

“Rendering Unto God... Our Faith”

by Pastor Steve Hammond on 8/11/19
Mark 12:13-17, at FBC of Newport, NH

//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.”//

—Mark 12:18-27 (NIV)

Last week the trick question was drawn from the politics of the day. Today, the trick question comes from the theology of that day, at least for the Sadducees. They don't believe in the resurrection, as we pointed out last week, and so they have this question for Jesus designed to embarrass anyone who holds a belief in the resurrection. They must have surely felt confident this question would confound Jesus. It is seemingly air tight in its legality and logic. Marriage, in light of the resurrection, makes little or no sense at all. So either the idea of marriage next age has to be discarded or the idea of the resurrection has to be discarded. One or the other has to give way. And to the Jews of the first century the idea of giving up marriage after the resurrection would have been an unthinkable shock.

(I wonder if even people in our own time, where marriage has been tossed under the buss back in Sixties . . ., I wonder if people in our present time are back to expressing more faith in the idea of marriage to an eternal soul-mate than they are expressing in a resurrection of the soul and body for eternity. But I'm getting ahead of things here.)

Not only does Jesus face that dilemma, but he faces trying to give an answer that can't be given from the limitations of this earthly life. One would have to know the next life and world of the resurrection, in order to actually *know* the answer to the question posed to Jesus. And the Sadducees are banking on this. They are counting on Jesus being just like everybody else in the world and not having any such answer.

Do you ever get hit with these kinds of questions? Either by other people, or maybe even by your own mind late at night? Do you ever get hit with this very question? What will happen to your marriage at the resurrection? What will happen if you've never been married come the resurrection day? What about sex in general? What about *food* for that matter? Did you know there won't be any night in the new Jerusalem? What's it going to be like having it daylight all the time?

Sound silly? Well, they're real questions for anyone who reads the Bible with a serious sense of its authority. But they are silly if we let these questions, and our limited understanding of our present world, dictate to us what we should or should not believe about Jesus, about the kingdom of God, and about the world of the resurrection promised in the scriptures.

So I want us to look at how Jesus dealt with the Sadducees' question back in his day. And then I want us to look at what this means for us today.

Jesus straightforwardly confronted the Sadducees for their ignorance of God. Now these were Jews who would have claimed to know God and worship God. They were the majority on the ruling council of the Sanhedrin. They were in charge of the Temple for crying out loud! But they had an ignorance of God that might as well have been labeled atheism. For they were ignorant of what God says in the scriptures and ignorant of what God has the power to do. Imagine someone claiming to know you, while at the same time they know nothing about what you say or do. Why bother? How else do we know someone except by knowing what they say and do? Without such, they might know your name but that's about it.

Are there such people in our day? Of course there are.

Now it's one thing to have so many outright atheists writing books and making waves in our world. But I have to say, it's better to deal with these atheists in the world than in the churches. I suspect one reason we have seen such a decline in the modern, Western churches of our day is because there have been so many Sadducees at the helm within them.

These are not just people who don't know God. These are people who know nothing about God and yet want to run the church, teach the Sunday Schools, preach in the pulpits and manage every board and committee. They do not accept most of the word of God as being the word of God. And what they do accept as such they fail to understand faithfully. They do not believe in things like angels, demons, miracles, anything supernatural and they especially do not believe in any real resurrection. They might give lip service to something going on after death, but mostly they concern themselves with the here and now. Their understanding of

God and all of life is confined to their understanding of the here and now immediately surrounding them. There is no extending their understanding beyond that visual horizon by way of faith, hope and love toward the living, eternal God.

How do we know this?

We know it by how they respond to the person of Jesus, especially as he speaks to them through the scriptures and in keeping with the power of God.

Take for example the question of the resurrection raised by the Sadducees. Jesus answers them. He takes them beyond their limited vision and simply tells them that marriage is obsolete after the resurrection. He also takes them to task by pointing out where they have overlooked the obvious implications of the resurrection in the present/perfect tense God uses when describing himself, the great "I am," in relationship with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Both of these words from Jesus are tremendous windows into the mind and power of God.

Yet what do the Sadducees do? There's no direct word. The text goes on to say one of the "teachers of the law" hears Jesus and proceeds to ask him a serious question. But the overall implication is that the Sadducees as a whole simply licked their wounds and continued their plans to oppose Jesus, even kill him.

Sound familiar?

Sounds like most every political and religious argument going on in our world right now. Does this mean we should throw up our hands in frustration, because there's no way to know who's right, who's wrong? Who should change and who should stand their ground?

Politically that can be a difficult question, I suppose. But we're not simply talking politics here. We're talking about the resurrection. Remember? That's hardly a political question. Nor is it a question hinging upon our personal experience and opinion.

The resurrection is a question for God. And the only way we'll get an answer that does us any good is for us to take God at his Word and to take that Word seriously. There is no other way. We're not going to figure it out on our own. We're not going to conduct experiments and discover the resurrection. We're not going to invent the resurrection. We're not going to build it or legislate it. We're not going to artfully create the resurrection by reciting songs and poetry about it. We're not going to paint a picture or make a movie that bring the resurrection to life.

We are simply going to have to take God at his Word and we are going to have to take that Word seriously into our hearts and believe it.

What the Sadducees did with God's word in the scriptures they ended up doing with the Word of God standing before them in the flesh and blood of Jesus. They refused to believe. Therefore they not only were wrong about the resurrection, but they entrenched themselves within their error deeply by claiming they were in the right. For most of them this would make their error of sin a permanent mark upon their souls, keeping them from ever experiencing the resurrection unto eternal life. The only raising they would know would be that of the second death of burning judgment.

Jesus actually expressed the grace of God toward these Sadducees by his forthright confrontation and exposure of their ignorance. It was an ignorance toward God: his word and his power. They knew nothing about the raised as being like the angels in neither marrying nor being given in marriage. They knew nothing about what was right-under-their-noses in the scriptures making clear that God is the God of the living, not the dead.

After this it was up to them how they would respond. Would they believe themselves to know what they really don't know? Or would they recognize the Word of God and believe? It simply comes down to that.

Do we acknowledge our own ignorance and our sin?

Do we confess this to God and call upon the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ, to save us?

Do we put our faith in God through Jesus Christ? If we do, then we are taking God at his most perfect Word.

ILLUS: **The Perfect Tense.** Let me share something from Jonathan Cahn again, in his *Book of Mysteries*, page/day 157, "Days of Future Past."

Did you know there are only two tenses in the Hebrew language? In English there are 12, 13 or 17 depending on how they're explained. (see sheet)

But in Hebrew there are only the Perfect tense and the Imperfect tense. The only way you get the simple *past, present and future* tenses is by context. The Perfect tense speaks of an action that is completed, finished. While the Imperfect tense speaks of an action that is incomplete.

Jonathan Cahn makes the interesting connection between this grammatical reality in scripture and the greater reality of our strivings for salvation. If we are always striving for that which is never completed in this life, then we are not living in God's Perfect tense. We are living in our human Imperfect tense. How do you live in the Perfect tense of God?

We must learn "... from that which is already done, to triumph from a victory already won." And that would be "The work of God." The completed work of Christ on the cross, where the perfect Word of God, Jesus, said, "It is finished."

By taking God at his most perfect Word in Jesus, we become far wiser than we otherwise should be. We become forgiven of sin. We become cleansed, even righteous by God's grace and justification by the blood of Christ. In this way we come to know the scriptures and the power of God—even the resurrection—both now and forever on the Day of resurrection.