

Mark Chapter 12 Continued

Mark 12:18 "Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying,"

“Sadducees”:

The most wealthy, influential and aristocratic of all the Jewish sects.

All the High-Priests, chief priests, and most of the Sanhedrin (see note on Matt. 26:59), were called Sadducees.

They ignored the oral law, traditions, and scribal laws of the Pharisees, viewing only the Pentateuch as authoritative (see note on Matt. 3:7).

“Which say there is no resurrection”:

The most distinctive aspect of the Sadducees’ theology, which they adopted because of their belief that Moses did not teach a literal resurrection from the dead.

With such a disregard for the future, the Sadducees lived for the moment and whatever profit they could make.

Since they controlled the temple businesses, they were extremely upset when Jesus cleansed the temple of the money changers because He cut into their profits (11:15-18), the reason they also wanted to discredit Jesus in front of the people.

The Sadducees were Jews who did not believe in the Spirit.

They did not believe in life after death.

They were strict Jews who believed in the Pentateuch (the first five books of Moses), and nothing else.

They did not believe in angels or demons.

They really had no future at all to look forward to.

They had a sort of fleshly religion with no spirit at all connected to it.

Mark 12:19 "Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave [his] wife [behind him], and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother."

The Sadducees were summarizing (Deut. 25:5-6), which refers to the custom of a levirate marriage (marriage to a dead husband's brother).

God placed it in the Law of Moses to preserve tribal names, families, and inheritances (see note on Matt. 22:24).

"Moses wrote":

The Sadducees appealed to Moses because they were fully aware of Jesus' high regard for Scripture, and therefore believed He would not contest the validity of the levirate marriage.

This is called "levirate marriage" (levir being Latin for "husband's brother), and is instituted (in Deut. 25:5).

They thought they would give Jesus a problem that He would not be able to reconcile in these seven brothers who marry the same woman.

Everything they believed was based on Moses' teachings.

Here again, they called Him Master, but they did not accept Him as Master.

They tried to use one little thing that Moses said to trap Jesus.

Mark 12:20-23 "Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed." "And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise." "And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also." "In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife."

They thought that surely this would prove beyond a shadow of a doubt, that there was any type of resurrection.

They never dreamed Jesus could get around this.

How could she be married to all seven?

Here again, Jesus showed them up to be very foolish, because they did not understand the Scriptures about heaven.

Mark 12:24 "And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?"

"Ye know not the scriptures:"

They knew the words of the Old Testament, but they lacked insight into its spiritual implications.

“The power of God”:

“Their ignorance of the Scriptures extended to their lack of understanding regarding the miracles God performed throughout the Old Testament.

Such knowledge would have enabled them to believe in God’s power to raise the dead.

Their ignorance was twofold.

They should have further studied the Scriptures, which plainly teach life after death.

The power of God was evident in all of Moses' teachings, so they were without excuse for not knowing God's power.

Mark 12:25 "For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven."

“Neither marry”:

Marriage was designed by God for companionship and also the perpetuation of the human race on the earth.

Jesus was emphasizing the fact that in heaven there will be no exclusive or sexual relationships.

Believers will experience an entirely new existence in which they will have perfect spiritual relationships with everyone else.

“As the angels”:

Believers will be like angels in that they will be spiritual, eternal beings who will not die (1 Cor. 15:39-44, 48-49; see note on Matt. 22:30).

The resurrection state will bring with it a life different from what we know now.

"Angels" are ministering spirits.

Hebrews 1:13-14 "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?" "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

You see, the flesh will not be important in heaven.

We will be changed into a spiritual body.

1 Corinthians 15:44 "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."

Mark 12:26 "And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I [am] the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?"

“Book of Moses”:

The Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament.

Jesus appealed to the only Scriptures the Sadducees held as completely authoritative.

“In the bush”:

A reference to (Exodus 3:1 - 4:17), where God first appeared to Moses at the bush.

“God spake unto him, saying, I AM”:

By keying on the emphatic present tense of (Exodus 3:6), “I am ... the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,” Jesus was underscoring the personal and perpetual covenantal relationship God established with the 3 patriarchs.

Even though all 3 were dead when God spoke to Moses, God was still their God just as much as when they were alive on earth, and more so in that they were experiencing eternal fellowship with Him in heaven (see note on Matt. 22:32).

Here Jesus places a great deal of weight on the grammar of (Exodus 3:6).

God said, “I am”, despite the fact that the patriarchs had died long before.

He spoke these words to Moses.

Thus, the Old Testament itself points to the fact of life after death.

Mark 12:27 "He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err."

“Ye therefore do greatly err”:

Jesus accused the Sadducees of making a complete error in teaching that there is no resurrection.

Jesus told them of a Scripture in Moses' writings; because that was the only part of the Bible that they read.

Jesus was telling them that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still alive and would join their bodies on resurrection day.

Mark 12:28 "And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?"

“Scribes” (see note on 1:22).

“Which is the first commandment of all?”:

The rabbis had determined that there were 613 commandments contained in the Pentateuch, one for each letter of the Ten Commandments.

Of the 613 commandments, 248 were seen as affirmative and 365 as negative.

Those laws were also divided into heavy and light categories, with the heavy laws being more binding than the light ones.

The scribes and rabbis however, had been unable to agree on which were heavy and which were light laws.

This orientation to the law led the Pharisees to think Jesus had devised His own theory.

So, the Pharisees asked this question to get Jesus to incriminate Himself by revealing His unorthodox and unilateral beliefs.

Salvation, it was taught, depended on the scrupulous observance of each rule.

We see this scribe (who was educated), came to see, since the Sadducees couldn't trip up Jesus, if he could.

He knew God had given Ten Commandments, and he was seeing if he could get Jesus to say that they were unimportant.

More than all of that, he wanted to understand the importance of the burnt offerings and sacrifices.

Mark 12:29 "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments [is], Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:"

“Hear, O Israel”:

By quoting the first part of the Shema (Deut. 6:4-9), which is Hebrew for “hear,” Jesus confirmed the practice of every pious Jew who recited the entire Shema (Num. 15:37-41; Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21), every morning and evening.

See (Deuteronomy 6:4).

These are the opening words of the Shema, the Jewish call to worship.

They establish the basis of love for God in the fact of God's being the Lord our God, the God who has covenanted to redeem us to Himself.

Surrounded by Egypt and others countries that believed in many gods as well; the one thing that separated God's people was that they believed in one God.

Mark 12:30 "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this [is] the first commandment."

“Love the Lord”:

Taken from (Deut. 10:12; 30:6), Jesus used God's own word from the Pentateuch to answer the question, indicating the orthodox nature of His theology (see note on Matt. 22:37).

You see, Jesus left no doubt at all about what position the Lord thy God must have in our lives.

First of all, He must be Lord.

He must be the most important thing in our lives.

The heart is mentioned first, because it is the center of our being, and we are what our heart is.

Our will is involved with the soul.

The mind controls our thoughts.

We must be stayed upon Him.

Mark 12:31 "And the second [is] like, [namely] this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."

“The second”:

Jesus took the Pharisees' question one step further by identifying the second greatest commandment because it was critical to an understanding of the complete duty of love.

This commandment, also from the books of Moses (Lev. 19:18), is of the same nature and character as the first.

Genuine love for God is followed in importance by a genuine love for the people (see note on Matthew 22:39).

“Neighbor”:

Luke 10:29-37; see Leviticus 19:18.

All of the Ten Commandments are actually caught up in these two, because if you love your neighbor as yourself, you won't murder, or lie, or cheat, etc.

You would not do those things to yourself, so you won't do them to him either, if you love him as yourself.

Verses 32-33:

“The scribe said”:

The scribe's response reveals he understood Old Testament teaching that moral concerns took precedence over ceremonial practices (1 Sam. 15:22; Isa. 1:11-15; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:6-8).

Mark 12:32 "And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:"

This scribe had received the Lord's truth unto himself.

He had understood the meaning of the law, and not just the ritual of the law.

This scribe in truth called Jesus Master, because he understood.

This scribe confessed with his mouth that this was truth.

He recognized that Jesus was true.

Mark 12:33 "And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love [his] neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

“Burnt offerings”:

Sacrifices that were completely consumed on the altar (Lev. 1:1-17; 6:8-13).

This scribe, like some in the Old Testament (see 1 Sam. 15:22), realized that heart commitment and obedience out of gratitude to God were of utmost importance.

God cannot be bribed into accepting us if we do not, from the heart devote ourselves to Him (see Psalm 40:6; Isa. 1:11-17).

Mark 12:34 "And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him [any question]."

“Not far from the kingdom”:

Jesus both complimented and challenged the scribe.

Jesus acknowledged the scribe’s insight regarding the importance of love.

Yet by stating that the scribe was “not far” from the kingdom He emphasized that he was not in the kingdom.

He understood the requirements of love, he needed only to love and obey the One who alone could grant him entrance to the kingdom.

“Discreetly,” meaning wisely, or sensibly, appears only here in the New Testament.

They saw how futile it was to try to trap Him.

Jesus saw that this scribe truly was seeking truth and He encouraged him.

This showed that people from all walks of life can receive God's truth, because this was a man of the law and he understood.

Mark 12:35 "And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David?"

Jesus’ question exposed the Jewish religious leaders’ ineptness as teachers and their ignorance of what the Old Testament taught regarding the true nature of the Messiah.

“Temple” (see note on 11:11).

“Christ”:

This is a translation of the Old Testament Hebrew word “Messiah,” which means “anointed one” and refers to the King whom God had promised.

“Son of David”:

The common messianic title that was standard scribal teaching.

The religious leaders were convinced that the Messiah would be no more than a man, thus they deemed such a title appropriate (see notes on 10:47; Matt. 22:42).

David, if David called Him Lord?"

It is not an easy question to answer, if you think of everything from the physical standpoint.

We do know that, in the flesh, Jesus was descended from David.

Mark 12:36 "For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool."

“David himself said by the Holy Ghost”:

David used his own words, yet he wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Sam. 23:2).

“The Lord said to my Lord”:

In this quote from the Hebrew text (Psalm 110:1), the first word for “Lord” is Yahweh, which is God’s covenant name.

The second word for “Lord” is a different word that the Jews used as a title for God.

Here David pictures God speaking to the Messiah, whom David calls his Lord.

The religious leaders of Jesus’ day recognized this psalm as messianic.

Jesus grounds the authority of this Old Testament passage (Psalm 110:1) in its divine inspiration.

David recognized the Messiah, who would be his descendant, as being also his Lord.

We see here, that Jesus took this opportunity of being in the temple to further instruct these scribes and Pharisees on who He truly is.

He just said, "How can Christ be a descendent of Jesus Christ (the Spirit of God), is eternal.

The Spirit of Jesus, which is eternal, was David's God.

God is a Spirit.

Jesus is God the Son who was housed in a body for His stay on this earth.

Jesus, even now, is seated victorious at God's right hand.

You see, Jesus (the Word), took on the form of flesh and dwelt among us.

Jesus was saying to these people here, that you are looking at the flesh, and you are not understanding the Spirit.

They could not understand why God would take on the form of flesh and dwell among them.

They were like many people in our day.

They wanted to think of Jesus as a man and not God.

All they could see was His flesh.

Mark 12:37 "David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he [then] his son? And the common people heard him gladly."

“David therefore himself calleth him Lord”:

Jesus interpreted (Psalm 110:1), for the Pharisees.

David would not have called one of his descendants “Lord.”

Thus, the Messiah is more than the “Son of David”, He is also the “Son of God.”

Jesus was proclaiming the Messiah’s deity, and thus His own (Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim 2:8; see note on Matt. 22:45).

“Common people”:

The multitude of people who observed this confrontation between Jesus and the religious leaders.

Mark 12:38 "And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and [love] salutations in the marketplaces,"

“Beware”:

This means “to see” or “to watch.”

It carries the idea of guarding against the evil influence of the scribes.

“Long clothing”:

A long, flowing cloak that essentially trumpeted the wearer as a devout and noted scholar.

“Salutations”:

Accolades for those holding titles of honor.

These scribes, above, were not servants of their fellow men.

They wanted to be looked up to as being special.

Their prayers were not sincere, they were only for those around them to hear and brag about how great they were.

God does not care about fancy big worded prayers.

He just wants us to pray from our hearts.

Mark 12:39 "And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts:"

“Chief seats in the synagogues”:

The bench in the synagogue nearest the chest where the sacred scrolls were housed, an area reserved for leaders and people of renown (see note on James 2:3).

Mark 12:40 "Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation."

“Devour widow’s houses”:

Jesus exposed the greedy, unscrupulous practice of the scribes.

Scribes often served as estate planners for widows, which gave them the opportunity to convince distraught widows that they would be serving God by supporting the temple or the scribes own holy work.

In either case, the scribe benefited monetarily and effectively robbed the widow of her husband’s legacy to her.

“Long prayers”:

The Pharisees attempted to flaunt their piety by praying for long periods.

Their motive was not devotion to God, but a desire to be revered by the people.

Many scribes of that day were dependent on generous individuals for their livelihood.

Some abused the hospitality they were shown and brought their hopeless donors to the brink of financial ruin.

Others flaunted their religion for the sale of impressing others with their spirituality, perhaps thereby obtaining more support.

Mark 12:41 "And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much."

“Treasury”:

This refers to the 13 trumpet-shaped receptacles on the walls in the court of the women where offering and donations to the temple were placed.

These scribes, or in fact our modern preachers today, who are more interested in the money and prestige associated with the ministry than they are in ministering to the needs of their sheep are in a whole lot of trouble.

You may read more about this in the 34th chapter of Ezekiel.

Mark 12:42 "And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing."

“Two mites”:

A small copper coin was the smallest denomination in use.

“Farthing”:

For the benefit of his Roman audience, Mark related the “small copper coin” to this smallest denomination of Roman coinage.

A “cent” or a farthing was equal to 1/64 of a denarius, and a denarius was the equivalent of a day’s wage.

The mite (Hebrew lepton), was worth something like one-eighth of a cent.

It was so small that its stamp was barely legible.

Jesus was explaining, here, that sacrificial giving is truly a gift to God. If you give of your abundance and have plenty left after you give, that is no sacrifice.

When you give in your need, not knowing where your next meal is coming from, then that is truly sacrificial giving regardless how small the offering.

Verses 43-44: God does not measure giving by conventional human standards.

Mark 12:43 "And he called [unto him] his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:"

“Verily I say unto you” (see note on 3:28).

Mark 12:44 "For all [they] did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, [even] all her living."

“All her living”:

This meant she would not be able to eat until she earned more.

The widow exemplified true sacrificial giving.

The amount of the offering you give is not as important to God as your attitude about the gift.

Give from a free heart, because you love God, and not to be seen of man and God will greatly love your offering.

Mark Chapter 12 Continued Questions

1. What did the Sadducees believe about life after death?
2. What were the Sadducees trying to prove with the story about the seven brothers who had one wife?
3. Who were the Sadducees?
4. What part of the Bible did they accept as truth?
5. What could you call their religion?
6. How many brethren was this story about?
7. In the resurrection, whose _____ shall she be, was the question they asked Jesus.
8. What two things did Jesus tell them they did not know?
9. What are the resurrected dead as in heaven?
10. What are angels?
11. In 1 Corinthians, what do we learn about the body?
12. What did Jesus mean by God of the living?
13. What had the scribe perceived about Jesus' answer?
14. What did the scribe ask Jesus?
15. What was Jesus' reply to him?
16. What one thing that separated God's people from the Egyptians and such around them?

17. What two things cover all Ten of God's Commandments?
18. What remark did this scribe say about Jesus' answer?
19. When Jesus saw the scribe answered discreetly, what did He say to him?
20. David, speaking by the Holy Ghost, had called Jesus what?
21. Why was it so hard for them to believe that Jesus was God?
22. Name three things these scribes liked that caused Jesus to say beware of them?
23. Why did these scribes pray long prayers?
24. What kind of prayer pleases God?
25. What did Jesus notice while He was sitting over by the treasury?
26. Describe a sacrificial gift.