

Mark 12:18-27
Badly Mistaken or God of the Living?
BPC 5pm Service
Feb 16, 2025

27 years ago, Emma and I were married at St Jude's in Carlton
And apart from having Jesus in my life
Being married to Emma is easily the best thing that has ever happened to me
Emma has been God's gift to me each and every day
And it is an undeserved blessing to be married to her
If that's the case how am I to make sense then of what Jesus says in tonight's bible passage

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

Jesus is saying that there is no marriage in heaven
If there is no marriage in heaven
If Emma and I will not be husband and wife in the afterlife
Well then you know what
Maybe I don't want to be in heaven.
After all, I cannot imagine life without her

Now by the end of the sermon,
I want to show you what's wrong with that statement
I want to show you something better
But you need to listen to the end.

Tonight we will be looking at this passage in two parts
Firstly, the Badly Mistaken Sadducees
And secondly, the God of the Living according to Jesus

Well let's look firstly at the Badly Mistaken Sadducees

As we heard last week from Ben Nelson,
In the context of Mark chapter 12
Different powerful groups in Jerusalem have targeted Jesus in their sights
The Pharisees and Herodians are trying to arrest Jesus and to silence him
As we saw last week, they failed in their attempt to trap Jesus with their words
Another group – the Sadducees step up to the line and now they have their go at Jesus

Now who are the Sadducees?
The first thing we're told about the Sadducees in verse 18
is that they don't believe in the resurrection.
And this is something that distinguished them from the Pharisees

We see this very clearly in the book of Acts chapter 23
When the apostle Paul was addressing the Sanhedrin
which was the ruling council of Jerusalem
This is what happened

Verse 6

[Paul said]...“I am being judged because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead!”⁷
When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.⁸ For the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, and neither angel nor spirit, but the Pharisees affirm them all.

Here’s a bit of background to the Sadducees
They didn’t just oppose the Pharisees,
They were bitterly opposed to them
So even though these different religious groups were working together to kill Jesus
It was not because they liked each other
It was a relationship of convenience because they saw in Jesus a common enemy

The Sadducees tended to be wealthier and more powerful than the Pharisees.
And thus they held positions of power in the Sanhedrin
And also in the temple of Jerusalem
Chief priests tended to come from the Sadducee party
So for example, Caiphas, the high priest who condemned Jesus to death
Was a member of the Sadducees

Because the Sadducees held more power
They were more accommodating to the Roman occupiers than Pharisees
And they did not like political unrest
And this might be one of the reasons why they didn’t welcome the idea of a resurrection
Because it might create more zealous martyrs
Who were willing to die for their cause in the hope of resurrection.

But probably the main reason why they didn’t believe in the resurrection
Was because they considered God’s word to be limited only to the Pentateuch
The first five books of the Old Testament
Genesis to Deuteronomy
This was different to the Pharisees who considered God’s word as being broader than this
Including not only the rest of the Old Testament
But they also placed a lot of weight on their own oral traditions

And the Sadducees approach Jesus by presenting him with a ridiculous scenario
Verse 19

¹⁹ “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that **if a man’s brother dies**, leaving a wife behind but **no child, that man should take the wife and raise up offspring for his brother.** ²⁰ There were seven brothers. The first married a woman, and dying, left no offspring. ²¹ The second also took her, and he died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. ²² None of the seven left offspring. Last of all, the woman died too. ²³ In the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be, since the seven had married her?”

Here is some background to this scenario
It’s based on a law from Deuteronomy 25
And the purpose of this law was God’s provision
If a woman’s husband died, her brother-in-law was to marry her for a couple of reasons
To provide a continuing name for her dead husband in having offspring
But also to provide for the widow by making sure that she was cared for within the family
And not by an outsider which would be shameful in an honour shame culture

But now I want you to see what the Sadducees are doing here
They are taking this Scripture
And then creating this caricature
This cartoonish situation in which the same unfortunate woman
Has to marry brother after brother after each dies
Their question to Jesus is not a genuine question
They themselves didn't believe in the resurrection
And their goal is to discredit Jesus
To make him look foolish for believing the resurrection
How foolish would Jesus look if he affirmed a bodily resurrection in this ridiculous scenario
Imagine all these brothers and this woman
Arguing in heaven over was going to be her husband in the afterlife

No rather Sadducees saw in this law of God,
Their own idea of resurrection
The first husband's *name* lives on after he dies
That's his legacy
That's his immortality
There is no such thing as a bodily resurrection.

How does Jesus' respond?
Look at verse 24
Instead of giving them the answer they are seeking
Jesus concluded about them "Isn't this the reason why you're mistaken: you don't know the
Scriptures or the power of God?
You've taken a good law of God's provision
Something God intended for good
And manipulated it to serve your own selfish ends
You haven't understood Scripture at all and therefore you don't see who God is
No Scripture, No Power.

This is Jesus' conclusion about the Sadducees in verse 27
"You are badly mistaken"
Imagine having the Son of God say that about you.
You are badly mistaken

Bruce Ismay was the founder of the White Star Line which owned the Titanic Cruise Liner
Ismay was convinced that the ship's cutting edge design was unsinkable
And that's what the promotional material of the White Star Line said
"Practically Unsinkable"
Even the ship's builders Harland and Wolff did not claim this
And they disagreed with this claim
Bruce Ismay, considered the Titanic to be a giant lifeboat itself
That it would take days to sink
Which would allow more than enough time for other ships to come and rescue passengers
This is what Bruce Ismay is alleged to have said to Thomas Andrews
The managing director of the Ship's builders – Harland and Wolff

*"Control your Irish passions, Thomas. Your uncle here tells me you proposed 64 lifeboats and
he had to pull your arm to get you down to 32. Now, I will remind you just as I reminded him
these are my ships. And, according to our contract, I have final say on the design. I'll not*

have so many little boats, as you call them, cluttering up my decks and putting fear into my passengers.”

The Titanic set sail with only 20 lifeboats in the end
And on that fateful night on April 15, 1912, the Titanic sank in three hours not days
And only 700 people survived on those lifeboats
And over 1500 people died in the icy depths of the North Atlantic

“You are badly mistaken”
You can be sincere in your beliefs Like Bruce Ismay and the Sadducees
So convinced of your own conclusion
And yet be completely self-deceived
And where does that leave you – dead in the water

But it’s not like the Sadducees had no scripture at all
It’s what they did with it
They read scripture with their own agenda in mind
Here’s something I want you to think about
Scripture is God’s agenda and not your’s
Are you at risk of making the same mistake as the Sadducees?

Here’s an example
The Bible says that God is love in 1 John 4
But what if a Christian leader takes that verse
And then says that because God is love
God doesn’t care about your sexual orientation or your gender
You can choose who you want to be
And how you express that
With whoever you choose to express that with as long as you do that in love
Actually when you read the bible properly
1 John also speaks about love but also about God’s concern about truth
And the reality of sin
So God in his good design does care about gender and sexuality

Here’s another example
What about the controlling boyfriend or husband
Who uses Ephesians 5 to demand that his wife/girlfriend submit to him in all circumstances
And then because of this verse,
Justifies his anger, his demands for sex, and coercive behaviour
All in the name of serving His own agenda
While ignoring that Colossians 3 also says,
Husbands love your wives and do not be harsh with them

You’ve got to be honest with yourself
Don’t be self-deceived like the Sadducees.
Scripture is not here to serve your own agenda
Scripture is God’s living and active word
A sword that can pierce your heart
And judge your thoughts and attitudes
And ultimately bring you life
It is not your tool or your weapon used to serve your own selfish purposes

Like the Sadducees

The thing you want to avoid is to meet Jesus one day
When he returns to judge in awesome majesty
And to hear those words from him "You are badly mistaken"

This brings us to our second point:

The God of the Living according to Jesus

The heart of the problem is No Scripture, no power
But the converse is also true
But if you know the Scriptures, you will know God's power
The power of the living God even to raise the dead to life

Now although there are not many explicit references to resurrection in the Old Testament
They are there in the Bible
And I've printed these references in the outline for you to look up later in their context
But here are a couple of them
For example Daniel chapter 12

Many who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to eternal life, and some to disgrace and eternal contempt.

Here's another Old Testament reference to the resurrection
Isaiah chapter 26
Your dead will live; their bodies will rise.
Awake and sing, you who dwell in the dust!
For you will be covered with the morning dew,
and the earth will bring out the departed spirits

Take a look at the other references in your own time
There is even one in Isaiah 53 related to the resurrection of Jesus.

Now the Sadducees would say to those references, so what?
None of the those verses are found in the Pentateuch
And so Jesus goes to the book of Exodus to prove his point about the resurrection.

Look at verse 26.

²⁶ And as for the dead being raised—haven't you read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God said to him: **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 badly mistaken."

Jesus quotes from Exodus chapter 3,
The incident where God appears to Moses in the burning bush and reveals his name
Jesus calls Exodus the book of Moses
Because Moses is known as the author of the first five books of the Bible
And Jesus also knows that the Sadducees respected the teachings of Moses
And Jesus is saying here that Moses did not reject the idea of resurrection
In Exodus 3, God reveals himself as "I AM"
I AM means that He is the Living God - self-sufficient and self-existent

But I AM also means He is the Saviour and Protector of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
All of whom died putting their faith in God
And so the question is: Are these patriarchs still dead?
Long dead according to the Sadducees
If that were so then God should have said "I WAS the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob"
But he says I AM which implies that God has an ongoing relationship with the living
This is only possible, if Abraham, Isaac and Jacob experience resurrection
The Living God is the God of the Living not the dead
And resurrection from death is not reserved just for the heavy hitters of the Old Testament
Jesus offers this resurrection to all who trust in Him
Listen to him in John 11

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. ²⁶ Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

And if the Sadducees had given themselves to knowing God's Scriptures properly
Instead of serving their own agenda
They would have been able to join the dots about the resurrection and Jesus
And that's the great irony
They would have realised that the one standing right in front of them
The one they are trying to trap
Is the Living God in the flesh
The one who was promised by the Scriptures
The one who would not only die as an offering for the sins of the world
But the one in whom God's power would be seen
In his own resurrection from the dead
And all of this was going to happen in a matter of days

Let's hear 1 Corinthians 15 again

³ For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.

Twice Paul says "according to the scriptures"
If the Sadducees knew their Scriptures they would have seen it
Others in the Bible knew their Scriptures
In Luke's gospel we're told of Simeon and Anna
who were both older, devout followers of God
When they saw Jesus being presented at the temple as a young child
When they held him in their arms
They joined the dots in the Bible
They knew immediately that Jesus was the Saviour the Scriptures had promised
And they worshipped God

The Sadducees had their opportunity and they blew it.
Rather than seeing in Jesus the Power of God
They saw him as a threat to their earthly power

Listen to Caiphas the High Priest
A Sadducee and a consummate politician

Here's John 11

⁴⁹ One of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! ⁵⁰ You're not considering that it is to your advantage that one man should die for the people rather than the whole nation perish."

Sounds so noble doesn't it

Jesus is going to cause a stir that will bring the fury of the Roman's down on Israel

So Caiaphas wants to sacrifice this one man for the peace of the nation

But really behind that mask

Is the desperation to maintain power for the Sadducees

in their fight against others like the Pharisees

And in the end, in AD70

When the temple was destroyed by the Romans

The Sadducees lost all their power and relevance.

And they were sad you see.

Here's my encouragement to you

Know Scripture, Know power

Our commitment at this church

Is to teach the bible not for the sake of the bible

No it's because in knowing Scripture

You will know the power of the living God

And you need to know His power

To live a life full of peace, purpose and hope

Here's how I can tell people who know Scripture

The more you know Scripture

The more prominent the main character becomes in their lives

The main character is Jesus

In fact, life works best when you become a side character

And Jesus becomes the main character

The Harry Potter series contains

A powerful story about facing tragedy and grief

The value of loyalty and love in friendship

The importance of standing up to evil

Unlikely heroism

Even resurrection – spoiler alert

Now imagine if you were to read all the Harry Potter books

But if you took out the main character – Harry Potter

The story then loses all its power

It's the same with Knowing Scripture

If you give yourself to knowing Scripture with Jesus as the main character

You will know the power of the living God.

And what I want to do now is to show this to you in relation to the resurrection.

You see I think most of us live the Christian life

Without really knowing the power of God in the resurrection

And the power of God in the resurrection changes everything.

Pornography, Singleness, Sexuality, Body Image
All of these things we grapple with are changed by the resurrection
Let me show you.

I told you that I would come back to verse 25 at the end and so here we are
When Jesus refutes the Sadducees ridiculous scenario of one bride for 7 brothers
He says that there will be no marriage in heaven
Just as the angels aren't married
So neither will people be when they are resurrected

Neil's final sermon as Senior Pastor will be on 1 Corinthians 15 next month
And that chapter is one of the most important passages about the resurrection
So I won't steal Neil's thunder tonight
But the one thing I will say is that resurrection from that passage
Shows us that there is continuity but also transformation in the resurrection
Resurrection is not just resuscitation back into this life as we know it
Instead our bodies are transformed like Jesus' body into a new life
And from our passage tonight this impacts marriage

So I want you to think through the implications of this in Scripture
At the start of Genesis
God felt it was not good for people to be alone
So he gave the good gifts of sex and intimacy in the union of marriage
He told Adam and Eve to procreate,
To multiply and fill his creation
Sex in marriage is the means to do this
Sex in marriage is celebrated in Song of songs as a wonderful expression of God's kindness
Marriage is a picture used to portray God's relationship with Israel in the Old Testament
Marriage is a reflection of the intimate union between Christ and His church
And now Jesus is saying that human marriage is a *temporary* gift
That in the resurrection
There will no longer be marriage between men and women
There will no longer be the physical intimacy of sex or the need to procreate
Those gifts of God in other words will have achieved God's purpose
The only marriage in heaven will be the marriage between Christ the bridegroom
And His bride – all believers who have trusted in Jesus.

After 27 years of marriage that raises things for me
Will I know Emma in heaven?
I believe the answer is yes, and I can show you a reference in 1 Thessalonians 4 about that
And the disciples did recognize the resurrected Jesus, eventually
There is a tinge of grief for me that I won't be married to Emma if I'm honest
But if I state in defiance that if Emma and I can't be married
Then I'd rather not be resurrected in heaven
Then you know I'll just be like the Sadducees
I will cling to what I see and what I know – my earthly power and privilege
I will believe that Emma and I are the main characters of our story
Just like the ending of the Notebook where they die together in the nursing home
Our story is the greatest love story
Vomit
That makes me want to throw up

The greatest love story is the story between Jesus and his bride
Marriage and sex in this life is not ultimate
Having kids in this life is not ultimate
Because resurrection life with Jesus is ultimate

Joni Eareckson Tada

Led a very active life in her childhood years until she was paralysed at 17 in a diving accident
In the years since living with quadriplegia
she has come close to death on a few occasions
She is married but was not able to have children
And she has spent decades pointing people to Jesus
In whom she has found comfort and hope

Joni wrote that the first thing she is going to do with her new resurrection body.

It is not to dance and to leap for joy which she will do eventually

But she said:

I can't wait for that day because when I get my glorified body, the first thing I'm going to do with my resurrected legs is to fall down on grateful, glorified knees.

Joni knows that the use of her body is not ultimate

In the resurrection, Jesus is ultimate

Worshipping Jesus in thankfulness for what he did for us on the cross

And for the new bodies he will give us

And for his sheer breathtaking majesty – that is ultimate

Joni knows that the main character is Jesus

Even though I won't be married to Emma

What if resurrection life with Jesus is better than I can imagine

I'm looking forward to how Jesus will transform me

So that I won't be capable of sinning against Emma anymore

Where I can love her without mixed motivations even if I'm not her husband

Where I won't need to watch her suffer from sickness or death

I'm looking forward to seeing Emma with Jesus

And to see her reflect the glory of Jesus in her resurrection body

And to see her be everything God intended her to be

I'm looking forward to being in heaven with my single friends who wanted to get married

Who grappled with loneliness and grief in this life but trusted Jesus to the very end

I can't wait to see them bask in their marriage to Jesus

I'm looking forward to seeing friends who could never have children but wanted them

I can't wait to see God wipe away their tears of grief

And to see Jesus replace their heartache with lasting joy

I'm looking forward to seeing my friends who have struggled with porn

For the struggle over their bodies will be over and gone will be the guilt and shame

Because their new bodies will find lasting satisfaction in worshipping Jesus

I'm looking forward to seeing my friends who have never been comfortable in their bodies

When Jesus gives them new resurrection bodies

I'm looking forward to seeing them feel comfortable in their own skin for the first time

Sam Allberry is a pastor, a faithful bible teacher and author
Sam has shared honestly about his same sex attraction in his books and talks
Sam has also spoken about his commitment to honouring Jesus with his body
by remaining single and celibate in this life
Sam is actually coming to our church in May to preach at the 5pm service

He wrote a book called "What God has to say about our bodies"
And it gives you a glimpse to see how the resurrection
gives Sam the power to live out this commitment
This is what he wrote

With these new bodies we will be able to glorify and serve Jesus perfectly. That is what
should make us most excited. Knowing all this can give us a new way to look at our lives. The
fact is, this body now, in all the ways in which it is a blessing and a burden, is not the only
bodily experience we will ever have. Through Christ we are confident of a future
resurrection. There will be no more physical temptations, no more spiritual or physical
weakness. No more shame or affliction. No more sin. And no more death.

I'm looking forward to it.
Come Lord Jesus come.

Don't be badly mistaken like the Sadducees
Know Scripture
And you will know the power of the living God in Jesus
Let him be the main character in your story
And you will see the glory that awaits you in the resurrection to come.