

Mark 12:
One Bride for Seven Brothers

We are still in Tuesday of Jesus' last week prior to his death.

We've seen how various groups have gone to try and trap Jesus with some sort of question – religious, theological, or political. Each time those with the question have left disappointed.

Today we see a passage that affirms the hope of a resurrection but also gives news that is among the most disappointing is all of scripture. Many who are married receive this news with a sad sigh. .

v. 18-

Some Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection) *came to Jesus, and *began* questioning Him, saying, 19“Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves behind a wife and leaves no child, his brother should marry the wife and raise up children to his brother. 20 There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died leaving no children. 21 The second one married her, and died leaving behind no children; and the third likewise; 22 and so all seven left no children. Last of all the woman died also. 23 In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one’s wife will she be? For all seven had married her.” 24 Jesus said to them, “Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures or the power of God? 25 For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 26 But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *passage* about *the burning bush*, how God spoke to 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 of the living; you are greatly mistaken.”

V. 18-23 The Sadducees and their theological inquiry

The Sadducees and Pharisees were the two prominent factions in Israel in Jesus' day. They, too, had arisen about the same time as the Pharisees in the second century B.C. But they were different from the Pharisees: these Sadducees only accepted the authority of the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament. They did not believe in angels or demons; and they adamantly did not believe in a resurrection. The Pharisees put a great stress on the sovereignty of God while the Sadducees believed the affairs of men and nations were determined by the unfettered free will of human creatures. (Sproul).

The Pharisees, building their case largely on the teachings of the prophets, believed in life after death and in the resurrection.

The Sadducees were convinced that since there was no teaching in the Torah about life after death, certainly there would be no resurrection at the end of the age. They were the party that was closest to the wealthy elites among the Jews. Many of their prominent members belonged to the priesthood. They were the aristocrats of their day. Those who are comfortable and well-off in this age often have a hard time believing in an age to come. They simply want to build their lives and legacies in this world.

** If this world is all there is, then a legacy really doesn't matter because within one or two generations of your death most people won't be remembered. Unless you live a truly remarkable life, you won't be remembered for long.

The Sadducees were so locked into the status quo of Judaism that once the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. their influence quickly faded. If there's no Temple, no temple influencers, and no priesthood then the Sadducees would be defunct.

So, in order to trap Jesus, they brought a question about marriage and resurrection. It's an odd question since they would have no real interest in what happens to people in the world to come because they don't believe in a world to come. I wonder how long they talked among themselves to find the right question to

befuddle Jesus. Had they already practiced this question with their religious opponents, the Pharisees? So, now they are ready to try it out on Jesus.

AGAIN, when acting as a prosecutor, don't ask a question you don't already know the answer to.
When will they ever learn, oh when will they ever learn?

The marriage aspect is in their wheelhouse because it comes from the Torah; it comes from Deuteronomy 25. It's the so-called Levirate law of marriage (latin for 'brother-in-law')

You and I know it well from the Book of Ruth where it's one of the issues. It's one of the principal themes in the Book of Ruth. A married woman's husband dies. The couple is childless, and the husband's brother is then under obligation to marry that widow and raise up a seed in his brother's name. The first-born of that marriage will be regarded as the offspring of the deceased brother. Well, here's the conundrum. There are seven brothers — and you know what happens. Each one successively dies, and after seven of them are dead the woman was still childless. After seven husbands, she herself dies, and here's the great conundrum: Which husband will she have in heaven? It's sort of one bizarre arguments people make to make a religious person sound absurd. It's a ridiculous question. And remember, the Sadducees DON'T believe in a resurrection. They're not really concerned. They just want to get Jesus to tie himself into a theological knot.

JESUS GIVES THEM TWO TRUTHS:

#1 You are Wrong in two ways

v. 24 The Reason for theological mistakes

What was true for the Sadducees is true for us, but to say they don't understand the scripture would have been shocking and offensive. It would have been like telling Seth Julin that he doesn't understand Excel.

Who was this untrained upstart saying such a thing to the Sadducees? That statement from Jesus would have gone viral and there would have been calls for him to apologize because what he said was offensive. I think Jesus knew that, and he didn't care.

The verb *πλανᾶω* (*planao*), meaning to wander, cause to wander, lead astray or distract from an intended or expected trajectory. Like the parent noun, our verb does not merely speak of making or verbalizing a single error, but rather to instigate a movement that deviates from the current social norms.... It's also the verb that describes the entire intellectual position plus the subsequent walk of life of the [Sadducees](#) ([Matthew 22:29](#)), which was not centered on God and thus destined to disintegrate (which indeed eventually happened as the Sadducees are no longer with us).

We too are often mistaken when we don't understand the Scripture or the power of God.

EX; think about the individual and national mistakes made over the course of history and they are usually rooted in a failure to understand the scripture.

Whether its conservative legalism on one side or liberal licentiousness on the other, each side has a basic failure to understand the Scripture. And the problem isn't always because the person or group has failed to read and study the scripture. That may be the cause, but not always.

The Pharisees and the Sadducees would take pride in their knowledge of the scripture, yet Jesus often exposes how they don't understand it.

v. 24-27 The Power of God

Obviously, the Sadducees don't understand the power of God because they don't believe in the resurrection power of God even as it was displayed in the OT. But they didn't believe in all of the OT such as the prophets, and the wisdom writings.

It was clear that they denied the power of God. They had a secular perspective not one shaped by a living faith in a present God of unlimited power.
Jesus exposes that by taking them to Ex 3:6.

Jesus takes them to the part of the scripture they do believe in – TORAH – the first five books of Moses and he shows them that they don't understand it because they don't believe in the power of God.

When you have a prior anti-supernatural viewpoint then it restricts your field of faith. You “can’t” believe certain things, like a resurrection, because you WON’T believe them.
They would believe that God could speak in a bush on fire that was not consumed yet any resurrection is off the table. WHY?

EX: Joe Rogan

Over the course of a few years, famous comedian and podcaster Joe Rogan went from mocking Christianity as a “myth” to telling his audience that “we need Jesus.”
“The difference between science and [religion](#) is that science only asks you for one miracle. ‘I want you to believe in one miracle, the big bang.’ And it’s funny because people would be incredulous about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but yet, they’re convinced that the entire universe was smaller than the head of a pin,” Rogan said on a recent episode of “The Joe Rogan Experience.”

i.e. people are willing to accept one scientific ‘miracle’, but not one that would require them to acknowledge a supreme cosmic authority.

#2 THERE IS NO MARRIAGE IN HEAVEN

The Sadducees make the mistake of thinking that the resurrection world they don’t believe in will have the same conditions as the present world. In their make-believe world to come the arrangements for marriage, reproduction, and childbirth will remain the same. (Lenski)

They don’t believe in a resurrection world, so they don’t understand it.

Jesus refutes them and instructs them.

“You are mistaken/deceived 'For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. '

Note : they are ‘like’ angels, NOT they “are” angels.

Jesus, who came from heaven, is able to speak with authority about mankind and angels.

We don’t become angels or cherubs sitting on clouds playing a harp.

Since there is no death in heaven, there is no need for the creation norm to be fruitful and multiply, thus no marriage.

v. 26-27 A Living Faith in the God of the Living

Jesus goes to a passage that would be familiar – Ex 3

Jesus clearly affirms a resurrection of those who were dead. He goes directly at a key distinction between the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

The Sadducees thought that using the resurrection issue in the context of the Levirate Law of marriage would make the resurrection issue seem absurd...

i.e. “So, you affirm the resurrection. How about this scenario...”

Jesus not only affirms the resurrection, but he also piles on by referring to angels, which the Sadducees also denied. They start the conversation, but then Jesus takes it to them.

** Apply – when you have the truth on your side you don't have to shrink away from it.

This passage teaches us something important about marriage – as great as it can be, and as important as it is in representing the relationship of Christ and the Church, IT IS NOT THE ULTIMATE RELATIONSHIP.

The ultimate relationship is the one we have with God and in heaven it will be so glorious that nothing can destroy the joy and happiness of that heavenly relationship, not even the absence of marriage.

I say this today with a deep sense of sadness because tomorrow Linda and I celebrate 46 years of marriage.

(Happy Anniversary Linda) It is sobering to read this text about the absence of marriage the day before our anniversary. We've had 46 wonderful years and we don't know how long it will last, but this text does prepare us for the reality that heaven will be different. Our vows were "Til death do us part." That's all that we can promise in this life.

WE don't know exactly what Heaven will be like, but we do know that there will be no sin, not just between husband and wife but in ALL relationships. There will be no enmity, rivalry or jealousy. Our friendships in the heavenly body of Christ will be so Christ centered that we'll have deeper and more fulfilling relationships than we could have here on earth. Our lives in heaven will be truly human in a glorified sense, but they will not be precisely like our human life in this world. It will be better.

There is a message here for single Christians who may have longed for marriage but never got there. You may feel like you have missed out on something special. Perhaps you did. BUT you will not miss out on the MOST SPECIAL relationship of all. Your heavenly relationships with others or with God will not be diminished in any way because you were not married in this life. No relationship or lack of relationship in this life will disturb our eternal joy and felicity in heaven. Nothing that we miss or lack in this life will disturb our eternal happiness in heaven.

Sproul: *"We fail to understand the depth of joy and delight that God has prepared for His people in heaven. If you use your imagination and try to conjure up the greatest possible experience that you would have in heaven, once you reach the pinnacle of that imagination, multiply it by a million times, and you still will not reach what God is preparing for His people with His power and with His Word."*

Ps 73:28 But as for me, the nearness of God is my good;
I have made the Lord God my refuge, That I may tell of all Your works.

In refuting the Sadducees, Jesus gives hope to us today.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob still live as do OUR loved ones IN THE LORD who have passed from this life. Their lives are in the hands of the God of the living and all who know Him through faith in Christ have the promise of eternal life and fellowship with God.

This life is not all there is. We were made for something or someplace else.

Ps 16:11

11 You will make known to me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

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