

## 活人的神揭穿死人的错——马可福音 12:18-27

### God of the Living Reveals Error of the Dead—Mark 12:18-27

#### *Introduction and Outline*

- Scripture reading: Mark 12:18-27; 1 Corinthians 15:35-50.  
Mark 12:18-27 (NASB 1995)  
18 Some Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection) came to Jesus, and began questioning Him, saying, 19 “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves behind a wife and leaves no child, his brother should marry the wife and raise up children to his brother. 20 There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died leaving no children. 21 The second one married her, and died leaving behind no children; and the third likewise; 22 and so all seven left no children. Last of all the woman died also. 23 In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one’s wife will she be? For all seven had married her.” 24 Jesus said to them, “Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures or 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 But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning 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 the God [p]of the dead, but of the living; you are greatly mistaken.”
- In all of history, humanity has always had a strong interest in the future (consider, e.g., fortune-telling, horoscopes, tarot cards, crystal balls, etc.). The most important thing about the future is what will happen after death. Therefore, all kinds of speculations about death, soul, and afterlife have become the hot topics for all religious superstitions. Shamans and monks of all sorts have invented all kinds of stories to cater to people's curiosity about the future.
- In fact, the Bible is full of revelations about the future. But people in the world are generally uninterested in the Bible. God's Word has clearly revealed everything we need to know about the future, death, resurrection, judgment, eternal life, and hell, but unfortunately, people in the world are generally uninterested in what the Bible says. They would rather believe in all kinds of bizarre myths and legends than to come to the teaching of the rich truth of God's Word and learn what God has said about the future.
- Such things happen not only in the world, but also in some who profess to be God's people. One such group is the Jewish religious leaders at Jesus’ time who came to debate with Him about resurrection.
- Outline:  
Title: God of the Living Reveals Error of the Dead—Mark 12:18-27
  1. Background
  2. Error of the Dead (vv. 18-24)
  3. God of the Living (vv. 25-27)

#### **Background**

- This is the third day of the Passion Week, the day when Jesus and the Jewish leaders had the most intense direct confrontation. On this day, the leaders first attacked Jesus and challenged His authority

(11:27-33); Jesus then exposed their wickedness with a parable (12:1-12); they attacked Jesus with a series of carefully devised questions, all of which were perfectly answered by Jesus (12:13-34); and finally, Jesus ended the day with a whole long sermon that is nothing but fierce condemnation (Matthew 23).

- Therefore, the question in today's passage is not a sincere seeking of truth, but a trap to maliciously attack Jesus, just like the question about tax last time. From Jesus' answer, we could certainly discuss how Christians should relate to civil government or what the resurrection is like; but these passages mainly want to show us **the deceitfulness of sinners!**

**【Analogy】** Similar traps are often seen in evangelism. Questions such as “If God is good, why does He allow so many disasters to happen in the world?” “How could a good God create a place like hell?” “Can an omnipotent God make a rock so heavy He cannot lift?” While some might ask these in sincere curiosity, there're certainly many who use questions simply as traps to ensnare Jesus, not unlike the Jewish leaders in this passage.

### **Error of the Dead (vv. 18-24)**

- "Sadducees": They were a class of powerful office-holders, more powerful than the Pharisees. The priest system, including the high priest family, was basically Sadducees, who directly managed the temple operation. The Gospels often mention these people as "priests", but here they are called "Sadducees" because their religious ideology is key to this passage.
- "who say that there is no resurrection": In this regard, they are the absolute minority that is different from everyone else. Almost all Jews firmly believe that the dead will be resurrected, which is one of their most basic and important beliefs. See, for example:

**Psalms 17-14-15** “From men with Your hand, O Lord, From men of the world, whose portion is in this life, And whose belly You fill with Your treasure; They are satisfied with children, And leave their abundance to their babes. As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake.”

**Psalms 71:20** "You ... will revive me again, And will bring me up again from the depths of the earth."

**Isaiah 26:19** "Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits."

**Ezekiel 37:12** "Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel.”’

**Daniel 12:2** "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt"

The Sadducees believed that when a person dies, both the body and the soul die at the same time. The soul disappears in an instant, totally going out of existence; and the material elements of the body will eventually decay and degrade, and the whole person ultimately comes to nothing, leaving nothing behind.

In addition to denying resurrection, the Sadducees also say there is "nor an angel, nor a spirit," (Acts 23:8), They just don't believe anything in the spiritual world. It is very similar to today's atheism, except for one difference: they would not say they are atheists. Instead, they say:

- "Moses wrote for us": They say they fully believe in Yahweh, the one true God according to Moses! As a religious sect, the Sadducees have this peculiar belief that only the Pentateuch of Moses is the authoritative revelation of God.

【Comparison】 The Pharisees added endlessly to the Law, while the Sadducees went to the other extreme and threw away all other Old Testament books, leaving only the Pentateuch; and they only interpreted it in the most literal and mechanical way, refusing to make any implication from the text. In their own eyes, the Sadducees were protecting the purest form of Jewish faith because they rejected all the oral laws added by man and only accepted God's Law given through Moses. But...

【Principle】 They only accepted the most literal and superficial interpretation of the Law, completely ignoring the most important divine spiritual principles behind the text. This is very similar to some people today who push literal interpretation to the extreme, isn't it? Bible reading should be a most noble spiritual activity, but some have debased it into a most boring word game.

【Caution】 This is not just a historical background, but also a common mistake today. The Sadducees were very proud of themselves, for they thought they were warriors defending the pure Jewish faith. They'd say, "Whatever God says we believe! We don't add or remove anything from God's Word!" In reality, they completely missed the whole point of the Bible.

"If a man's brother dies and leaves behind a wife...": This is based on the "levirate marriage" in Deuteronomy 25. God, being full of mercy and knowing bad things happen in this fallen world, made some prearrangement in order to help the Israelites in that time to deal with some disasters, and, of course, ultimately to show God's own glory through them.

【Theology】 To take a step back, is death God's original plan for man? If Adam had not sinned, there would've been no "levirate marriage" at all. Widows are the product of a fallen world, and levirate marriage is one way God still shows grace to His people even in this fallen world.

【Insight】 Levirate marriage obviously has its scope of application. It's not an eternal law. So are many other laws. They all have their scope of application! Within the scope, God's people must of course obey them literally; but the point of the Law has never been simply to demand literal obedience. The point of all God's Law is to reveal to us the God of all richness, glory, and goodness. Knowing God is the key.

"There were seven brothers...": The Sadducees came up with this impossible hypothetical scenario, just to make it difficult for Jesus.

【Insight】 God's laws are thoughtful considerations of actual situations people may encounter, while the Sadducees fabricated a completely unrealistic hypothetical scenario. This happens to be a common trick sinners use to reject the Bible, that is, to fabricate unrealistic hypothetical scenarios. "If someone does good deeds all his life and never hears the gospel, will he also go to hell?" Well, "does good deeds all his life"? Who?

## **God of the Living (vv. 25-27)**

- "you are mistaken": The question itself is a mistaken question! Jesus simply ignored the story they made up.
- "you do not understand the Scriptures": Extreme literalists. They only see the letters of the Word, and yet do not understand its meaning at all.
- "or the power of God": If you know the power of God, the question would not be a problem at all. If people still need marital relationships after resurrection, will not God figure out a perfect solution somehow by His power?

【Analogy】 Many believers, after being saved, look back at their previous childish questions and realize they are no problem at all.

**Jeremiah 32:17** "Ah Lord God! Behold, You have **made the heavens and the earth** by **Your great power** and by Your outstretched arm! **Nothing is too difficult for You.**" In other words, Genesis 1:1 is enough - in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth: what is too hard for God?

- "For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven": Angels never had a marital relationship, and yet they still can serve God joyfully in God's presence forever, right? The same is true for the saints after resurrection, that there'll be no need for marital relationship.

【Theology】 Marriage is God's will for man in this life. In the future, *"By the power of the resurrection, marriage, sex and family relationships will be transcended by perfect communion with God and perfect communion with each other."* - A Bible scholar

- "have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush": This passage is in Exodus 3 where Yahweh appeared to Moses in the burning bush. Such an important passage, have you not read it?
- "how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'?"": This is it! The message of resurrection! Wait, you say, isn't that too far-fetched? Did Jesus commit the error of "spiritual interpretation"? Beware of extreme literalism!
- "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living": Genesis clearly shows that death is not God's original plan for man. The bodies of the three ancestors had long been in the grave, but God still introduced Himself as their God, which implies their souls weren't dead at all. Moreover, God created man with both soul and body, so their bodies will also be resurrected in the future. Done. Resurrection proved.

## **Concluding Application**

**Fix your eyes on eternal things! Don't be sucked up by things in this world, but focus on those that last forever! The only things that last forever are human souls; and the only thing that can build up the human soul is the Word of God.**