

RESURRECTION!

Mark 12:18-27

Many people in our culture believe that the universe and all that is in it is the result of natural forces acting over billions of years to produce life as we experience it today. One of the implications of evolution is that we are simply physical beings and when we die physically, we cease to exist. There is no afterlife, no heaven, no hell, no God. These beliefs don't surprise us; they are logical conclusions of evolution.

What may be surprising are the people we're going to meet in our study this morning. They were theists, they believed in the existence of God. They served in God's Temple and spiritually led the nation of Israel in the days of Jesus. But they, like evolutionists today, believed that when a person died physically, they ceased to exist. They did not believe in an afterlife and they certainly didn't believe in that which we are celebrating today – the resurrection.

Before we meet these people, let's put our passage in its historical context. Jesus and His disciples were in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover 33A.D. (11:1-11). Three times Jesus foretold that this journey would result in His rejection, murder and resurrection (8:31, 9:30-32, 10:32-34). He specifically predicted that the chief priests, elders and scribes of Israel would reject Him and hand Him over to the gentiles (Romans) to be executed (8:31, 10:33). Mark records three occasions on which the chief priests, elders and scribes or their representatives attempted to trap Jesus (11:27-33; 12:13-27). In this third attempt, they sent a delegation from the party of the Sadducees.

Little is actually known about the Sadducees. They left no written record of their own; what we know about them is from the writings of their enemies and they were not well liked. They were wealthy, but they were described as being arrogant, argumentative, rude and ill mannered. Because of their wealth, they dominated the positions of power both in the Temple priesthood and in the Sanhedrin (the national ruling counsel of Israel). Politically, the Sadducees were extremely conservative wanting to maintain the status quo and their hold on power. Religiously the Sadducees were at odds with the Pharisees and mainstream Judaism. They considered only the first five books of the Bible, the books of Moses, to be authoritative. They rejected any beliefs that could not be found in the Torah. They did not believe in the existence of the soul. They did not believe in life after death or in the resurrection. They did not believe in a final judgment. And they did not believe in angels or demons (Acts 23:8).

The Sadducees sought to trap Jesus on the issue of the resurrection. They presented a hypothetical problem they believed exposed the absurdity of an actual resurrection. They hoped to stump Jesus and drive a wedge between Him and the crowds who believed in a resurrection.

THE SADDUCEES SET THE TRAP (12:18-23)

Mark 12:18-23 (ESV)

¹⁸ And Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection. And they asked him a question, saying, ¹⁹ "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and

leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.²⁰ There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no offspring.²¹ And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise.²² And the seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died.²³ In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife.”

In the Torah, (that part of the Bible that the Sadducees accepted as authoritative), God established the law of levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5-10; see also Gen. 38:6-26; Ruth 3-4). Here is what God instructed the Israelites to do in the event that a married man died without a son to inherit his land.

Deuteronomy 25:5–6 (ESV)

⁵ “If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband’s brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her.
⁶ And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.

After Israel conquered the Promised Land, the land was distributed to the twelve tribes and then to the clans and families within each tribe. The purpose of levirate marriage was to preserve the deceased brother’s family line and to keep his allotted property in the family. It was the duty of an unmarried brother to marry his brother’s widow and produce a son. The first son would be named for the deceased brother. He would be considered the son of the deceased brother thus perpetuating his line and keeping the property in the family.

In the Sadducees’ contrived scenario the first brother died without producing an heir. In obedience to the law of levirate marriage each of the six living brothers married the widow, but died childless. Finally, the unfortunate widow herself died.

The punch line of the story was meant to ridicule belief in a resurrection:

“In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife.”

Perhaps this thought problem stumped the Pharisees or the man on the street when the Sadducees used it to argue against a resurrection, but Jesus foiled their trap declaring them ignorant of both God’s Word and His power.

JESUS FOILED THEIR TRAP AND AFFIRMED THE RESURRECTION (12:24-27)

Mark 12:24-27 (ESV)

²⁴ Jesus said to them, “Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor 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 And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the 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 God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong.”

The whole thought problem presented by the Sadducees was built upon an erroneous assumption. They simply assumed that the resurrection will be no different from life as we experience it here on earth. In other words, in their understanding, the resurrection was simply an extension of this life into an endless future.

In this, the Sadducees manifested their ignorance of God's power to raise people from the dead and to raise people to new realities in the future. Jesus reveals that in the resurrection married people will no longer be married. We will be like the angels in that just as angels do not marry neither we will be married in heaven.

Unfortunately, this is one of those passages that can be taken out of context and made to say that people become angels when they die. That is not what Jesus is teaching nor is that taught anywhere in the Bible.

But Jesus is revealing that life in the resurrection will be different than the life we are experiencing here on earth.

Years later, Jesus showed the Apostle John a glimpse of heaven.



Revelation 21:1-4 (ESV)

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

After further describing the city John reported:



Revelation 21:22-27 (ESV)

²² And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵ and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. ²⁶ They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. ²⁷ But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

The resurrection is not more of this life. In heaven Jesus will envelope us in His love and fill us with His light and His life. There will be no evil, no violence, no hunger, no disease, no death. We will be reunited with our loved ones who died in Jesus. The colors, the music, the gardens, the city and the throne of God will fill, satisfy and delight our souls in a way we have never known in this life.

The Sadducees had it all wrong. No wonder they denied the resurrection thinking it was only more of this life. But their primary reason for rejecting the resurrection was because they did not believe it was taught in the books of Moses. Here, too, they were wrong.

Jesus took them to the second book of Moses, the book of Exodus, and showed them evidence for the resurrection. It was the occasion when God called Moses to lead the Israelites out of their slavery in Egypt.

Exodus 3:1–6 (ESV)

¹ Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. ³ And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." ⁴ When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵ Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." ⁶ And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

The Sadducees were very familiar with this passage, but they failed to rightly interpret it. God said to Moses:

"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

Moses lived four hundred years after Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. If, as the Sadducees believed, there is no afterlife, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were long gone by the time of Moses; annihilated by death, extinct. In the view of the Sadducees, when Abraham, Isaac and Jacob physically died, they ceased to exist.

But as Jesus pointed out, God identified Himself to Moses as *continuing to be* the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. How could God *continue to be* the God of people who didn't exist? Therefore, God's statement to Moses affirms that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are alive; they continue to exist and, like all mankind, they will be raised from the dead.

This is a truth that is not well understood: the Bible teaches that every human being will one day be resurrected. That means *you* will be resurrected. Jesus Himself revealed:

John 5:25–29 (ESV)

²⁵ "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

There will be a resurrection of life and there will be a resurrection of judgment. We've already read a bit about the resurrection of life; what is the resurrection of judgment?

THE RESURRECTION OF JUDGMENT (REVELATION 20:11-15)



Revelation 20:11–15 (ESV)

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Many of us are familiar with John 3:16.

John 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

To *perish* is to be resurrected to judgment, to be put on trial and convicted of sinning against God and ultimately to be sentenced to separation from Him for all eternity in the lake of fire.

But as you can see from Jesus' words, God doesn't want that for you or for anyone. God loves you and gave Jesus to save you from the resurrection of judgment.

Jesus paid the penalty for all our sins when He died in our place on the cross. When we consciously and sincerely put our trust, our faith, in Jesus' death for the forgiveness of our sins, His payment is applied to our account. The Apostle Paul describes it this way:

Colossians 2:13–14 (ESV)

¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

Because the record of our sin has been cancelled, we are delivered *from* the Great White Throne Judgment and we are delivered *to* the resurrection of life.

Jesus is the first to be raised to the resurrection of life. The Bible says:

1 Corinthians 15:20 (ESV)

²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Where there is *first fruit* there is more to follow! Jesus' resurrection is the guarantee of our resurrection to life.

As we close, it is important to realize that this requires a personal faith response from each of us. It is not enough to know these things. It is not enough to intellectually believe that Jesus lived, died and rose again. This is about a relationship with God. Do you want a relationship with Him like He wants a relationship with you? If you do, then

you need to deal with the sin issue that separates you from Him. If you really want God, then confess your sin and rely completely on Jesus' death and resurrection. God will come to you and your life will be changed for all eternity.