

A QUESTION OF THEOLOGY

Friday, August 18

Reading: Mark 12:18-27

Mark 12:24 *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.*

The Sadducees were the opposite of the Pharisees in most ways. They were the “liberal” element in Jewish religion. They controlled the Temple and the priesthood and cooperated with Rome to keep their power. They believed in God but did not believe in supernatural elements such as angels, resurrection, or final judgment. They held that only the five books of Moses were authoritative and rejected the rest of the Old Testament. For them to ask Jesus a question about the resurrection was hypocritical for they did not believe in the possibility of life after death!

Their story revolved around Levirate marriage (Deuteronomy 25:5-6). According to the Law of Moses, if a man died without having an heir, his brother would marry his widow and raise up children for his brother so that the family inheritance would not be lost. The Sadducees carry their story to a ridiculous extreme by suggesting seven brothers all marry the same woman and die with no children being born. For them, the idea of one woman having seven husbands in the resurrection was ridiculous thus the concept of resurrection was also ridiculous.

Jesus answers with two rebukes: They did not know the Scriptures and they did not know the power of God! If they had understood the power of God they would have never doubted His power to give life after death. Jesus corrected their assumption of what the resurrection would be like by saying it will not be like here on earth. There will be no marriage or procreation. Then Jesus corrects their unbelief in resurrection. Since they only believe in the books of Moses, Jesus quotes from Exodus 3:6. When God spoke to Moses, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been dead for centuries, yet God speaks of them in the present tense. This showed that God still had a relationship with these men. They lived in the presence of God. Once again, an attempt to make Jesus look foolish has made His opponents look foolish instead.

POINTS TO PONDER:

1. “They Will Be Like the Angels in Heaven.” This does NOT mean that believers become angels when they die. Jesus is saying that just as angels do not marry or have children, so believers in heaven will have a different relationship with each other. Believers will know each other in a more perfect way as we will have perfect bodies ready for eternity. The relationships we have here on earth will pale next to those we will have in heaven. How does the thought of heaven help you in your walk with God today? How should knowing we will have perfect relationships in heaven impact our relationships here on earth?
2. “You Are Badly Mistaken!” The Sadducees’ question was meant to distract Jesus from their real problem. Many people today want to start a debate about trivial matters of Christianity so they don’t have to think about the real issues of belief and repentance. Like Jesus, we need to point out their error but always point them back to God’s Word and the issues that really matter. Don’t be distracted by theological questions that don’t point to Jesus Christ. Stick with the gospel and allow God to change lives.