

## The City and the King: Biblical Authority

Mark 12:18-27

I want you to think about how different your morning would have been this morning if you didn't have access to electrical power. I know I do multiple things in the morning that require tools that are plugged in. I take a warm shower because we have a hot water heater. I make coffee because my coffee maker can heat water up and pour that hot water over ground up coffee beans to draw the beautiful flavor and life giving caffeine out of those beans. I scramble eggs because my stove top can heat a pan up to cook the eggs. The list goes on and on.

Most of the time we don't think about how necessary electrical power is to sustain our ordinary lives. I think very often we don't think about how necessary God's power is in our daily lives. The NT is quite clear that God's power sustains us in a whole host of ways. In fact, the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:10 that one of his highest ambitions was to know, in his daily life, the power of Christ's resurrection. If you are a believer, the very same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in you today to keep you and sanctify you.

But we don't often think about that power and so we lose confidence and it's like trying to make some toast without plugging the toaster in. So, how do we plug the toaster in in our spiritual lives? We don't have access to God's power in some mystical way. The only way to truly know God's power is through knowing the Scriptures and submitting to the Scriptures.

I want you to turn to Mark 12:18-27 this morning and we're going to look at another one of these confrontations between Jesus and the religious authorities in the temple. Keep in mind that all of these take place during the last few days of Jesus' life. Here's how I would summarize the passage this morning: **To properly submit to God's authority we must know His power through the Scriptures.** In order to flesh this sentence out we are going to see **an unbiblical denial** of the Scriptures and God's power and we're going to see **an authoritative affirmation** of the Scriptures and God's power.

- **An Unbiblical Denial (vv. 18-23)**

Look at verse 18. This time we see a group of the Sadducees coming to him to engage him. Most of chapter 12 has been taken up with different groups

approaching Jesus and trying to show him to be a counterfeit and have no authority at all. Look back to verse 27 and 28. Now look ahead to verse 13 and then skip past our passage to verse 28. In this particular text the Sadducees come to him. This is the only time in the gospel of Mark the Sadducees are mentioned and Mark tells us what we need to know about them. Look at the rest of verse 18 and the beginning of verse 19.

So, they don't believe in a resurrection and they hold very strongly to the books of Moses, the Pentateuch, even denying that the rest of the OT is God's Word. They deny the resurrection because they don't find it mentioned in the books of Moses and so they plan to ask Jesus a question to trip him up and embarrass him publicly. Jesus had spoken about the resurrection several times in his ministry and they knew this and wanted to show how silly they thought that belief was.

Let's see what sort of question they pose to him. Look at verses 19-23. To us this just sounds bizarre, but this sort of arrangement, where a deceased man's brother would marry his widow was spelled out in Deuteronomy 25. The idea was that the dead brother's line needed to be continued because of his land inheritance and so this law was set in order to provide children. This is the law behind the book of Ruth.

The question of the Sadducees is meant to take this law to a crazy extreme to show, in their minds, how ridiculous the idea of a bodily resurrection is. Mark has already told us that the Sadducees deny the resurrection, so this question is disingenuous and dishonest. Jesus exposes it as such with his authoritative teaching.

- **An Authoritative Affirmation (vv. 24-27)**

Jesus doesn't mess around. Look at verse 24 where he identifies the exact nature of the problem. Now, the Sadducees prided themselves on being committed to the Scriptures and they were leaders in the nation of Israel, both religiously and politically. So, to say that they don't know the Scriptures, or the power of God would be like saying that Wolfgang Puck doesn't know anything about cooking. Jesus is hitting them where they believe they are strongest and showing that their strength is actually a weakness. He goes on to explain 2 ways in which they are

wrong, and both of these ways deny the Scriptures and the power of God. The first is found in verse 25. Look there.

The Sadducees are assuming that in the resurrection things will be exactly like they are here in this life. Jesus says, no, by the power of God things will be significantly different. Some things will be similar, but much will have changed, and God has the power to change things. Paul explains this change in 1 Corinthians 15:40-44.

The second explanation of why the Sadducees are wrong is found in verses 26 and 27 and this is the heart of the authoritative affirmation Jesus is making. Look there with me.

Jesus takes them immediately to the OT Scriptures and directly to something from the Pentateuch, which Moses wrote. Keep in mind that the Sadducees only held to the books of Moses and so Jesus will teach them from those books. Of course, they didn't have chapter and verse numbers so Jesus directs them to the passage of Moses and the burning bush and He mentions these words of God found 3 times in that passage.

Jesus argues from this passage and these words of God that the Sadducees are wrong and that Moses teaches the resurrection. What is it about this text and these words that lead Jesus to argue for the resurrection?

Turn with me to Exodus 3 for a minute. Jesus is not only drawing our attention to these words, but to this entire passage. What is happening in Exodus 3? Well, God's covenant people are out of the Promised Land and are languishing in slavery in Egypt. Moses, identified at his birth as unique in the plans of God, has fled from Egypt out of fear for his life and is living in Midian. Look at verse 1. Moses comes upon a burning bush and God reveals himself to Moses out of the midst of that bush. Listen to verses 2-6.

God is defining Himself to Moses here and he does it two more times in this passage. Look down at verses 13-17. Why does God mention these 3 names as a way of telling Moses and the elders of Israel who He is? In the book of Genesis God made a covenant with Abraham that he would bless him, make of him a great nation, and give His descendants a land flowing with milk and honey.

The book of Genesis is built around Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Even the story of Joseph comes under the life of Jacob. God defines himself this way to Moses because He is the covenant keeping, redeeming, life giving God. This is who God was with the Patriarchs and He will continue to be this type of God.

Even the mention of Abraham here should have sparked their memory of the way in which God literally brought life from Sarah's dead womb and Isaac was born. The way in which Jacob's son Joseph was thought dead but brought life to his entire family through his "death" in Egypt. In fact, even mentioning Exodus 3 clues us into the way in which God rescued his people from slavery out of Egypt and brought them into the Promised Land with the promise of life and well-being.

He is the God who brings life out of death and who saves and redeems. Jesus uses this example from the story of Moses and the burning bush, but keep in mind that story is the beginning of the Exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt and toward the Promised Land. The Exodus is the defining OT instance of God redeeming his people and doing whatever it takes to be faithful to His covenant.

What better example do we have of the power of God put on display? In fact, listen to this song, sung by Moses and the people of Israel, after God rescues them from Pharaoh and brings them safely out of Egypt. (Exodus 15:1-18)

God did not make this covenant with Abraham, and then continue to be faithful to His covenant to Isaac and Jacob, only to cast them aside when they physically died. He has not forgotten them forever, but still chooses to be identified by the covenant He made with them.

The point Jesus is making here is that the Sadducees do not know the power of God because they do not truly know the Scriptures. By toying around and denying the resurrection they are denying the very character of the God they claim to serve as He is revealed in the OT. He is the God who is faithful to His covenant and those who physically die will rise from the dead because God is the God of life. The entire argument of Jesus here is based on God's character, specifically his power.

Sometimes it's easy to downplay the power of God because frankly, we don't see entire armies thrown into the sea like the Israelites did. But, part of submitting to the authority of the Scriptures means understanding and living like that same

power is operative in our lives today. God is the God of the living and His resurrection power gives spiritual life to those who are dead. His power is what keeps us now from falling away and His power is what one day will raise us bodily to eternal life with Him.

Jesus tells the Sadducees in verse 24 that they did not KNOW the Scriptures or the power of God. They had not experienced the life and power of God through the Bible.

We must take a warning from the example of the Sadducees in Mark 12. They denied the resurrection, and essentially believed that this present life was all that was available. This is quite like the way so much of our culture approaches life today. It's called a secular point of view. We use that word often but what does it mean to live a secular life or for our culture to be becoming increasingly secular?

To be secular means to live as if you can have significance without transcendence. It means to live as if this life is all there is. It means I find my highest ambitions, passions, and goals in this material world and not in God. Are you living this week in such a way that you are preparing for 10,000 years from now? Are you finding your significance in the momentary or the transcendent?

The entire scope of the Bible teaches us that a transcendent God has created us and loves us and that His power is operative in the world today. The message of the gospel that Jesus teaches here is that there will come a day when the dead will be raised, some to eternal life and some to eternal punishment.

For those who do embrace this God and have trusted Jesus Christ for eternal life, the same power of God that parted the Red Sea and raised Jesus from the dead is operative in our lives and one of our goals as believers should be to experience that power.

In Philippians 3:10 Paul explains that knowing this power was one of his highest ambitions. Paul does not mean by this that he would be able to explain the mechanics of Christ's resurrection. What he means is that he would know the power of the resurrection by experience. There's a difference between knowing that the Carolina Reaper is the world's hottest pepper and has 2.2 million Scoville Heat unit's, which measure spiciness. But your knowledge will take on a whole

new meaning when you place that Carolina Reaper in your mouth and begin to chew.

Well, how does Paul say he plans to experience and know the power of Christ's resurrection in his own life?

Listen to Philippians 3:7-11. Paul says that in order to really know the power of God as operative in my life I must pursue the knowledge of Jesus Christ through the Scriptures. Knowing this power must become my passion.

And this is obviously where the Sadducees failed. They denied the power of God by not knowing the Scriptures and they allowed "secular" ideas regarding the resurrection to influence the way they thought and lived. And all of this led to this very clear indictment from Jesus.