

## Questions About Life and Love

Mark 12:18 – 34

**Proposition:** Know the Word of God, the power of God and the love of God.

**Application:** Love God, love people, love His Word and know His power.

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There is a playful saying that teachers of the Bible sometimes cite: “*If you want to draw a big crowd then speak about “sex” or “the end times.”*” And if you want to draw a really big crowd then speak about “*sex in the end times.*” That was the topic raised by a group of religious leaders known as the Sadducees who themselves did not believe in the end times or the after life. This morning, we will look at what Jesus taught about the resurrection and the commandments.

Know the Word of God, the power of God and the love of God.

### I. Question about Life (12:18 – 27)

*The Sadducees* (12:18): In the Gospel of Mark this is the only meeting between Jesus and the Sadducees. The Sadducees were wealthy Jewish priests and part of the Sanhedrin – the legal body who condemned Jesus to death. They were blessed with wealth, and influence. Sadducees and Pharisees did not see eye to eye. Pharisees were about the traditions of the elders. Sadducees did not care for the traditions, but they cared about the Torah, the five books of Moses. For the Sadducees the rest of the Bible namely the prophets, Psalms, and historical books, were second-rate to Torah. Only Torah was the Word of God. If a doctrine could not be found in Torah it was denied. The Sadducees believed the resurrection was not found in Torah so it could not be a true doctrine (1 Cor 15:12). The Sadducees also denied the existence of angels and the spirit. They were true materialists (Acts 23:8). After the temple was destroyed in 70 AD the Sadducees ceased to exist.

The Sadducees approached Jesus with a contrived tale designed to make fun of belief in the resurrection.

*A Trick Question* (12:19 – 23): The question had been used in the past stumping other Jewish scholars. The Sadducees believe this question would stump Jesus and discredit His authority. The background to this question is found in Deuteronomy (Deut 25:5, 6; Gen 38:8).

*God’s Intent for Levirate Marriage:* The intent of this precept was to *perpetuate* the dead brother’s name - so his name would not be blotted out from Israel; to *preserve* the dead man’s inheritance – so it would stay within the family; and to *provide* for the surviving widow.

*The Error of the Sadducees:* Although this question may have stumped the Jewish scholars of the day, it did not stump Jesus. Jesus rebuked them for their ignorance of the Word of God and their ignorance of the power of God.

*The Power of God (12:24):* The Sadducees believed in the miracle of the plagues, the miracle of parting the Sea, the miracle of Manna from heaven, but the miracle that God would raise people from the dead? The Sadducees believed that is a miracle God could not do, because the resurrection was not taught in the Torah. It is worth noting that Jesus did raise two people from the dead. Surely the Sadducees knew about this. Yet Jesus did not point to His miracles, nor did He highlight the prophets. To point out their error to correct their thinking Jesus used the very Scripture the Sadducees relied on, the Torah.

***Three Truths about the Resurrection (12:25 – 27):***

*The power of God to glorify our physical bodies (12:25):* Scripture teaches that death separates the body from the soul. And Scripture also teaches that at the resurrection the body and soul will be rejoined. Eternal life involves joining our immortal body with our immortal soul. Even as the Lord Jesus had a glorified body so we too will have glorified bodies. Just as Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration had glorified bodies, so will we. Just as the disciples could recognize the glorified Jesus, the glorified Elijah and the glorified Moses so we will be able to recognize one another in heaven (Phil 3:21; 1 Cor 15:35, 42 – 44, 54).

*Present reality differs from future reality:* Most religions do not believe God will make a whole new heaven and a whole new earth. They believe heaven is just a better earth. They believe the resurrection is simply a restoration of our present bodies – with the same appetites, desires, and passions only more so. Islam teaches this view. For instance, one who commits jihad and dies as a martyr will at once be ushered into heaven welcomed by 72 virgins. He will then enjoy sensual pleasures in heaven. That is not how it works. Heaven is where Jesus came from so He knows how things work in the realm of heaven. He taught that life in heaven has different features than life on earth. For instance, there will be no marriage and therefore no sex in heaven. And Jesus used the example of angels to highlight that life in heaven is unlike life on earth. We will not be like the angels in all things, but we will be like them in three things.

1. ***Angels do not die:*** Angels have immortal bodies. Our resurrected and glorified bodies will be immortal (Luke 20:36).
2. ***Angels do not marry:*** Marriage is God ordained but it is an earthly bond. God ordained

marriage for partnership, for pleasure and for pro-creation. He gave us the command to be fruitful and multiply. That command was not given to angels. And the command is only good for this present age.

3. **Angels do not procreate:** Every angel that exists in heaven was brought into being by the hand of God. Angels were created but not procreated. Because of this, angels do not engage in sexual activity. Be fruitful and multiply was not a command given to the angels. In the same way, for glorified saints. There will be no procreation in heaven therefore, no sexual activity. This does not mean sex within marriage is sinful, but it does mean that sexual relations are temporary. Although sexual intimacy with our spouse will cease, we still will have a meaningful relationship with our spouse. Our relationship with the Lord and with others will be so filled with love that in contrast all earthly relationships will seem shallow.

Glorified saints will be like the angels in that there will be no death, no marriage and no sex.

The Sadducees loved Torah, so Jesus used Torah to show that it does teach about eternal life. He draws from the example of God and Moses at the Burning Bush.

*We have a perpetual relationship with God even in death (12:26, 27):* God is not in relationship with someone who is dead. When God spoke to Moses, Abraham died 430 years ago. Notice God did not say **He was** (past tense) the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but **He is** (continuous present tense) the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God was still in a relationship with the patriarchs at the time He spoke with Moses. By saying **I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob** He affirmed these men were still alive though they had died. Death may separate the soul from the body, but for those who die in Christ death does not separate the soul from God. Our relationship with God endures even in death. He is the living God of living men and women even though we may have died. As Eliza Hewitt wrote in Her hymn “*When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the victory!*”

The Sadducees were doubly mistaken. They committed two errors. They ignored the Word of God and 2) they denied the power of God. Now let's explore the second question, this time from a Scribe.

## **II. Question about the Commandments (12:28 – 34)**

*The Scribes (12:28):* The scribes took the commands of Torah and arranged them into 613 commands. 365 negative ones, for every day of the year, and 248 positive ones for every bone in the body. The scribes believed all 613 commands were binding to Israel. Yet they made a

distinction between weightier commands and lighter ones. The scribe wanted to know which command was foremost.

*A Test Question:* The Scribes and Pharisees bantered among themselves which of the 613 precepts carried the most weight. But for all their debate they could not agree which commands were foremost. One scribe went to Jesus to see if He could settle the matter.

*The Truth about the Commandments (12:29 – 31):* Jesus answered by quoting the *Shema*. *Shema* means *hear*. It is recited by observant Jews twice a day. *Shema* is the last thing a religious Jew utters when passing from this world. The phylacteries, the black boxes orthodox Jews wear on their foreheads and arms contain a mini scroll with the *Shema*. The *Mezuzah* placed on the door posts of Jewish homes contain a mini scroll with *the Shema*. The *Shema* is as crucial to the Jewish people as the Lord's prayer is to Christians. The *shema* is found in Deuteronomy (Deut 6:4 – 9).

- *Our walk with the Lord involves hearing.* Hearing comes before obeying. Once we have heard His Word we can do His will (Ps 119:34). If we are hearers and doers of His Word we will not be deceived.
- *We love a personal God:* We are to love the One God with our one life. The **heart** is the seat of our desires. The **soul** is the seat of our self-identity. The **mind** is the seat of our intellect. And **strength** is our abilities. We love the Lord with our desires, our personality, our intellect and our abilities. As Sinclair Ferguson once said “*God is never satisfied with anything less than the devotion of our whole life for the whole duration of our lives.*” And yet our love can be divided. We may love God with our mind, love our spouse with our desire, love money with our ability. Jesus instructs us to love God with our whole being and for our whole life.
- *We love with the love of God:* We love God with the love of God (Rom 5:5). It is not about my love for God. It is not about your love for God. It is about loving God with His love. We love God because He first loved us. He is the source of our love, and He is the object of our love.
- *We love one another with God's love:* Love is not just warm fuzzies feelings it is an action of the will. When the feelings go can we still love? For instance, when I love myself, I don't get warm fuzzies. I love myself by doing good to myself. That is what love is – the act of benefitting self and others. Love is the act of doing good to another. It is a choice not a feeling. God is the source of this love. In the first case, God is the source and object of our love. In the second case, God is the source, but people are the object of our love.

- *Love is the greatest commandment:* The command to love stands in first place. The power of love exceeds the effect of all sacrifices (1 Sam 15:22). If we love God with the love of God; if we love others with the love of God, we will not need to follow the 613 commands of the Torah. What a relief that Jesus narrowed down the 613 commands to just two (Rom 13:10).

When we hear the Word of God, we will know the truth we will know how to live, and we will not be led astray. When we love God and others with the love of God, we will live an obedient life and we will know and experience the power of God. Love God, love people, love His Word and as you obey Him know His power.