

Know The Scriptures And the Power Of God

Mark 12:18-27

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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.”

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.*”

Have you wondered why we believe in the authority of Scripture?

Answer: Because we believe that the Bible, sixty-books we call Scripture is the *inspired* word of God, is *inerrant*, *sufficient*, and is *profitable* for life and godliness.

And you may ask how did we arrive at this conviction?

The Reformers gave us this conviction.

We owe a lot to the Reformers for this legacy. Because, as imperfect as they were, they gave us the confidence to stand on Scripture alone. Not Scripture plus *tradition* as final authority, not Scripture plus *personal experience* as final authority, not Scripture plus *another book* as final authority, but Scripture alone stands as final authority.

Zwingli, a contemporary of Luther said that “*The foundation of our religion is the written word, the Scriptures of God*” - Huldrych Zwingli

Just to give you a glimpse of what the reformer Martin Luther he had to deal with in the aftermath of posting his 95 theses 1517. The authorities in Rome saw that Luther's writings were a direct insult to papal authority. Therefore, Luther was called a heretic and was deemed worthy of being burned at the stake. There were people before him who were called heretics and burned at the stake. People like Jan Hus, John Wycliff and

William Tyndale. To deal with Luther, the pope at that time, Leo X, appointed a theologian by the name of Sylvester Prierias.

Here is what Sylvester wrote to Luther, *“he who does not accept the doctrine of the Church of Rome, and pontiff of Rome, as an infallible rule of faith, from which the Holy Scriptures, too, draw their strength and authority, he’s a heretic”* - Sylvester Prierias

Luther’s wrote back to Sylvester saying *“Like an insidious devil you pervert the Scriptures”*.

Luther may sound crude and harsh but without Luther’s stand I wonder if we would have a Protestant Church today.

In one debate, Luther said the following, *“It is not in the power of the Roman Pontiff, or of the Inquisition to construct new articles of faith. No believing Christian can be coerced beyond holy writ (Scriptures). - Martin Luther*

Luther once remarked that a *“school boy with Scripture in his hand is better fortified than the pope”*.

Let us give the Scriptures to our children when they are still young and teach them.

Here, in this passage, we go back 1500 years prior to the Reformation period - to the time of the Sadducees. The Sadducees were a strange group. They believed *only* in the first five books of the Bible (The Pentateuch) as Scriptures. Other books like the Prophets and the Psalms were not Scripture to them. Unlike the Pharisees, the Sadducees did *not* believe in life after death. They did not believe in angels.

If the Pharisees were lay leaders, the Sadducees were official leaders of the Temple. Together, the Pharisees and the Sadducees formed a Council called the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin council had the authority to declare someone like Jesus a heretic or a blasphemer and hand him over to the Roman authorities for a death sentence.

So far, in our journey through the Gospel of Mark, we have seen the chief priests, the elders and the scribes trying to arrest Jesus. Then we saw the Pharisees trying to trap Jesus with his words. They use flattery and deceit but they themselves are trapped. In this passage, we see the Sadducees attempting to discredit Jesus with *cleverness*. But Jesus, in his response, we see him as an expositor. Jesus affirms, explains and interprets Scriptures. Isn’t that wonderful?

Verse 18 through 22.

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.”.

Notice the first thing that the Sadducees say.

They say Moses wrote for us. Who did Moses write to? Moses commanded the people of Israel that if a man dies, his brother should marry the wife and have children so that the family's name be perpetuated.

The Sadducees very likely refer to a passage in Deuteronomy 25.

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. ⁶And 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”. Deuteronomy 25:5-6

There are times when atheists ask questions like “why does not your omnipotent God prevent all the horrible tragedies in this world?” Well, it turns out that atheists, who have faith in their unbelief, have a conscience too. But why bother if there is evil or good in this world? Good and evil are just relative terms for those holding a non-Biblical worldview.

Did you know that *five* percent of deaths in Canada are caused by a physician-assisted procedure called euthanasia? Iceland brags that they have completely eliminated Down's Syndrome in their country. How? By getting rid of the “abnormal” fetus before a live birth. Today what the Bible calls evil is called good. Whenever there is war, the collateral damage is so high in terms of human cost. Helpless children maimed, orphaned and killed. It appears we live in a constant shadow of death.

I don't know if any atheist is able to answer the question - why would a sinless, innocent man be murdered and put to death on a cross? Why didn't God prevent the tragedy of the brutal killing of Jesus? Because in the tragedy of the cross, there was redemption being prepared for sinners who would otherwise face an eternal tragedy.

Atheists don't believe in an afterlife. Similarly, the Sadducees don't even believe in the resurrection. Why care about marriage in the next life when you don't even believe in the resurrection? They assume too much about marriage in the next life.

They come up with a theoretical question. This is sort of the gotcha question. Their motive is to trap question.

How does Jesus respond?

Verses 24 through 27.

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.”*

We see at least two major observations:

First observation:

Does knowing Scriptures offer you a hope beyond physical death?

Jesus does not waste time in calling the error of the Sadducees. Jesus tells them “on account of this you are quite wrong”. On account of what? On account of their question. They acknowledge scripture. And yet their minds are set on earthly things like marriage and rights and property.

Jesus’ answer about marriage in the resurrection can be concerning to some and be comforting to others.

- It can be concerning to some because some may speculate and worry if they are going to see their spouse ever again. Or some may have a lost a spouse early and they miss them dearly. Jesus does not say you will never see your loved ones again in the glorified body. He simply says there is not going to be marriage the way we understand in this life now. Jesus says you will be like angels in heaven. Meaning you will have capacities better and greater than you have now. You will have desires not tainted by sin. Your relationships may be better than ever. Just not the way we experience life on this earth. The best person on this planet may have mixed-motives but in the resurrected body, you can expect only pure and holy desires.
- Jesus’ answer can be comforting to some because not everyone is called to married life. Paul as a single man writes in 1 Corinthians 7 this way. *“To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”* 1 Corinthians 7:8-9
- *“The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. ³³ But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, ³⁴ and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. ³⁵ I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure*

your undivided devotion to the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 7:32-25

Second observation:

Is the power of God a reality in your life?

If the Sadducees claim to believe in the first five books of the Bible, then Jesus vets their belief. Jesus points them to the burning bush incident. Every Jew, whether Pharisee or Sadducee, knew this story from Exodus 3.

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.*” Exodus 3:2-6

The Sadducees claim to believe in the books of Moses but it turns out they don’t understand one of the most important passages in the books of Moses.

So, Jesus corrects them and tells them that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are alive according to Jesus. They are not dead.

Remember, when we saw in the passage on the transfiguration of Jesus who was there? Moses spoke with Jesus. Mark 9:2-4

How is Moses alive? Moses was physically dead. God himself buried him but his spirit is alive. (Deuteronomy 34:5). Moses is alive in spirit because God is a Living God.

- If the Sadducees knew what Moses wrote, they ought to have believed in the power of God to raise the dead. Their knowledge is just head knowledge without transforming faith.
- If the Sadducees truly believed the God of Moses in the five books, they ought to have believed in Jesus as the Messiah because Moses wrote about Jesus. In the Gospel of John, Jesus told the Jewish leaders “*For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?*”. John 5:46-47
- Jesus displayed the power of God all throughout his ministry. Jesus raised the dead, healed the sick, calmed the seas. What further proof do they need? Yet the Sadducees won’t believe Jesus *because* they are spiritually dead.
- When Paul was on trial before king Agrippa, he told them that it was because of the hope of resurrection he was on trial. He testifies to them asking “*Why is it thought*

incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?” Acts 26:8

Some believe there is nothing beyond death. Some believe in annihilation or non-existence after physical death. Others believe in some form of re-incarnation. Jesus said, “Fear him who is able to cast both soul and body into hell”. Matthew 10:28
 “It is appointed for man to die once and after that comes judgment”. Hebrews 9:27

There is a death that is far more serious than physical death. That death is spiritual death. God is far more concerned in remediating spiritual deadness than physical death because spiritual deadness invites the wrath, judgment and ultimately separation from God.

What is the remedy?

The remedy is the Living Christ! Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.

For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the *power of God* and the wisdom of God. 1 Corinthians 1:22-24

Jesus is the power of God. Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

“For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God” 2 Corinthians 13:4

In conclusion, do you know the Scriptures? Do they lead you to the Living Christ?

No one transforms a life better than Jesus Christ.

God’s power is so great, so awful, so dreadful yet so wonderful and so transformative that you will not remain the same once you have experienced it. This is the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. This is a power that defies physical death.

A power that is quite enthralling and offers hope in this life and beyond.

You can receive this power too. How? By repenting deeply, surrendering your life to Jesus Christ and trusting in him as Lord and Savior.

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: Know The Scriptures. Mark 12:18-27

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. What motive do you see in the Sadducees in asking Jesus a question about marriage in the after-life? How did Jesus correct their lack of understanding?
2. HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.
 - Do you believe Scripture is the chief, supreme and final authority for life and godliness? Why or why not? Read Luke 24:45-47. What does Jesus teach his disciples about Scripture?
 - What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

3. HANDS For personal reflection: Read Philippians 3:10. What will you do to know Christ more?