

2026-06-21

The God of the Living

Mark 12:18-27

How do you understand the word “resurrection”? What comes to mind when you hear or think of the resurrection? It seems that the Jewish people did not have a good or biblical understanding of what the resurrection is. The Sadducees were very critical of the popular view and teaching about the resurrection. It seems like the popular view of the resurrection was a simple understanding of life after death. It was an extension or continuation of this life. For them their relationships in this life continued as they were into the next life. Husbands and wives will continue to be husbands and wives in heaven. **We have lived with** and loved our spouse for decades in this life. It was their belief and desire to want that sexual relationship to continue into the next life and forever. Is that what you believe? Is this what the Bible teaches? The Sadducees were right to question this thinking. Their classic example to argue against this view of the resurrection is seen in their question to Jesus. Our scripture begins with a clear statement of what the Sadducees believed.

Mark 12:18 *“Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying:...”* Sadducees were priests through the tribe of Levi. They only believed in the first five books of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. They rejected all the written commentary on the Law of Moses. Those written commentaries became the traditions of the elders that the Pharisees held to as important as the law itself (Matthew 15:2 / Mark 7:3). They struggled with believing that there was any real life after death at all. For Sadducees, they believed that as long as their name lived on through their generations of children, they lived on. In a later statement in Acts, we learn that the Sadducees did not believe in spirits or in angels (Acts 23:8). Since the Sadducees could not figure out the answer to their question, they chose not to believe in a resurrection at all. So, these Sadducees asked Jesus what they could not answer.

Verses 19-23 *“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. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.”* It is an interesting question **if** life in the next world is a continuation of life in this world. There are some people in this world that have lost their spouse and have not gotten remarried because they did not

want to deal with this problem after they died. The scripture in the Old Testament that these Sadducees were referring to is found in Deuteronomy 25:5. It has nothing to do with the resurrection or life after death. It is only a concern that the name of the dead brother who died without a son, that *“his name may not be blotted out of Israel”* in this world (25:6). The brother can refuse, and it makes for some interesting reading (25:7-10). The struggle of the Sadducees is that they developed a problem that does not exist and then based their understanding and belief in the afterlife from this problem. This is probably how lots of people develop their theology. This is a very bad way to develop your theology. It will lead you into believing lots of weird and wrong things about God. How did Jesus answer the Sadducees?

Verse 24 *“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God?’”* Jesus is telling these Sadducees that they are making a really big mistake. Wait, these men are the religious leaders of their nation. The high priest is a Sadducee. How could they get this wrong? They read into scripture things that were not true. The Pharisees did the same thing with their traditions. I have heard preachers teach their opinions about God that many people believe but have no basis in scripture. When you develop your understanding of God and your belief in God, get all your information from the Bible. Believe what God reveals in scripture about Himself and about life. He does not lie. He is telling the truth. Even if it is hard to believe, believe God and His word. Pay attention to what He is trying to teach you. Remember, God is all powerful. Never forget the amazing power and glory of God. Remember what He has done in this world and in your life that are beyond any human ability. As the Psalmist said, *“I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will also meditate on all Your work, and talk of Your deeds”* (Psalm 77:11). God is powerful and He does great things. The Sadducees did not grasp this knowledge.

Verse 25 *“For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.”* Luke adds two more truths in his record. *“Nor can they die anymore”* and they *“are sons of God”* (20:36). Jesus is giving these Sadducees a basic lesson on the resurrection. First, **there is a resurrection**. *“When they rise from the dead.”* Everyone will experience a bodily resurrection! We are here worshipping God on a Sunday morning and we do this every Sunday, at least we should. We primarily worship God together on Sundays and not on any other day of the week because we believe in a resurrection. Specifically, we believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus on the first day of the week (John 20:1). When we talk about a resurrection we are talking about the resurrection of our physical body. The resurrection is the power of God on display! Believe the scripture. Believe in the power of God to do His will. Jesus also taught that there is a resurrection of all

people. Jesus said, *“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation”* (John 5:28-29). Those in the graves are in the realm of the dead. How do you know what is good? The scriptures teach us. Learn from the Bible what is right and wrong. Don’t develop your own belief of right and wrong or you may end up like the Sadducees, not believing the scriptures or what God can and will do.

Second, whatever resurrection you are a part of, **there is no marriage in heaven**. Heaven and hell are not a continuation of this life. For some this is hard to hear. Jesus did not say we will not know each other or continue a relationship with each other. What He is saying is there is no sexual relationships in heaven or hell. Why? Luke’s additional truth helps us here. There is no death in heaven or in hell. Since we do not cease to exist in eternity, there is no need for babies to be born. The marriage relationship is not needed. The only marriage relationship in heaven is between Christ and His Church (Revelation 19:7). We will have relationships in heaven. They will just be different. The third truth is **we are like angels in heaven**. Jesus did not say we become angels in heaven as some believe. He said we are like them. How are we like them? Angels never die and angels never married in heaven. I am glad Jesus said we are like *“angels in heaven.”* We do not want to be like fallen angels in hell or wherever they are. Again, Luke’s additional truth helps us here. We are not angels because we are *“sons of God.”* At no time did God seek to redeem angels when they rebelled against Him. He did redeem sinners who were made in His image, in His likeness for all who believe (Hebrews 2:14-18). The word *“sons”* refers to children. I believe even in our resurrected bodies (1 Corinthians 15:50-54) we keep some resemblance of our person in this world into eternity because of what Jesus said next.

Verses 26-27 *“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’? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.”* Since the Sadducees only believed in the first five books of the Bible, Jesus used a scripture that they said they believed in order to prove God is right and they are wrong. Jesus quoted God speaking to Moses (Exodus 3:15). From the statement, *“I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,”* these are all men who are alive in the next life, even though their bodies have died. God is a living God and a God of living beings. He is not God of things that do not exist.

You may wonder, isn’t God the God of everything, the living and the dead? Yes, God is God of everything. He is not a God of nothing. The Sadducees did not believe in

an afterlife. Jesus is telling these Sadducees that they were greatly mistaken. There is an afterlife. There is eternity. These Sadducees did not know the scriptures or power of God. They were going to miss out on an eternal life in the presence of God where “*there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain*” (Revelation 21:4). By the power of God all these things will pass away.

Everyone is developing or has developed a theology of God, of life, of the afterlife. There are many religions in the world that believe and teach many different things that are contrary to each other. Not everyone can be right. Do you pick and choose those things that you like and hope that they are true? Are you like the Sadducees who cannot understand one thing that others teach so they develop their own belief system? Do not be fooled. Believe the Scriptures and the power of God.

God is the God of the living! He has revealed to us that there is a resurrection. He has given us proof of the resurrection by raising Jesus from the dead. He has taught us about a resurrection of life and a resurrection of condemnation. That means there is a coming judgment by God (John 5:29-30). God has revealed in the scriptures that we were all dead in our trespasses and our sins. We once walked according to the course of this world. But **God who is rich in mercy** because of His great love with which He loved us, redeemed us through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. By God’s grace we are saved from His judgment through faith in Christ, not by our own works. He has made us alive. He created us in Christ to do His good works (Ephesians 2:1-10). Keep developing a correct and healthy belief in God, life, salvation and eternity.

Questions to ask yourself:

Do you really believe in a resurrection? Do you really believe in a judgment? Do you really believe in heaven and hell? Do you really believe in the power of God? Do you really believe God can change your life?

Actions to take:

Write out what you believe about God, life, salvation and eternity. As you study the Bible, does what you believe and what the Bible teaches match up together? If not, make corrections in your belief, not in the Bible. Live accordingly.

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