

# The Superior Wisdom of Jesus

After being confronted by the Pharisees and Herodeans, Jesus is now challenged by the Sadducees. This group that represented the priestly aristocracy sought to discredit the teaching of Jesus regarding the resurrection. Jesus' authoritative answer exposes their arrogance and lack of faith.

## Mark 12:18-27

<sup>18</sup> And Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection. And they asked him a question, saying, <sup>19</sup> "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. <sup>20</sup> There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no offspring. <sup>21</sup> And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. <sup>22</sup> And the seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died. <sup>23</sup> In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife."

<sup>24</sup> Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? <sup>25</sup> For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. <sup>26</sup> 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'? <sup>27</sup> He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong."

The Sadducees believed that only the first five books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch) were God's Word, and were convinced that there was no resurrection of the dead. They differed from the Pharisees on this issue and probably thought they could deal a double blow to both the Pharisees' doctrine and Jesus' teaching through their challenge. Based on the "Levirate" law found in Deuteronomy 25, they pose an exaggerated situation regarding a woman who is widowed seven times. They believe that the dilemma they set for Jesus exposes the absurdity of the resurrection.

Jesus doesn't take the bait. Instead, He cuts to the heart of the issue, which is the arrogance of the Sadducees who see themselves as superior, not only to the revelation of God in the whole of the Old Testament, but also to the ultimate revelation of God standing in front of them.

### 1. The Sadducees' Arrogance Leads to Silly Reasoning (v.18-23)

The Sadducees thought of themselves as superior in their understanding of what constituted God's Word. Having chosen to believe only part of revealed Scripture, they actually set themselves up as an authority over Scripture. Furthermore, they believe themselves to be superior to Christ in regards to understanding Scripture. While it's easy to be critical of the arrogance of the Sadducees, we must be quick to realize that we at times do the same thing. We set ourselves up as authorities over Scripture when we pick and choose the Scripture we believe is relevant to our lives or worthy of obeying.

### 2. God's Truth Leads to Eternal Life (v.24-27)

In response to the Sadducees, Jesus does four things. First, He exposes the reason they are so off in their thinking. They actually don't know Scripture that well and do not believe in the power of God to raise the dead. Secondly, Jesus demolishes their silly reasoning about the resurrection. If people do not die in heaven, why would there be a need for propagating the race? There will be no marriage in heaven. Thirdly, Jesus proves the doctrine of the resurrection from the part of the Bible that the Sadducees say they believe. Jesus takes them to Exodus 3:6 and reminds them that in the context of showing Moses that He is a covenant-keeping God, God calls Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This was not a reference to caring for them in the past. This was a reference to His continued care for them. He is the God of the living. Fourthly, Jesus draws the only conclusion possible which is simply, "you are quite wrong." It is important to remember

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that Jesus is not just winning an argument, but teaching that God is the God of the living, who is powerful enough to fulfill His covenant promise to His people forever.

### Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do we place ourselves as authorities over Scripture? What leads us to do this?
2. In what ways do we limit the power of God? Are there areas in your life where you lack the faith to believe that God can act?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-22. How can you be sure of your own resurrection? Why does Paul say we should be pitied (v.19) if our belief is only in this present life?
4. How does the belief in the resurrection shape your actions and thoughts today?

### Going Deeper

1. What books of the Bible are you the least familiar with? What are you going to do to change this?
2. What teachings of the Bible do you struggle with the most? What should you do about this?