



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V23 N18

May 2, 2021

KING JESUS

"Is Heaven for Real?"

Mark 12:18-27

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Eternity

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to establish his eternal kingdom.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."
John 14:1-4



"How is resurrection possible?"

In Mark 12:18-23, the Sadducees question Jesus about "resurrection." They do not believe in it. (Apparently, they do not believe in an afterlife in heaven or hell either.) Moreover, they consider belief in it to be absurd, as their hypothetical question to Jesus suggests. But what did belief in "resurrection" mean in the first century? Did it mean belief in "life after death" or something more? One commentator explains that it meant something more: "When people speak of 'life after death' they usually mean, the life that follows immediately after bodily death. People often assume, in fact, that this is among the primary things that Christians believe and that atheists deny. *But this is not what 'resurrection' meant in the first century.* Here there is no difference between pagans, Jews and Christians. They all understood the Greek word *anastasis* and its cognates, and the other related terms we shall meet, to mean: new life after a period of being dead. Pagans denied this possibility; some Jews affirmed it as a long-term future hope; virtually all Christians claimed that it had happened to Jesus and would happen to them in the future. All of them were speaking of a new life *after 'life after death'* in the popular sense, a fresh living embodiment *following* a period of death-as-a-state (during which one might or might not be 'alive' in some other, non-bodily fashion). Nobody (except the Christians, in respect of Jesus) thought that this had already happened, even in isolated cases . . . The meaning of 'resurrection' as 'life after "life after death"' cannot be overemphasized, not least because much modern writing continues to use 'resurrection' as a virtual synonym for 'life after death' in the popular sense" (N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 31, italics added).

With respect to Jesus, this means that on the first day of the week, his *physical* body, which died on the cross the previous Friday, was *resurrected*, that is, restored to life and changed, namely, clothed with immortality. We know that the body that went into the tomb on Friday was the body that came out of the tomb on Sunday because the

tomb was empty when the women entered it. Remember what the angel told them early in the morning? "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here" (Mk 16:6). And before leaving the tomb, Jesus' changed body was reunited with his *immaterial* soul (cf., Lk 23:46). With respect to the righteous dead, this means that they too will be resurrected one day, that is, restored to life and changed, namely, clothed with an immortal resurrection body like their Lord's. Paul tells the Corinthian Christians:

"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'

'Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?'

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Co 15:51-57).

The *first* resurrection, the one unto eternal life that the righteous look forward to, occurs not all at once but in a prescribed order. Jesus is resurrected first, followed by those who belong to him when he comes (see 1Co 15:23). And since his coming occurs in two phases, the *rapture* followed later by the *glorious appearing*, there will be a resurrection of the righteous at the rapture followed later by a resurrection at the glorious appearing. Paul writes about the former one in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, and John writes about the latter one in Revelation 20:4-6. The righteous spend the time between death and resurrection, called the *intermediate state*, with the Lord in heaven (see 2Co 5:1-5), but heaven is not where they will spend eternity. They will spend eternity on a new earth (see Rev 21).



EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

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 raise up offspring 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 burning 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!"

*Some manuscripts, resurrection, when people rise from the dead

READ also Luke 20:34-38

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 the age to come 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 burning 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."

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "Sadducees" in v. 18.
- Circle "resurrection" in vv. 18, 23.
- Underline "Moses wrote" in v. 19.
- Bracket "whose wife will she be" in v. 23.
- Box "or" indicating *inclusive alternatives* in v. 24.
- Box "like" indicating *comparison* in v. 25.
- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 27.
- Highlight v. 27.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Unlike the Pharisees, the Sadducees “say there is no resurrection.” Explain the difference between *resurrection* and *resuscitation* (see 5:35-42; cf., Jn 11:1-44).
 2. Explain how the law of “levirate marriage” benefited childless widows (see Dt 25:5-10).
 3. How did the Sadducees intend to prove that belief in resurrection is absurd?
 4. A key *assumption* lay behind their question to Jesus (v. 23). Explain.
 5. The Sadducees are mistaken with respect to *two* things. Identify them.
 6. Explain the *comparison* in verse 25.
 7. What does this *comparison* imply with regard to “living arrangements” following the resurrection?
 8. Explain what God’s statement in Exodus 3:6 implies (cf., v. 27).
 9. How does *Jesus’ statement* based on *God’s statement* substantiate belief in resurrection?
 10. **Discussion:** Talk about questions you have about *resurrection*.
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Commentary On The Text

Mark 12:18-27 describes the fourth of six controversies, taking place on Wednesday of Passion Week (see Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, 91-92). The previous one involved a question concerning paying taxes to Caesar (vv. 13-17). This one involves a question concerning the resurrection of the dead. As one commentator says: "The question is not intended to clarify a theological matter but to discredit Jesus before the crowd and make him look like a fool" (Eckard J. Schnabel, *Mark*, TNTC, 295).

The question is asked by Sadducees, who unlike the Pharisees believe in neither resurrection nor life after death, both of which they consider theological claptrap, choosing to believe instead that the soul perishes along with the body at death. Neither do they believe in angels and spirits, nor do they follow the traditions of the Pharisees. They approach Jesus confident they can embarrass and discredit the "Teacher" before a crowd of people.

Following a lengthy description of a hypothetical situation involving levirate marriages, they spring the question intended to show that belief in the resurrection is absurd. The law required that in the event a man died without a son, his brother was required to take his widowed sister-in-law as his wife, so that he might give her a son to "carry on the name of his dead brother" and pass on his legacy (Dt 25:5-6). The hypothetical situation posed by the Sadducees involves seven brothers, six levirate marriages, and one widow. "The six brothers of the original husband dutifully, each in his turn, took the widow as a wife. Yet not one was able to beget a child by her. In the end the woman died childless, having been married to all seven brothers" (Craig A. Evans, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 34B, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 253). With relish, the Sadducees spring the question, designed to ridicule belief in the resurrection. They ask, "At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?" One commentator writes: "The case they presented was doubly absurd, since they themselves did not believe in any such thing. To present an unfair caricature of a view, and then to demolish it, is an old pastime" (R. Alan Cole, *Mark*, TNTC, 264).

Jesus replies by asking a *rhetorical* question tinged with sarcasm that identifies the reasons behind all wrongheaded thinking concerning theology and ethics: ignorance of the Scriptures or denial of the power of God. The Sadducees are guilty of both. Their as-

sumption that life following the resurrection will mirror life before the resurrection is simply wrong. While there are *continuities* between this life and that life, namely, spouses will recognize each other, there are also *discontinuities*, namely, spouses will no longer live together as husband and wife. Jesus explains, "When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be *like* the angels in heaven" (v. 25). They will not *be* angels; Jesus was not an angel following his resurrection. Nor will they be *like* angels in *every* respect. They will be *like* angels in *this one* respect; they "will neither marry nor be given in marriage." "Jesus reasons implicitly that nowhere in Scripture is there any hint that the marriage state continues after the resurrection (cf. *b. Ber.* 17a: 'in the world to come there is no . . . propagation'). The Sadducees' question is therefore irrelevant" (Evans, 255). Marriage as we know it will not exist when people have immortal bodies, and when deathless existence will not require propagation of the human race.

Their assumption that God is unable to raise the dead is simply wrong, too. Of course, they do not believe in life after death. They reason if the material part of man dies, the whole person ceases to exist. Death ends it all; it marks the end of personal existence. That alone, of course, makes resurrection impossible. However, Jesus reasons contrariwise if the immaterial part of man lives on, the whole person is destined to live on. Reckoning from Exodus 3:6 where God says, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," Jesus infers that the patriarchs are not dead but very much alive and therefore, destined for resurrection. After all, God is the God of the living! As one commentator says: "Would God claim to be the God of ghostly shadows or of those who no longer exist? The living God would hardly identify himself as the God of corpses. He does not say, 'I was their God,' but 'I am their God.' God remains the God even in death. The Sadducees do not reckon with God's power or God's love to give them life again (see 1 Cor. 6:14)" (David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary: Mark*, 470). What's more, the unconditional, eternal covenants God established with the patriarchs implies they remain alive after death and will one day be resurrected. In the words of Jesus, the Sadducees are "badly mistaken" (v. 27).

Word Studies/Notes

v. 23 *Sadducees*

“It is generally believed that they were the Jewish aristocratic party whose members came largely from the priesthood and the upper classes. Though less numerous and popular than the Pharisees, they occupied influential positions on the Sanhedrin, the Jewish supreme court and generally cooperated with the Roman authorities. They denied the truths of the resurrection, future judgment, and the existence of angels and spirits (cf. Acts 23:6-8). They accepted only the Books of Moses (the Pentateuch) as authoritative and rejected the oral traditions observed as binding by the Pharisees. This is Mark’s only reference to the Sadducees” (John D. Grassmick, “Mark,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 162). “In contrast to the Pharisees, they denied the doctrine of the resurrection and of personal life after death in general (12:18b; Acts 23:8a; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.1.4 §16-17; *J.W.* 2.8.14 §165; cf. also Acts 4:1-2), the authority of the oral traditions and probably the Prophets and Writings of the OT, holding only the book of Moses as authoritative (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.10.6 §297; 18.1.4 §16); the existence of spirits and angels (Acts 23:8b); and the sovereignty of God with respect to such matters as fate and predestination in favor of an emphasis on human freedom (Josephus, *J.W.* 2.8.14 §164-65)” (Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT, 552).

v. 18, 23 *resurrection*

Jesus predicted that three days after he was “killed” he would “rise” (8:32; 9:31; 10:34). Clearly, he was referring to the death of his body followed by the resurrection of that same body three days later. Resurrection was a *bodily* experience of Jesus, as it will be for all believers (1Co 15:3, 12-23, 50-57). Resurrection neither refers to “life after death” per se (see p. 1) nor to “resuscitation.” “Christ’s resurrection was not simply a coming back from the dead, as had been experienced by others before, such as Lazarus (John 11:1-44), for then Jesus would have been subject to weakness and aging and eventually would have died again just as all other human being die. Rather, when he rose from the dead Jesus was the ‘first fruits’ (1 Cor. 15:20, 23) of a new kind of human life, a life in which his body was made perfect, no longer subject to weakness, aging, or death, but able to live eternally” (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 609; see also Norman L. Geisler, *The Battle for the Resurrection*, 40-50).

v. 19 *Moses wrote*

See Dt 25:5-10; cf., Ge 38. “The law is formally spelled out in Deut 25. Levirate marriage was an ancient solution to the problem of the widowed and childless woman. In great antiquity a woman had two places: her father’s house as an unmarried virgin or her husband’s house, in which she would bear him children. A childless widow had no secure place in ancient society. Through levirate marriage she had the opportunity to bear children in the name of her deceased husband. The

Sadducees summarize the law, which is accepted as uncontroversial” (Craig A. Evans, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 34B, *Mark* 8:27-16:20, 253).

v. 23 *whose wife . . .*

“The Sadducees present a *reductio ad absurdum* argument: since belief in resurrection leads to ridiculously complex marital situations in the afterlife, it must be absurd” (Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark*, TNTC, 297).

v. 24 *or*

Cf., “because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God” (ESV); “Your mistake is that you don’t know the Scriptures, and you don’t know the power of God” (NLT).

v. 25 *like*

“Jesus did not say that when people die they become angels, which they do not, nor that we will be ‘like angels’ in every respect, which we will not” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Mark,” 2021 ed., 254, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/mark.pdf). “They will be like angels, who do not marry and have children. Whereas ‘love’ is eternal, for God is love, marriage and the sexual relationship (contra Belo 1981: 189) are temporal. The reunion of married partners in the resurrection leads to greater joy and fulfillment than can be imagined, but marriage, as we know it here on earth, will cease to exist (cf. 1 En. 15.7)” (Stein, 554).

v. 27 *but*

Is God the God of the living or by way of *contrast*, the God of the dead? According to Jesus, God is not the God of corpses or those who no longer exist. “For Jesus, this statement proves that there is life after death for the righteous (V. Taylor 1952: 484; Donahue and Harrington 2002: 351). The covenantal relationship God established with the patriarchs and the fact that long after their death he still identifies himself as their God indicates that they are alive and in fellowship with him. God’s promises and his relationship with the patriarchs and prophets are not broken by death, for they are alive (Luke 16:19-31; Matt. 8:11-12; 13:17; John 8:56; cf. 4 Macc. 7:19; 13:17; 16:25; cf., however, Gundry 1993: 703, 708-9)” (Stein, 555). “If all God’s people are destined to perish and to remain dead, then in what sense is he the God of the living? The *living* God will surely reign over a *living* people. The resurrection is accordingly a logical inference and, for those who experience the power of God, it is an experiential inference” (Evans, 258, *italics added*). “The patriarchs are still alive, and therefore will be raised in the future. Prove the first, and (within the worldview assumed by both parties in the debate, and any listening Pharisees) you have proved the second” (N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 425).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

If we should die, knowing the Scriptures and the power of God, we believe God will raise our mortal bodies and clothe them with immortality to experience eternal life.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

Sometimes conversations look like this. Well-meaning and kind person: What are you up to today? Me: Well... (start listing my to do's). I'm a taskmaster and easily get caught up in my checklist and all the things I need to do. I allow my chores or my job to rule my day and don't feel successful until those things are accomplished. The thing is I have these kids and quite frankly they don't care about the bathroom being cleaned (I mean really don't care—have you seen a 10-year-old brush their teeth?) or a deadline that I have to meet. Am I a good parent because everyone has clean clothes and a nutritious lunch or am I a good parent because I listen to my kids and spend time really knowing them? I can convince myself that my life is about my tasks, but the bottom line is that relationships matter. Years ago, I went to a high school graduation where each parent had to read a letter to their child. I walked away with the thought that these parents really knew their child. They had a thriving relationship and I remember wondering what I needed to do to make sure I knew my kids. Here's a parenting gem that was passed to me years ago that I absolutely hold firm to: if you want a good, healthy relationship with your teenager, start working toward that and building the relationship when they're born. If you want your kids to come to you in times of trouble, start building the relationship today. We are praying for laughter and love in your family relationships.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Mark 12:18-27.

1. Read Acts 23:8. What do the Sadducees believe?
2. In your own words, what question did the Sadducees ask?
3. How important is marriage after the resurrection? Why?

What Do You Think?

If the Sadducees don't believe in the resurrection, why did they ask Jesus about it?

What Do You Do?

Each morning read Psalm 148 and sing a song of praise to start your day.

CORE COMPETENCY: Eternity

I believe in heaven and hell and that one day Jesus will come again.

MEMORY VERSE: Philippians 3:20

"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ . . ."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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