

The God of the Living

Jesus' Last Days (Mark): Part 10

Mark 12:18-27 (Mt.22:23-33, Lk.20:27-38) 2/13/2021

What does it mean to have God as your God?

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Mark 12:18 Then the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. 19 "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. 20 Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any children. 21 The second one married the widow, but he also died, leaving no child. It was the same with the third. 22 In fact, none of the seven left any children. Last of all, the woman died too. 23 At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

24 Jesus replied, "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? 25 When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. 26 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'? 27 He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!"

Introduction

What need do you have in your life right now that is out of your reach? It's just simply not in your power, you don't have control over it, but it's important. Sometimes we run into impossible obstacles and we wish we had some kind of superpower—like Thor's hammer or something that could go beyond normal human ability that would enable us to make circumstances change, or make people change, or some kind of way of getting out of the confining limitations of being human. Tonight we're going to talk about a power that you can gain access to that's kind of like Thor's hammer, except better. But first let's remind ourselves of the context of Mark 12.

The Mocking Question

The chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the Pharisees have all had a run at Jesus, now here come the Sadducees in v.18. These groups are like a bunch of 747's at DIA all lined up waiting for their turn. So far Jesus has demolished everyone who came at him, now here come the Sadducees.

Sadducees

This is the only time in the book of Mark the Sadducees are mentioned.¹ The main thing you need to know about the Sadducees is right here in verse 18.

Mark 12:18 Then the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question.

The Sadducees denied the resurrection because they were annihilationists. They said when you die, your body goes into the ground and your soul, your personhood is annihilated. You just simply go out of existence. There's no afterlife, no judgment day. Whatever happens in this life is what happens, then it's over.²

Moses

These are rich, powerful, influential aristocrats. And they were also brutal, vicious, dangerous men. But just like the Pharisees and Herodians, they approach Jesus with a bogus respectful greeting. And then they quote Moses. 19 "Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us They 1`quote Moses because they only accepted the books of Moses as authoritative. If a doctrine couldn't be found in the first 5 books of the Bible, they didn't accept it.³ You might have heard of people who are Jesus-only, or Paul-only; the Sadducees were Moses-only.

And so it was hard to convince a Sadducee that resurrection was real because all the verses in the OT that talk about resurrection are in the later books. So they rejected the idea because Moses never mentioned it. At least, that might have been their excuse. Jesus is going to tell us

¹ They operated in the Temple, so until Jesus came to Jerusalem, he didn't have occasion to run into them. But now he's in the Temple causing problems, the Sadducees made a lot of money running the Temple, and they didn't want Jesus fouling things up for them.

² That was very much the minority view in Israel. The vast majority of people believed in resurrection and an afterlife of some kind.

³ The Sadducees are often called conservatives, but this isn't so much conservatism as it is reductionism, like modern liberals who focus only on Jesus and say Paul introduced a different belief system.

the real reason they didn't believe. But before we get to that, let's watch them take their stab at stumping Jesus.

19 "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.

That's a law out of Deuteronomy 25. Your brother dies without having a son to carry on your brother's name, and you're single, you need to step in, marry the widow, and your first son will carry your brother's name.

The Crazy Scenario

Now here comes their crazy scenario.

20 Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any children. 21 The second one married the widow, but he also died, leaving no child. It was the same with the third. 22 In fact, none of the seven left any children.

This is the musical that never really caught on—one bride for 7 brothers. So they come up with this goofy scenario and then get to the punchline. (And you can almost hear them snickering.)

22 ...Last of all, the woman died too. 23 At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

That is not an honest question. It was a mocking question. Why 7 brothers? Why the crazy story? Why not just ask, "What happens when a widow remarries—which guy is her husband at the resurrection?" That's a much more relevant question, since lots of people have a second or third spouse. But they aren't trying to come up with a common problem; they're trying to make the doctrine of resurrection sound stupid. It would create impossible problems in eternity. It's unworkable.

And not just unworkable, but also undesirable. None of the six brothers marry the woman out of love. They were never interested in her, they might not have even liked her. They only married her because the law required it. Which was a bummer, because in that culture, it was a curse to be stuck with a barren wife. And this woman is as barren as they come—0 for 7. And a barren wife who seems to have a knack for killing off husbands is even worse. So their question is, out of the seven, which poor guy gets saddled with this cursed woman for all eternity? The doctrine of resurrection is unworkable, undesirable, and just plain dumb.

This argument is their ace in the hole. No doubt they used it to stump a lot of Pharisees because the Pharisees believed people would be raised in the same condition they died. They even debated about whether you'd have the same clothes on that you were buried in. They thought everything would be pretty much the same—you'd have the same weaknesses, same blemishes, same clothes, same family situation, same wife. So for them, this argument really would be a problem. What about people who have been married multiple times? Are they just doomed to really awkward family photos all through eternity?

Jesus' Answer

So that's their question. And I'm sure these wealthy, powerful aristocrats were used to people being intimidated and cowed by their presence, especially country bumpkins from places like Nazareth. Let's see how nervous Jesus sounds.

A Strong Rebuke

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

That's how he begins. Skip down to v.27 and see his final words.

27 ... You are badly mistaken!"

It's the same Greek word both times. So, thesis statement: "You're wrong." Conclusion: "You're really wrong." Jesus stands before these rich, powerful, dangerous men and says, "The only thing I can't figure out is whether your errors come more because of your ignorance of Scripture or your ignorance about God."

24 "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God?"

The word translated "error" literally means "to wander" (*planeo*—we get our word "planet" from it because planets are the stars in the sky that seem to wander). He's saying, "You've gone astray. You've wandered, badly. You've wandered so far from the truth I can hardly see you from here. The problem isn't with the doctrine of resurrection. The only problem is your colossal ignorance."

Failure to Know the Scripture

He points out two underlying causes of their getting so messed up. The first is they don't understand the Scriptures.

24 "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures ...?"

If you don't know the Bible, you're going to wander off track. You can't assume the Holy Spirit will keep you from being deceived if you can't be bothered to learn what he already said in the Scriptures.

Failure to Know the Power of God

So they didn't know the Bible well enough—that was half their problem. The other half was ignorance about God's nature.

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

This is the real reason they rejected resurrection—they didn't have an adequate view of God's power. Now, if you asked a Sadducee, "How powerful is God?" no doubt he would say, "God is all-powerful." But God's omnipotence is one of those doctrines that it's easy to say you believe it without really understanding the significance of what you're saying.

They couldn't imagine how God could possibly solve this problem of multiple spouses. Other people doubt the resurrection because they can't imagine how God could raise a body that has been burned or blown up or eaten by animals. This is a very common error. "I can't think of how God could do it, therefore God can't do it.. God isn't capable of solving the problems I'm thinking of."

If the Sadducees really believed in the power of God, they would have said, "We don't know how, but we know God can pull it off somehow." People who can't bring themselves to believe in miracles, they doubt the supernatural—those people don't understand the power of

God. In fact, they seem to think God has no power at all. If God isn't capable of doing anything that isn't already happening in nature, then he has no power at all, right?

They read about an axe head floating in 2 Kings 6 and say, "That didn't really happen. It's a myth. Axe heads can't float." How much power does it take to support an axe head on the surface of some water? I don't want to brag or anything, but I could hold an axe head in midair—with one hand! I could do that, the skeptic could do that, a little kid could do it, but God? No way. They don't even think God has as much power as a child.

When we doubt something the Bible says because it seems impossible to us, what we're doing is assuming our inability to fill in the blanks implies God's inability to fill them in. That's insanity. What seem like impossible problems to us a piece of cake for God. In this case, the solution to their "impossible" conundrum ended up being so simple it almost makes you laugh.

No Marriage

Simple Solution

So, how is Jesus going to sort out this impossible conundrum about marriage in the afterlife?

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

I don't know if they were bracing for some big, long, convoluted argument, or a million quotations from past rabbis like the scribes would give, or some esoteric argument that only the most educated minds could follow. But Jesus says, "How will God solve the problem of marriage in heaven? There is no marriage in heaven. Problem solved."

I think we might be a little embarrassed when we show up in heaven some day and hit God with our most impossible questions, and he tells us the answer. We going to think, "Oh, right. Yeah, I guess it wasn't that hard after all." God's power and wisdom always bursts the limits of all our knowledge and imagination.

A Whole New World

And here Jesus bursts not only the Sadducees' imagination, but also the Pharisees. The Sadducees' problem was they believed too little—rejecting most of the Bible. The Pharisees' problem was they believed too much—adding their traditions to the Bible. So they were just as stumped by this as the Sadducees, because they had all these traditions about what the afterlife would be like, and they had it looking way too much like this life (including marriage).

And Jesus says, "No. The resurrection will set off a whole new dimension beyond anything the world has ever experienced."

For us, death will be a lot like birth. Prior to birth, all you've ever known is the warmth and security of the womb, and that's all you can really imagine. Then the day of birth comes, which is a decidedly unpleasant ordeal. But it's only on the other side of that ordeal that the child gets to see its mother's face and be held in her arms and nurse at her breast, and grow to love her in a relationship unlike any other in the world. In the womb, you were surrounded by your mother, but never saw her. Right now you're surrounded by God but have never seen him. But after the ordeal of death, you will enter into an existence with God that is as different from what you have now as the whole wide world is from your mother's womb.

1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

You can no sooner guess what your resurrected body will be like by looking at your current body than a person who has never seen a tree could guess what it would look like by looking at the seed (1 Cor.15:35-37).

Like the Angels

So Jesus completely solves the whole problem with a single sentence—marriage won’t be a problem because there will be no marriage. And then he throws this in:

25 ... they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.

Why does he say that? It’s not really necessary for the point he’s making. Why not just say, “When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage” and leave it at that? How is saying we will be like the angels going to add anything to the force of his argument? The Sadducees didn’t even believe in angels.

Revelation not Argumentation

I think the answer is, this isn’t argumentation; it’s revelation. Jesus is just dropping a piece of brand new information that mankind had never known before, nor could we ever know without God telling us. Nobody ever knew or could know whether or not angels got married until this moment when Jesus said this. Nor could we have known that we will be like the angels in that way.

This is an example of Jesus speaking with authority unlike anyone ever before. He just drops these bits of inside information about heaven that could only come from someone who has been there.

Humans Never Become Angels

And please notice it says we will be like angels, not that we will be angels. Hollywood’s stories notwithstanding, humans never become angels. We will rule the angels in the next life; we won’t be angels, ever.

Argument from Scripture

So Jesus answered their spoken question about marriage. Now he’s going to deal with the unspoken question, which is the real issue at hand and has nothing to do with marriage, namely, whether there’s an afterlife. He answered their spoken question about marriage in order to address their ignorance about the power of God. Now he’s going to answer the underlying question about resurrection by addressing their ignorance of Scripture in v.26.

26 Now about the dead rising-- have you not read He’s going to prove the resurrection by taking them to Scripture.

The Book of Moses

And there's a number of places he could have taken them that speak of resurrection. But they're all from later on in the OT. None of them are in the part of the Bible the Sadducees accepted as authoritative (the books of Moses). So look what Jesus does. 26 Now about the dead rising-- have you not read in the book of Moses He's going to show them a proof right out of their own biblical stomping grounds. And it's not just in the book of Moses, it's a passage that involves Moses himself. It's ironic that Jesus says, "Have you not read ..." because this is a passage they would have read as much as any passage in the whole Bible.

26 ... have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush

The burning bush, where Moses was out in the wilderness and God spoke to him from the fire and called him to go confront Pharaoh about letting the Israelites go.

Resurrection and the Nature of God

What's significant about that passage? It's the place where God revealed himself in the clearest terms that he'd ever revealed himself. He says, "Let me tell you exactly who I am ..." And when he was done, he said, "This is how I want people to think about me forever."

The passage Jesus picks to teach about resurrection is a passage that's all about who God is. That's important. It shows us that the issue of resurrection is all bound up in the nature of God. It's a function of who God is. And who is that? What name does he give himself to be his permanent identity forever?

26 ... have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him,⁴ 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? 27 He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!"

Could This Mean Mere Association with Abraham?

Now, I have to be honest. When I first read that, it doesn't strike me as a very strong argument. When God told Moses, "I am the God of Abraham," couldn't that just mean, "I am the God associated with Abraham"? Couldn't it be that he was simply identifying himself—"I'm the same God who called Abraham out of Ur and all the rest. I'm the God of the Bible stories you grew up hearing. I'm not some pagan deity. I'm the God of Israel." Isn't it at least plausible that that's all God was saying when he said, "I'm the God of Abraham?"

God Of

What does it mean when God says he is the God of a certain person? Jesus' whole argument rests on the meaning of that phrase—God of Abraham. So I looked up that phrase ("God of" or "my God" or "his God")—I wanted to know exactly what that means. That turned out to be quite the study. It was fascinating, but I can't give you everything I learned because that would take all night. There were hundreds of passages—just the passages took up something like 50 pages in my notes. But I'll give you the bottom line.

⁴ In Matthew's account, it says "...God said to you" (Matthew 22:23). God not only spoke to Moses in the past, but through those same words he also speaks to us today.

Covenant Relationship

More than anything else, having the Lord as your God points to a covenant relationship. The first time God promised to be someone's God was Abraham, and it appears in connection with the covenant.

Genesis 17:7 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you ... to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

God made a deal with Abraham. And God's end of the deal was, "I will be your God and your decedents' God." So one thing we learn about this phrase "God of" is that God is not the God of everyone. He's everyone's creator. He's everyone's judge. But he's not everyone's God.⁵ When he told Abraham, "I will be your God," he was describing a kind of relationship between Abraham and God that most people don't have.

I wanted to know what all that relationship entailed, so I sorted through all the passages that gave a description of something God would do specifically because of that relationship. Passages that say, "This happened to this person because God was his God."

Here's what I found. The first one that stands out is success—when things work out inexplicably well. Having God as your God means God will bring you successes that are beyond what's humanly possible (see Gn.27:20). If you're sick, you need a doctor. If your pipes clog up you need a plumber. For your paycheck you need an employer. To move a mountain, to do something humanly impossible, you need a God. If God is your God, then you have someone to provide you with supernatural successes in your endeavors.

Other things you get when God is acting as your God are miraculous provision (Gn.43:23, Ex.16:12), miraculous healing (Ex.15:26), miraculous protection or deliverance, and redemption (Lv.22:32, Nm.15:41).⁶ On top of that, if God is your God it means he will come near to you and not reject you (Lv.26:11). If God is your God it means he will listen to your prayers (Ex.10:17). And having God as your God is such a close relationship that if your heart goes somewhere else, he'll get jealous, just like a husband (Ex.20:5). That's a sampling. Other benefits of God being your God are long life, reward, fruitfulness, fulfilled promises, blessings, and prosperity.⁷

Our Side of the Relationship

All of that is God functioning as your God, but that's only half of the story. That's all on God's end—the other half is on our end. If God is going to be your God, he requires some things of you, like worship, personal holiness, loyalty, honor, fear, trust, and, especially, obedience. Obedience is emphasized most.

Jeremiah 7:23 ... Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people.

There are long sections in the law where God gives a command, then stops and says, "I am the Lord your God," then the next command, then, "I am the Lord your God"—hundreds of

⁵ There is one passage that speaks of God as the God of all flesh (Jer.32:27), but when he speaks of himself as being the God of a particular person or group of people, it's a more specific application.

⁶ Numerous times Scripture says the reason God redeemed Israel from bondage in Egypt was in order to be their God (e.g. Ex.6:6—8).

⁷ That's not to say God does all that on demand or in the ways or timing we expect. Sometimes it can seem like he's not doing any of it at all. And when that happens, your enemies might taunt you by saying God is no longer your God.

Psalm 42:3 My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"

times. He doesn't just remind them at the beginning of the list and again at the end. He reminds them after every single command—"Don't forget. You have to do this because I'm your God."

And it's a relationship that must be maintained.

Isaiah 59:2 Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

He's still your God, but he's not acting as your God right now because of the distance your sin had put between you and him. And if that goes to the extreme, you can get to the point where he's not even your God anymore. After Saul fell away, he referred to Yahweh not as his God, but as Samuel's God.

1 Samuel 15:30 Saul replied, "I have sinned. ... come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD your God."

Saul no longer had that kind of relationship with God, but he knew Samuel still did, and so he asked Samuel to take advantage of that special relationship he had with God and use it to put in a good word for Saul.

The Two-Way Relationship Requires Two Parties

So, is it possible that when God told Moses, "I am the God of Abraham," he was just saying, "I'm the God who was associated with Abraham back in the day"? No. That's not what "God of" means. God was telling Moses, "I am the God who has that very special kind of two-way relationship with Abraham, where I protect and care for him in supernatural ways, he honors, trusts, and obeys me with total allegiance." And Jesus' point here is that God couldn't say that about someone who doesn't exist.⁸ It would be nonsense.

Even if you take a much lesser relationship, like a simple friendship—what if I said, "I'm Luke Skywalker's friend"? You would say, "Darrell, I don't think you know what 'friend' means." You can't have a friendship with a nonexistent person.

Even if it was a real person, if your friend dies, you start using the past tense. "He was my friend." Why? Because even though he still exists, he's not in the same realm you're in. So you can't really say he's currently your friend because friendship is a two-way kind of relationship. He was my friend in the past. We will be friends again in the future in heaven. But in the present, it's not really accurate to say we are currently carrying on a friendship. But it was accurate for God, 500 years after Abraham had died, to say, "I am Abraham's God. I currently have that kind of relationship with him." And for God to say that about someone who doesn't exist would be absolute nonsense.

God's Promises

So that's one reason Abraham has to still be in existence, because the two-way relationship requires two parties. Another reason has to do with all those things God promises when he signs up to be a person's God. If he's your God, then he's your supernatural protector. That's God's whole point at the burning bush. God is telling Moses, "Don't be afraid of Pharaoh—I'm the God of Abraham! I'm Abraham's provider and protector. I'm the one who steps in when he

⁸ Jesus is not giving a fully developed explanation of resurrection here. He says nothing about the body that will be raised in the last day. His point is to strike at the most fundamental point where the Sadducees were off, namely, with the idea of whether or not there is even an afterlife.

needs supernatural help. Therefore, Moses, when I tell you to go confront Pharaoh, you don't have to be afraid of anything."

So can you see what Jesus is saying? He's saying God's whole argument would be nonsense if Abraham had been wiped out of existence.

Again, Jesus makes his case in terms that are impossible to argue with. The Sadducees thought they were exposing Jesus' doctrine as absurd and ridiculous. But once again, with a single sentence, Jesus does to them what they thought they were doing to him. Look how ridiculous their doctrine is. If the Sadducees are right, then God would have to be telling Moses, "Don't worry Moses. You don't have to be afraid of Pharaoh or the people. After all, I'm the God of a dead guy. I am the protector of Abraham, who was snuffed out of existence and annihilated 5 centuries ago. I'm the savior of a man who didn't make it. I'm the preserver of the extinct. The patriarchs, who were wiped out of existence—I'm the one who promised to guard them from misfortune."

In this conversation between Jesus and the Sadducees, someone had ridiculous, absurd doctrine, but it wasn't Jesus. In the Sadducees view, the little tokens of deliverance that Abraham had during his earthly life were all there is to God's promises. But death gets the final word. God was there at Abraham's side through some of the smaller threats and problems, but the biggest enemy of all, death—that's where God abandons his people altogether. How worthless would that be? I wonder if Paul had this encounter between Jesus and the Sadducees in mind when he wrote about the absurdity of the no-resurrection view in 1 Cor.15.

1 Corinthians 15:19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

If God's promises of protection and blessing were nothing more than we get in this life, Paul would be thoroughly unimpressed with Christianity. Getting beaten and imprisoned over and over didn't strike Paul as that great of a life if that's all there is. And the same is true for Abraham. I'll tell you one person who didn't agree with the Sadducees' views about Abraham—Abraham! For one thing, Abraham believed in resurrection. He had never seen or heard of any resurrection and he didn't have the Bible, but Abraham still believed in resurrection for the simple fact that he understood what the Sadducees didn't understand, namely, the power of God. Where there was an impossible situation that seemed to have no solution, like, say, God requiring him to kill Isaac after God had promised that Isaac would someday get married and have children, instead of thinking, "Oh, there's no way out of this," Abraham just assumed God was powerful enough to handle it.

Hebrews 11:17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. ... 18 even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." 19 Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead.⁹

If you really believe God can create the universe out of nothing, and he can create people, it's not a stretch to believe he can re-create people.

And not only did Abraham believe in resurrection, he also knew, like Paul, that this life couldn't possibly be the end of the story.

Hebrews 11:9 By faith Abraham made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents ... 10 For he was looking forward to the city with

⁹ In contrast, the disciples refused to believe Jesus would rise from the dead despite the fact that he explicitly told them it would happen, and they had seen Jesus raise people from the dead with their own eyes.

foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ... 13 these people were still living by faith when they died. ... 16 they were longing for a better country-- a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

If God is your God, that means he has an eternal city prepared for you. You're not going to go out of existence. This life isn't all there is. God isn't going to abandon you to the grave. He's going to be your God 5 centuries from now and forever. If you think this life is the best God can do, you really don't know God.

Can you see why Jesus ended by saying, "You are badly mistaken"? They weren't just wrong about resurrection; they were as wrong as they could be about the nature of God himself. And if you don't know who God is, you are utterly wrong about everything.

It's interesting the assumptions the Sadducees make. They start with marriage instead of starting with God. In their thinking, there can't be an afterlife because marriage would, of course, be forever, which would be a muddled mess in the afterlife, therefore it must all end at death, including our relationship with God. They figured our relationship with God must end at death because marriage was forever. And Jesus says, "No, marriage ends at death and your relationship with God is forever."

Taking Abraham's Name

And that's especially obvious when it comes to Abraham, because God added Abraham's name to his own name. Moses' question was, "What if they ask your name? Who shall I say sent me?"

Exodus 3:15 God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers-- the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob-- has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.

The relationship between God and the patriarchs is so permanent that God added them *to his name*. Think about that. How committed would you have to be to a person before you'd get a tattoo with that person's name on your arm? God went farther than that. He permanently tattooed Abraham's name onto his own name. The only analogy we have to that in human life is a wife taking her husband's name, but even that is only temporary—for this life. God is still using Abraham's name to identify himself a half millennium after Abraham died.

Jesus' Resurrection

Did this argument persuade the Sadducees? Nope. In the book of Acts they are as anti-resurrection as ever. But I don't know if persuading the Sadducees was even the goal. You have to wonder if this whole conversation was more for the disciples than for the Sadducees. Jesus has been working at preparing his disciples for his own death and resurrection for months now. They haven't understood it or accepted it or believed it even though he's explained it over and over in very clear terms. But here he goes beyond just stating the fact, and lays a massive theological foundation for the whole concept of resurrection. He shows them that resurrection from the dead—far from some fanciful dream or farfetched wish, is absolutely essential in order for God to be God. His nature demands it.

And this did eventually sink in. In Acts 2 Peter spoke of Jesus' resurrection and said, "**He was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to**

life.” (Acts 2:31-32) Why did the Father do that? Because, as it says a half dozen times in the NT, he is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁰

Just as he was Abraham’s God, was Jesus’ God, and so he didn’t abandon Jesus in death.

Do You Have a God?

How many of you have a lawyer? I hope you don’t need one, but if you do need one, I hope you have a good one. What about a doctor—do you all have someone you go to? We need dentists for our dental needs, we need lawyers for legal needs, electricians for electrical needs, and we need to have a God for our supernatural needs, and spiritual needs, and eternal needs. We need to have a God for those times when some mountains need moving. And since one of those mountains is our need for eternal salvation, I recommend not just any god, but that you get a really good one. One who knows what he’s doing.

And, if you have bowed the knee to Christ, you have one. You have a God who is *your* God.

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God that brings salvation ... 12 teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness ... 13 while we wait for the blessed hope-- the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:1 ... To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ 2 have received a like precious faith.

Abraham had a God—someone to provide supernatural help, protection, deliverance; someone to move mountains for him, someone to step in and do all that is humanly impossible. Abraham had a God for all that—so do we. Have you ever stopped to think about the fact that you have a God? You may not have a lawyer, you may not have an agent, or a bodyguard. You may not have a hammer like Thor. But you have a God. A God, who is your God. The glorious, all-powerful Lord Jesus Christ—the unchangeable, eternal covenant-keeping God who blesses, loves, encourages, protects, and sustains his people forever is *your* God! And he will not abandon you, not even in death.

Summary

The Sadducees asked a mocking question designed to make resurrection, and Jesus, look dumb. Jesus rebuked them for being in error because of their ignorance of God’s power (they didn’t think God was great enough to figure out how to handle the “problem” of multiple marriages), and their ignorance of the Scriptures (in the account of the bush, God revealed that he had a “God of” kind of relationship with Abraham, which requires two parties, and in that relationship, God promises to provide supernatural protection).

¹⁰ Ro.15:6, 2 Cor.11:31, Eph.1:3, Phil.4:20, 1 Pet.1:3, Rev.1:6.

Matthew 22:23 That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. 24 "Teacher," they said, "Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him. 25 Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. 26 The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. 27 Finally, the woman died. 28 Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?"

29 Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. 30 At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. 31 But about the resurrection of the dead-- have you not read what God said to you, 32 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

33 When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

Mark 12: 18 Then the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. 19 "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. 20 Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any children. 21 The second one married the widow, but he also died, leaving no child. It was the same with the third. 22 In fact, none of the seven left any children. Last of all, the woman died too. 23 At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

24 Jesus replied, "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? 25 When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. 26 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'? 27 He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!"

Luke 20:27 Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. 28 "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. 29 Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. 30 The second 31 and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. 32 Finally, the woman died too. 33 Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

34 Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. 35 But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, 36 and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection.

37 But in the account of the bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' 38 He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."

39 Some of the teachers of the law responded, "Well said, teacher!" 40 And no one dared to ask him any more questions.