



The Gospel of Mark

A Living Word Independent Bible Study



The Gospel of Mark
Part 31
Mark 12:18-27

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Mark 12:18-27

(NIV)

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of chapter 11, we have seen:

Jesus entering Jerusalem, the royal city.

Jesus riding an unbroken colt, as king of peace.

Jesus being acclaimed as the Son of David.

Jesus demonstrating authority at the temple.

Jesus facing two confrontations with authorities:

The chief priests and scribes, about the source of Jesus' authority.

The Pharisees and Herodians, about the paying of taxes to Caesar.

Now, Jesus faces another confrontational group:

The Sadducees, who question Jesus regarding the Pharisaic doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.

Mark 12:18 (NIV)

Then the Sadducees,
who say there is no
resurrection, came to
him with a question.

“Sadducees”

This is their only appearance in Mark’s Gospel.

They are religious conservatives who only viewed the first five books of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy) as authoritative.

The name probably comes from either the Hebrew “tzadik” (meaning “righteous”) or from the Hebrew name Tzadok (implying “a follower of Tzadok”).

Here, they are yet another group rounding out complete opposition to Jesus.

“who say there is no resurrection”

They found no such teaching in Genesis-Deuteronomy, and therefore refused to accept the doctrine.

Pharisees, on the other hand, affirmed it explicitly in THEIR doctrine.

The Pharisees firmly believed in a Judgment Day and a general resurrection at the end of time leading to judgment.

The Sadducees believed death was a permanent end of the being.

Mark 12:19 (NIV)

“Teacher,” they said,
“Moses wrote for us
that if a man’s brother
dies and leaves a wife
but no children, the
man must marry the
widow and have
children for his
brother.”

“Moses wrote for us”

The “levirate laws” in Genesis and Deuteronomy are the topic here.

Genesis 38:8 – “Then Judah said to Onan, ‘Lie with your brother’s wife and fulfill your duty to her as a brother-in-law to produce offspring for your brother.’”

Deuteronomy 25:5-6 – “If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband’s brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.”

These rules were the solution to the problem, in ancient times, of a childless, widowed woman who held no place otherwise.

Mark 12:20-22

(NIV)

“Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any children. The second one married the widow, but he also died leaving no child. It was the same with the third. In fact, none of the seven left any children. Last of all, the woman died too.”

“seven brother ...”

The scenario is designed to show how ridiculous the idea of the general resurrection of the dead was.

It suggests the Sadducees believed Jesus held to the Pharisaic view, and wanted to discredit him.

Jesus WAS often closer to the belief of the Pharisees than other Jewish sects – the conflict with them was, generally, because they did not follow their own teaching!

Mark 12:23 (NIV)

“At the resurrection,
whose wife will she be,
since the seven were
married to her?”

“whose wife will she be”

The basic assumption is that the laws of Torah would still apply in a post-resurrection life.

The Messiah was expected to be an expert in Torah interpretation.

In the resurrection, the woman would be married to all seven brothers – a clear violation of polygamy laws!

So the Sadducees’ point is: How can you affirm BOTH the eternal validity of the Torah AND a doctrine of resurrection?

The two are logically inconsistent with one another!

Mark 12:24 (NIV)

Jesus replied, “Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God?”

“you do not know the Scriptures”

Remember that in 12:10, Jesus had asked other leaders a similar question about knowing the Scriptures.

Mark 12:10 – “Haven’t you read this scripture: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone?’”

Also, according to Mark 1:22, Jesus taught **DIFFERENTLY** from the teachers of the law:

Mark 1:22 – “The people were amazed at his teaching because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.”

“or the power of God”

Jesus doubts the Sadducees have ever experienced God’s actual power – and therefore have no ability to have insight into what Scripture really reveals.

He believes they have a very limited view of God’s power – of what God is truly capable of.

Mark 12:25 (NIV)

“When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.”

“When the dead rise”

Jesus gives tacit approval to the reality of the resurrection.

“they will neither marry nor be given in marriage”

Jesus says the question around marriage is irrelevant. Nowhere in Scripture is there a suggestion that the marriage state continues post-resurrection!

Although, Jesus’ words COULD imply simply that there are no NEW marriages – with no death, the levirate marriage laws would be unnecessary.

“like the angels”

There is also little in Scripture about angels! They all have male names in Scripture. But how they function in regard to marriage and sexuality is not at all clear.

Jews did not believe angels needed to marry because marriage was largely about procreation, and being immortal, the angels had no need of procreation!

IMPORTANT: This text does NOT say the dead BECOME angels, it says their MARRIAGE BEHAVIOR is “like the angels”.

Mark 12:26 (NIV)

“Now about the dead rising – have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’?”

“about the dead rising”

Jesus knows they are REALLY attacking the credibility of this belief, to try to show Jesus’ own lack of adherence to Scriptural teaching.

“read in the book of Moses”

It is important that Jesus uses a passage THEY would recognize as authoritative.

So, he chooses Moses at the burning bush – a fundamentally important passage.

Mark 12:26 (NIV)

“Now about the dead rising – have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’?”

“I am ...”

Jesus appeals to one of the most sacred passages in all of Torah – the revelation of the divine name “I AM”.

OTHER texts were often used by the Pharisees in defense of the doctrine, but these are NOT in Torah, and would be insufficient for the Sadducees:

Isaiah 26:19 – “But the dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead.”

Psalms 16:9-10 – “Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.”

Job 19:26 – “And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.”

Daniel 12:2 – “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.”

Mark 12:27 (NIV)

“He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!”

“not the God of the dead, but the living”

All Jewish sects would agree, “God is the God of the living”.

To say “God is the God of the patriarchs” AND to say “God is the God of the living” implies that the patriarchs must someday live again.

There is also a passage in the apocryphal book 4 Maccabees, which MAY have been written before this time (its exact dating is debated):

4 Maccabees 16:25 – “They knew also that those who die for the sake of God live to God, as do Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the patriarchs.”

If God is the God of those who have died, then somehow, they are still “alive to God”.

If God’s people are destined to die and remain dead, then in what sense can God be called “the God of the living”

Jesus suggests that resurrection is not only Scriptural, but a logical inference.

“You are badly mistaken!”

The Sadducees think they are experts in Scriptures, but Jesus says they have wandered from its truth – they are WAY off base!

Mark 12:18-27

(NIV)

SUMMARY

Jesus has now easily handled confrontations with chief priests, scribes, Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees.

For the second time, Jesus has accused his accusers of not knowing the Scriptures.

Soon, in Mark 13:5-6, Jesus will warn the disciples of the dangers of false prophets who will lead them astray from a correct understanding of Scripture.

The questioning of Jesus reaches a crescendo in the passage we will look at next, in which Jesus is confronted by yet another scribe.

This time, Jesus will be asked his understanding of “the greatest commandment”.



Bibliography

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