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.** It is interesting that Jesus actually used their supposedly well-crafted question to reveal the error in their doctrine. Rather than being outsmarted and unable to answer, Jesus turned the tables on them. Jesus declared that relationships will not be the same in heaven. They will not marry or be given in marriage but will exist similar to the state of angels there.

- This is a passage that is difficult for some to receive. I approach this with compassion and understanding, but we cannot deny the truth it reveals. Marriage was ordained of God with specific

purposes for this life. However, marriage relates primarily to the physical needs we all face in this life. Our existence in heaven will be spiritual, not physical. While I am convinced I will know Tanya in heaven, our relationship there will be much different than it is here on earth. I cannot relate to the grief experienced by those who have lost a spouse. I would never seek to minimize their pain or discourage them from their desire to be reunited in heaven with their spouse, but we must understand that our relationships will be different there. I love Tanya with all of my being, but she will not be the object of my affection in heaven – Jesus my Lord and Savior will be! He is the Bridegroom and we are His bride.

C. His Affirmation (26-27) – *And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? ^[27] He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.*

Having dealt with their question, Jesus now dealt with the heart of the matter. Their denial of resurrection actually denied the true character and existence of God. Using a passage they would have embraced as correct and trustworthy, Jesus revealed the error of their doctrine. God declared unto Moses, as He spoke to him from the burning bush, that He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God spoke of these men as being alive; He had not been their God, He was their God. If they ceased to exist at death, they would have had no relationship with God at the moment He spoke to Moses concerning them. He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living!

- What comfort we find in the words of our Lord. He is nearing the cross and will soon die there for the sin of humanity. He will face death, but death will not defeat Jesus. He will conquer death as He rises triumphantly from the grave. Because He lives, those who are saved by His grace have the promise of eternal life beyond the grave. He is not the Lord of the dead, but of the living. If the Lord doesn't soon return, we will all face physical death, but that will not be the end. This physical body will be placed into the ground and return unto the dust from which it was made. However, when the Lord returns for His church, the dead in Christ will rise from the grave, trading the mortal body of flesh for a new, glorified, resurrection body!

Conclusion: Are you convinced of the resurrection of the dead in Christ? Have you made preparations to meet the Lord when life is over? Salvation through His finished work on the cross is our only hope for salvation and eternal life. If you have been saved by grace, you will live eternally with the Lord. If by chance you are unsaved, I urge you to come to Christ for salvation while there is time and opportunity. Once you pass through the gates of death, it is too late.

ⁱ The Sermon Notebook - The Sermon Notebook – Mark.