

## The Sadducees Try to Discredit the Lord

### Mark 12:18-27

Mark 12:18-27 – *“Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: <sup>19</sup> ‘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. <sup>20</sup> Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. <sup>21</sup> And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. <sup>22</sup> So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. <sup>23</sup> Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.’”*

*<sup>24</sup> Jesus answered and said to them, “Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? <sup>25</sup> For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. <sup>26</sup> 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’? <sup>27</sup> He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.”*

### Background Notes

Like the Pharisees, the Sadducees were a religious party in Judaism. The Pharisees were the orthodox Jews of the day, and the Sadducees were the liberal Jews of the day. The Sadducees were not as numerous as the Pharisees, but they were quite influential because their members came largely from the wealthy upper classes and from the priestly families. They occupied a number of seats in the Sanhedrin - the Jewish high court.

The Sadducees believed there is no resurrection (v18), and there is no future judgment. Death is the end, as far as they were concerned. They did not believe in angels or spiritual beings. Acts 23:8: *“For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit.”* In addition, they accepted only the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, as Scripture.

The Sadducees came to the Lord with a hypothetical legal case - a made-up situation. They had probably presented it to the Pharisees before, and the Pharisees had no answer for it. The question in this fictional situation was based on the Levirate marriage laws in Deuteronomy 25. According to the Law there, if a man died without an heir, and if he had an unmarried brother, the unmarried brother was to marry the widow. The firstborn of that marriage would then carry the name of the brother who died. This law was given so that the older brother’s name and inheritance would not be lost in Israel.

The Sadducees give this hypothetical case to the Lord: there were seven brothers, and one after another they married a woman, and all seven brothers died. [I think if I had been the seventh brother in line, I might have tried to come up with some way to get out of this!] Then, last of all, the woman died as well. So the Sadducees came to the Lord and, probably in a very sarcastic voice, asked the question in verse 23: *Therefore, [Jesus], in the resurrection, [which you say there is], when they rise, [supposedly], whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.*” They thought they had the Lord in a dilemma. It’s amazing to me that the Lord didn’t just get up and walk away! The fact that He stayed there and gave them an answer - and He **did** give them an answer – demonstrates His amazing patience with the hypocritical religious leaders. Jesus told them that they were wrong on two counts: *You do not know the scriptures, nor the power of God.*

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. There is no marriage in Heaven.

Verse 25: *For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.* There’s no marriage in Heaven. Marriage is for this life here on earth. [How many are glad about that? - laughter - Don’t want to commit yourself on that one, right?] However, that doesn’t mean that we won’t know each other in Heaven, when we’re in our resurrected bodies. We’ll know one another, and we’ll remember things, but the state of marriage won’t exist in Heaven. So, if you’re not happily married at this point, you can rejoice! And if you are happily married, you can rejoice, too - because Heaven is better!

Recently I was talking to a newly engaged couple, and they were hoping that the Lord wouldn’t return before the wedding! Well, you can appreciate why they felt that way. But I can assure you that, if the Lord comes before they’re married, and we ask, “Hey, are you disappointed that you never had the chance to be married?” - they’d say, “Disappointed? No way! Marriage couldn’t be better than this!” There will be no disappointment in heaven. There will be rejoicing - no matter what your situation here on earth.

And by the way - we don’t turn into angels when we go to Heaven! A Christian once asked me, “Doesn’t the Bible say that we’re going to turn into angels?” No, we’re not going to turn into angels. That’s not what verse 25 means: *“but are like angels in heaven.”* We’ll still be ourselves, but we’ll have new bodies - resurrected bodies, bodies that will not sin, bodies that will be conditioned to live forever. What this verse means - *“like angels in heaven,”* refers only to marriage. Angels are not married. That’s what that Scripture means. Note, by the way, that by mentioning angels, the Lord also refuted the Sadducees’ belief that there were no angels!

### 2. There is no “soul sleep” after death.

Do you know what “soul sleep” is? Soul sleep is the idea that when the believer dies, the soul and spirit go into a state of unconsciousness and “sleep” until the resurrection. However, the Bible does not teach the idea of soul sleep after death.

That's false teaching. 2 Corinthians 5:8 is a Scripture that refutes the false teaching of soul sleep. 2 Corinthians 5:8 says that when believers die they are *"absent from the body...present with the Lord."* The Bible does not support the idea of a waiting period of unconsciousness or soul sleep after death.

It's interesting that our passage in Mark 12 is also a Scripture that could be used to refute the idea of soul sleep. In verse 26 the Lord quoted from Exodus 3, where God told Moses from the burning bush, *"I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."* Now, our Lord's argument to the Sadducees here was, "How can you Sadducees say that death is the end, when God says in Exodus *'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'?*"

It's significant that the Lord quoted from the book of Exodus. If you were asked that same question, and you were trying to refute their incorrect idea that there's no resurrection, what Old Testament Scripture would you have used? I probably would have gone to Job 19:25-26: *"For I know that my Redeemer lives and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God."* That's a classic passage that shows the Old Testament teaching on the resurrection of the body - so why didn't the Lord use that Scripture?

Well, you see, the Lord was meeting the Sadducees on their own ground. The Sadducees accepted only the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) as Scripture, and Exodus is included in the Pentateuch. So rather than use Job 19, which the Lord certainly could have used, He met them on their own ground, and refuted them with one of the books they accepted!

And what a tremendous answer the Lord gave here! He pulled this answer out from the burning bush passage: *"I am the God of Abraham, I am the God of Isaac, I am the God of Jacob.* In any case, our Lord's point was that the Sadducees were wrong! Death is not the end; death is not extinction. And if God is a covenant-keeping God, and He promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob things that they did not receive in their lifetime, then there must be a coming resurrection. This quote from Exodus refutes the false teaching of soul sleep. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob *are* alive, and they *are* awaiting the resurrection. They were not soul sleeping. There is no soul sleep after death.

### **3. Every word in Scripture is inspired and important.**

Notice that the Lord based His whole argument on a verb tense: I AM. The passage in Exodus doesn't say I WAS the God of Abraham – it says, "I AM the God of Abraham." The Lord based His argument on a verb tense.

The Lord's view of the Bible was not that only the thoughts of Scripture were inspired, or only the concepts were inspired. No! The Scripture is inspired right down to the very words and verb tenses. Every word in scripture is inspired and important. I trust that our view of Scripture is just as high as our Lord's was. Every word in Scripture is inspired and important.

## Practical Application

### It's not wrong to outsmart the opposition.

Just as the Lord outsmarted the Pharisees and Herodians, He did the same thing here with the Sadducees. We are to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44), but that doesn't mean that we capitulate to the enemy! No! We should, at times, try to outsmart the enemy - particularly when they're out to try to tear down the Christian faith. And that's certainly what the Lord did here.

In Acts 23:6-7, when Paul was defending himself before the Sanhedrin, we read this: *"But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!" And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided."* Paul was outsmarting the opposition. He purposely mentioned the resurrection, knowing that it would cause dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. He was practicing this principle of outsmarting the opposition. It's not wrong to outsmart the opposition. One of the courses I teach at Emmaus Bible College is Christian Evidences. Most of the students take this course to get some answers that they can use with skeptics of the faith, and maybe even be enabled to outsmart the opposition. [This course is available on the Growing Christians website: [www.growingchristians.org](http://www.growingchristians.org)]

Sometime we may feel discouraged if we think that the non-Christians have all the "big gun" arguments and we only have "peashooter" arguments! No! **We Christians** have the big guns! **Truth** is on **our** side! The enemy has the peashooter. And it's not wrong for us to outsmart the opposition. For example, if an unbeliever laughs at you for believing in the God of the Bible and creation, outsmart them. Ask them to explain creation. Ask them to explain how the universe came about – from nothing! Have them explain how life began. Ask them to go through their "big bang" scenario and explain how life began, step by step. They either can't do it, or they'll have to admit it takes more faith to accept something like that than to believe in a Creator. Then you can talk about the Creator-God of the Bible.

When you confront opposition, the Lord has enough evidence that you can use to outsmart the opposition. We have the truth and the big guns. If we study the Word and learn how to defend our faith, we **can** outsmart the opposition. And sometimes that's the approach we should use, because **it's not wrong to outsmart the opposition!**