

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

51. The Truth of Scripture and the Power of God.

Mark 12:18-27

REVIEW

Beginning in [Chapter 11](#) Mark devotes SIX of the sixteen chapters of his account of the life and mission of Jesus to those seven days!

From the Sunday before Passover through the week leading up to His death on the cross Jesus made the Temple Mount His ministry headquarters

The enemies of Jesus relentlessly pelted Jesus with questions — questions that challenged His authority to do the things he did and say the things He said. But there was something far more sinister going on in their hearts.

Mark 12:13 ¹³Then they sent some of the Pharisees and the Herodians to Jesus to trap him in his words.

trap — to capture by hunting or fishing. The emphasis of this word is on the chase. These guys were in violent pursuit of prey — hoping to trap Him in a slip of the tongue and take Him down.

Luke 20:20 (CSB) ²⁰They watched closely and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, so that they could catch him in what he said, to hand him over to the governor's rule and authority.

This week we meet another influential sect in Judaism — the Sadducees.

Mark 12:18 (CSB) ¹⁸Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him and questioned him:

Who were these guys?

Socially — they were the upper class in 1st century Israel. They were small in number they enjoyed tremendous social status and wealth.

The Sadducees were opposed to the Pharisees in almost every way. Theologically, the Sadducees were almost the exact opposites of the Pharisees. The Pharisees were the theological and moral conservatives in Israel. The Sadducees were the first century version of 21st century liberal theologians / Progressive Christians.

1. They rejected the supernatural — This is important to know about them because it will form the foundation of their question to Jesus.

They were essentially *religious materialists*. Anything that didn't fit within in the confines of their own intellect they mocked. If they couldn't understand it, couldn't see it, touch it, or feel it, it couldn't be real.

Their theology not only denied the supernatural elements of faith — they didn't believe in a coming kingdom that would be ruled by the Messiah and they didn't believe in a resurrection or a future day of judgment.

Acts 23 pretty much sums up the theological divide between the Pharisees and the Sadducees:

Acts 23:8 The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all."

2. They had a low view of the Bible — Though they professed belief in the God of Abraham, they only accepted the first five books of Moses as authentic, and even then, they were willing to disregard any part of those books when they deemed it necessary. They refused to accept the rest of the Old Testament as divinely inspired Scripture.

3. Their theological rejection of the supernatural and their low view of the Scriptures was the minority view in that day. The people disagreed with them. The Pharisees outnumbered them. But this small group of religious materialists had a lock on the high-priestly line — making them the religious elite.

DON'T MISS THIS — Their theology shaped the way they lived. That is an inescapable reality of life. You can tell someone what you believe — but the way you live tells what you really believe.

Kent Hughes — *“They were a tight little circle of mean-spirited, religious aristocrats—insular.... heartless, philosophical materialists.”*¹

The Jewish historian Josephus said this about them

*Josephus, the Jewish historian, says they were “indeed more heartless than any other of the Jews.”*²

Last week I referred to the sinister synergy generated by common hatred of Jesus. The Pharisees hated the Sadducees as much as they hated the Herodians. But — like the Herodians and the Pharisees — the Sadducees hated Jesus too. They hated Jesus because He was a threat to their power and wealth.

They watched the Pharisees and Herodians fail to bring down Jesus — and they were going to take their shot at Him now.

Mark 12:18–27 (CSB) ¹⁸Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him and questioned him: 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. ²⁰There were seven brothers. The first married a woman, and dying, left no offspring. ²¹The second also took her, and he died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. ²²None of the seven left offspring. Last of all, the woman died too.

Remember — The Sadducees *mocked* the idea of life after death. They constructed this elaborate hypothetical situation out of their utter contempt for Jesus! I can picture them snickering when they asked Jesus

²³In the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be, since the seven had married her?”

When the Pharisees and Herodians posed the question about paying taxes to Caesar they were SURE that they had Jesus on the horns of a dilemma. The Sadducees were just as sure that they had Jesus on the horns of a dilemma and

¹ R. Kent Hughes. Luke (2 volumes in 1 / ESV Edition).

² Ant. 18:17

that He would impale Himself no matter which way He answered. If Jesus laughed it off as absurd, then everyone who believed in the resurrection would reject Him. The Pharisees would be more than happy for Jesus to answer that way. But if Jesus tried to give a convoluted argument saying, “*Well, the first guy is the real husband,*” or, “*The seventh guy is the real husband,*” then the sophisticated liberals would laugh at him. In their minds — they had Jesus coming or going!

***24*Jesus spoke to them, “Isn’t this the reason why you’re mistaken:**

ESV — *24*Jesus said to them, “Is this not the reason you are wrong

Matthew (22:29) tells us that Jesus pretty much said — “*You’re just wrong. You are completely wrong!*” Jesus is going to tell them how and why they were wrong.

I think that this is so relevant to 21st century culture. We live in a time a lot of people think that when it comes to matters of religious faith everyone is right. Or to be more accurate — everything *but* orthodox Christianity is right. When it comes to virtually any and every other religious system — everything is right even when there are blatant contradictions between different belief systems. People talk about “*your truth,*” or “*my truth,*” but no one wants to talk about “the truth.”

Jesus knew these Sadducees were wrong about life after death, and he said so. Then he gave them two major reasons they were wrong.

***24*Jesus spoke to them, “Isn’t this the reason why you’re mistaken: you don’t know the Scriptures or the power of God?**

Matthew 22:29 (ESV) But Jesus answered them, “***You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.***

Matthew 22:29 NLT Jesus replied, “***Your mistake is that you don’t know the Scriptures, and you don’t know the power of God.***

These two reasons are at the heart of what is called “Progressive Christianity.”

“Progressive Christians” are like the Sadducees in that they will try to debunk the Bible with the Bible. The Sadducees mocked the biblical doctrine of the

resurrection by appealing to a passage in Deuteronomy. In our modern-day, it's common to hear a progressive Christian denounce hell because “*God is love.*” God is love, it's in the Bible (1 John 4:8; 16), but so is hell. God's love coexists and complements the doctrine of hell because God's love requires eternal judgment.

“Progressive Christians” are like the Sadducees in that they will try to deny and delete the supernatural. The first thing they have to deny and delete is the bodily resurrection of Jesus — the event on which the claims of Christ and historic Christian faith ultimately stand. They deny and delete the miraculous in Scripture — excuse it away. For example: The disciples thought Jesus was walking on water, but He was actually walking on a sandbar. Jesus didn't miraculously feed the five thousand with the five loaves and two fish that a boy in the crowd had. Instead, when the boy gave his five loaves and two fish Jesus everyone was convicted of hoarding their lunches, and began sharing with everyone else. Creation, the parting of the Red Sea, Jonah — all of that has to be explained away because they can only trust what they can quantify, and since they can't quantify such power — can't understand such power — such accounts must be deleted.

Jesus speaks to both of these problems, but in reverse order. First, he will show them how they didn't know God's power. Then he will show them how they didn't know God's word.

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

The Sadducees were sure that IF there ever was such a thing as resurrection, the resurrected life would be nothing extraordinary — it would be nothing more than the extension of this present life. They thought: *Since there's marriage in this life — there will be marriage in the resurrection.* Jesus said: *Wrong! No one will marry or be given in marriage!*

HERE'S THE DEAL — When Jesus says there's going to be no marriage in the resurrection, He is saying that the power of God in the resurrection life of the New Heaven and New Earth is so great that it will be *nothing* at all like life as we know it on this side of forever.

1 Corinthians 2:9 (NKJV) ⁹*But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”*

God tells us that it is utterly beyond our finite capacities to quantify the life that awaits us in the resurrection — or the love we will experience in the resurrection life. Nothing we have seen or heard or even dreamed on this side of the New Heaven and New Earth can help us grasp the power of God in the resurrection.

The realities of the New Heaven and the New Earth heaven are not just *better than* our greatest joys and pleasures on earth — they are in a different category altogether. It will be *other than*. **C.S. Lewis** describes it like this through one of the characters in the last volume of the Chronicles of Narnia

QUOTE: C.S. Lewis; The Last Battle — *“The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning.....*

Lewis closed that amazing volume with this —

*“All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story **which no one on earth has read**: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.”*

NO SMALL SIDE NOTE — Our eternal destiny has a radical influence on the here and now?

QUOTE: Teresa of Avila — *“The first moment in the arms of Jesus is going to make a thousand years of misery on earth look like one night in a bad hotel.”*

No matter what comes our way as we live between the already and the not-yet we can hang our hopes on the realities of the promise of the resurrection and the power of God that will be on display in it.

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

To say that there is no marriage in heaven is a declaration about the power of God in the resurrection! Follow me here.

A lot of people (including Bible believing, Jesus loving men and women) interpret what Jesus is saying through the lens of the here and now. The fact that there is no marriage after the resurrection might sound great to those who have an unhappy marriage, or have suffered divorce. Heaven sounds bad to divorce lawyers. But if you are in love with your spouse, heaven doesn't sound so good. Heaven sounds like a place where the dearest thing in your life is taken. That is not what Jesus is saying at all!

FIRST — In the resurrection, things won't be as they are now. There'll be a new heaven and a new earth ([Revelation 21:1](#)). Our physical bodies will be transformed ([Philippians 3:21](#)). They will never get sick and never grow old. There'll be no more tears, no more mourning, no more crying, no more pain and **no more death** ([Revelation 21:4](#)). Death has no place in the forever Kingdom of Jesus. In this age — one of the purposes of marriage is procreation. If there is no death in the life to come, there is no need for procreation — hence no need for marriage.

But there is something else about marriage that we need to see here. There is a great and ultimate reality at the heart of human marriage — one that transcends the way a lot of Christians understand marriage.

Human marriage is only a prototype of the relationship between Jesus and the church.

[Ephesians 5:25](#) Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

This has massive implications on the way the Christians process their relationship as husband and wife. The **ultimate purpose** of human marriage reaches beyond the here and now work of God in conforming us to the image of Jesus and uniting a man and a woman in serving Jesus. The **ultimate purpose** of human marriage is for the love between the husband and wife to point people toward the **ultimate and eternal reality** of Jesus and His bride, the Church.

Let me personalize it — My marriage to Valerie is only a momentary and imperfect shadow. Jesus and His bride, the church, are the perfect and everlasting reality. So, in the resurrection there will be no more reason for the imperfect shadow of earthly marriage.

In his book “Holy Sexuality” Christopher Yuan illustrates this in the marriage of Pastor Ken Smith and his wife Floy. Pastor Ken and his wife were used by God to lead Rosaria Butterfield to faith in Jesus. Ken and Floy had been married 46 years when Floy stepped into eternity. A lot of well intending people would try comfort Ken by saying, “Don’t you look forward to the day when you’re reunited with your wife in heaven?” His response was always “I don’t have a wife in heaven, but I’m certainly looking forward to being fully united to Christ.”³

Here’s how Pastor Ken explained those words

When I was looking at my wedding ring and deciding whether or not to wear it, I pondered the marriage vows we had taken. The vows say “till death do us part” and “as long as we both shall live.” Those thoughts led me to see our wedding as being “fulfilled.” I mused on the idea of our marriage being fulfilled, and it gave me a new slant on thanksgiving for dear Floy. Our marriage was not interrupted but fulfilled! No need to talk about renewing our relationship as husband and wife in heaven. Our marriage was an “on earth” institution, and it is now fulfilled. So I took my ring off. Marriage completed”

Should I die before Valerie — I will join all the Christians who have gone before us to wait for that day recorded in the book of Revelation when every believer (Revelation 19:6–9), will stand in glory and sing, “*Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready*” (Revelation 19:7).

I think that a lot of Christians struggle with Jesus saying there will be no marriage in heaven because the church has made marriage an ultimate thing.

QUOTE: Christopher Yuan — “Jesus didn’t die so we could get married; he died so we could have him.”

³ Christopher Yuan. “Holy Sexuality and the Gospel.”

QUOTE: Dennis Hollinger — *“Life without sexual intimacy and marriage is not a deficient life. Rather, life without intimacy with God in Christ is deficient.”*⁴

Marriage isn't the ultimate — it's the penultimate. There's the ultimate and then the penultimate. The ultimate awaits us in eternity, and you were created for it — and redeemed for it — regardless of whether you're single now or married.

There's a reason you can feel a certain discontent in your marriage, even when your marriage is healthy and good. It's because there's only one marriage that will bring you ultimate contentment — that will be when you are perfectly united with Jesus in a glorified body in His forever Kingdom.

This has tremendous implication for EVERY believer! There will be no more single people in the age to come; no more widowed people; no more divorced people. Jealousy and exclusion will have no place in heaven. Jesus is our Bridegroom.

To say that there is no marriage in heaven is a declaration about the power of God in the resurrection!

QUOTE: Timothy Keller — *“Heaven is a world of love **beyond** marriage, not beneath marriage; not below marriage but infinitely above and beyond it. In the resurrection, the love we are going to have with the Lord and with everyone else around God's throne is going to make the greatest married sex, the greatest erotic oneness seem like a firecracker compared to an atomic bomb.”*

We have no reference point for this in our broken world — but in the resurrection our time and energy will be spent in the ultimately fulfilling and awesome glory of worshipping and serving God in his presence. Nothing else will be important.

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

⁴ Dennis P. Hollinger, *The Meaning of Sex: Christian Ethics and the Moral Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009)

In the context of telling the Sadducees about the transforming power of God in the resurrection Jesus made a point of telling them that angels were real.

QUOTE: D.A. Carson — *“Jesus’ use of angels contains a double thrust since the Sadducees denied their existence.”*

In the resurrection we will be like the angels — we will have bodies suitable for life in the presence of God — suitable for life in an environment that is unlike the environment of our fallen planet. Our bodies will have powers that are beyond anything we can conceive of now. We will have greater mental capacity (we will know even as we are known). Like Paul wrote to the Corinthians: We have been “sown in weakness” but will be “raised in power” (1 Corinthians 15:43).

The power of God in the resurrection is so great that we will forever be free of the presence and power of sin. On this side of forever we pray, *“Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”* But in the resurrection we will always do His will! We will have no unrighteous desires, no covetous cravings, no proud thoughts, no depressions of spirit, no pulls of self-will, no inclinations to sin.

Like the angels, we will perpetually worship God. But **we** will have more to sing about than the angels **because** we have been redeemed.

QUOTE: Charles Spurgeon — *Never did angels taste above, Redeeming grace and dying love.*⁵

REAL QUICKLY — **The second reason the Sadducees were wrong:** They did not know the Scriptures.

YOU HAVE TO LOVE THIS — Jesus makes the Scriptural case for the reality of a forever life in the presence of God from the portion of the Old Testament they claimed to believe.

²⁶And as for the dead being raised—haven’t you read in the book of Moses,

⁵ The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, vol. 14 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1970), p. 658.

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? ²⁷He is not the God of the dead but of the living. You are badly mistaken.”

Jesus is SO amazing. First of all — He doesn’t go to the book of **Daniel**

*“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. **Daniel 12:2-3***

He didn’t reference the prophet **Isaiah**

*our dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead. **Isaiah 26:19***

He didn’t reference the Psalms

*Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. **Psalms 16:9-10***

*You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. **Psalms 73:24***

Nor did he reference the oldest book in the Bible — the book of **Job**

*“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me! **Job 19:25–27***

Jesus **didn’t** reference those amazing passages of the Jewish Bible **because** He knew that they rejected the prophets, rejected the Psalms and rejected the book of Job as being divinely inspired Scripture. They had effectively torn those pages out of the Old Testament.

Jesus says — *“I’m going to answer you and refute you on your own terms.*

They brought up Moses in their hypothetical scenario — so Jesus said, *“Okay, let’s talk about Moses.”* Jesus went straight to the book of Exodus and quoted from **Exodus 3:6** — the account of God appearing to Moses in the burning bush. There — in a passage of Scripture they considered God-breathed is the record of God saying: *“I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”*

God didn’t say, *“I **was** the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”* He said, *“I **am** the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”* He speaks of being their God in the present tense. He speaks of His covenant relationship with them in the present tense even though they’ve been biologically dead for centuries by the time He spoke those words to Moses.

God said that **at that very moment** He was their God. He owned His covenant relationship with them in the **present tense**. He didn’t **used to be** their God. **At that very moment** He owned that He was their God. **At that very moment** He enjoyed a deeply personal relationship with them rooted in His intimate, personal, never ending steadfast love. God wasn’t loving just **the idea** of men He used to know — but were now long dead.

On the human level — when you really love someone — whether it’s a baby, or a child, or a friend or your spouse — your greatest horror is the thought of ever having to say, *“I **had** a son”* or *“I **had** a spouse”* or *“I **had** a friend.”* You don’t want anything to come between you — especially death.

When God spoke to Moses, He spoke of His relationship with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the present tense **because** when God puts His love on you — when you enter into a relationship with God — **that** relationship can **never** go into the past tense.

For God to say to Moses, *I AM — right at this moment — the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob* tells us emphatically that **those who know God** in this life experience life that never ends. In fact — knowing God is the very substance and essence of that eternal life!

John 17:1–3 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, ²since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

That relationship with is only possible because of what Jesus would endure in a matter of hours after this confrontation with the Sadducees.

John 3:16 (CSB) ¹⁶For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

By God’s grace, Jesus fully experienced the death we deserved to experience — the death we earned.

Romans 6:23 (ESV) For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23 (The Message) Work hard for sin your whole life and your pension is death. But God’s gift is **real life**, **eternal life**, delivered by Jesus, our Master.

Romans 5:20b-21(ESV) but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to **eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord.

God can never say, “I was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” because God will never lose that which is precious to Him. You and I might, but He won’t. Every man and woman who enters into a personal living relationship with God through faith in Jesus will live forever as individuals loved by God forever. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are not anonymous — they’re known by God — they’re mentioned by their names

Those who die believing in Jesus aren’t lost — we know where they are — and they for sure know where they are. They’re finally free from everything broken in this world — everything broken in their own lives; free of all sorrow, never to die — and to live forever as sons of God.

CLOSE

We live in a world where everything is fading — everything is in the grip of decay. We are craving for life that is permanent — love that is permanent.

But we know that those who are dearest to us are in the process of dying and not even the strongest human love can change it. We know that we're in the process of dying.

God's love can never be less than ours! God's love can never be less intense than ours. God's love can never be shallower than ours! God will never let His love for us to ever get in the past tense.

The love of God for you in Jesus Christ is real — eternally real — utterly and divinely solid, utterly and divinely permanent.

It is so solid, so unchanging — that He gave His only begotten Son to rescue us from the powerful grip of sin and death.

When He puts His love on us, **we** become permanent — **we** become real **because** our relationship with him lasts forever!

The moment you enter into a living relationship with the living God, the moment you begin to experience His love in your heart, **nothing** will interrupt it.

***Romans 8:38–39 (ESV)** For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Life that never ends begins with a love and a relationship that never ends. That love and that relationship is promised in the Word of God. That eternal life that transcends the best of life in our broken world is accomplished by the power of God. Look at the what the Bible says about this forever life — this forever love. Look at what the Bible says about the power of God.

Don't underestimate the truth of Scripture or the power of God.