

Title: The Book of Mark: Part 37, Hope for Future Glory...Better than We Imagine

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Passage: Mark 12:18-27

Big idea: Jesus' certain conviction of Heaven gives us unshakable hope.



My name is Corey and I have the great joy of being one of your pastors here at West Park. We are going to be in Mark's Gospel as we continue our series in Mark 12, starting at verse 18.

The world that we live in has issues with Christian beliefs, doesn't it?

The world's systems take issue with our conservative moral values, and traditional family structures. It disagrees with our belief that not all roads lead to God, and that only Jesus is the way to right relationship with God. The world's systems take issue with us taking our marching orders from a poor, homeless vagabond preacher who gave up carpentry for preaching. The world believes Christians to be restrictive, old-fashioned, and on the 'wrong' side of history in regard to many of the "progressing" realities of our culture melting pot in North America. My favourite criticism of Christians is that we are "fun vampires". That we suck the fun out of life by making everything about the "rules" we have to follow.

These things are clearly mis-understood, and truly cannot be understood apart from the life-giving work of God the Holy Spirit bringing a dead heart to life.

However, there is a more significant area that even the most ardent opponents of Christian faith, if they are honest, hopes to be true. This is the issue of heaven. The afterlife. The answer to the question, what happens after we die.

In recent religious surveys in the United States, the data shows that 80% of Americans believe in some sort of life after death, while another 9% are unsure, leaving only 11% who deny that there is any life after death.

The belief apart from Christian tradition is that if we are a good person then God will allow us into heaven to enjoy perfection and paradise.



¹⁸ Then the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. ¹⁹ "Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother. ²⁰ Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any children. ²¹ The second one married the widow, but he also died, leaving no child. It was the same with the third. ²² In fact, none of the seven left any children. Last of all, the woman died too. ²³ At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?" 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. ²⁶ Now about the dead rising—have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'?" ²⁷ He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly

mistaken!"
Mark 12:18-27

BIG IDEA

Jesus' certain **conviction of Heaven** gives us **unshakable hope**.



Mark 12:18, “Then the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question.”

Now the Sadducees question Jesus. The Sadducees are part of the religious leadership of the Jews but are different from the Pharisees. One of the major distinctions theologically between the Sadducees and the Pharisees was their beliefs around the Torah, what was valid as God’s revelation, and their beliefs around the resurrection.

Pharisees:

- Accepted the whole of the Old Testament
- Believed in spiritual forces (Angels & Demons)
- Believed in the Sovereignty of God
- Believed in a resurrection state after death.

Sadducees:

- Accepted only the Pentateuch (5 books of Moses)
- Denied the existence of spiritual forces (Angels & Demons)
- Believed human will was responsible for moving history forward.
- Denied a resurrection state after death.

So, it is the Sadducees who come to Jesus with a question. hilariously, they bring a question about something they do not believe.

Mark 12:19-23, “‘Teacher,’ they said, ‘Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any children. The second one married the widow, but he also died, leaving no child. It was the same with the third. In fact, none of the seven left any children. Last of all, the woman died too. At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?’”

They go on about a hypothetical story that the Law gave specific instructions about, trying to put Jesus into a position that would trap him based on an “unsolvable problem” about the resurrection. If there is a resurrection from the dead (as Jesus had taught regarding his friend Lazarus), how would he explain away this complicated story?

The idea that they are posing to Jesus from a theological perspective is actually quite interesting. They are not making up some law to try and trap Jesus, it was written in the Law of Moses.

It is called the Levirate Law and is found in Deuteronomy 25, stating that a brother living in the same land as his deceased brother must marry the widow and must sire a child for his dead brother.

The story goes as such:

A man marries a woman, they have no children, he dies. It is the responsibility of the next younger brother to marry the widow and provide an heir for his brother, carrying on the name of the first husband, and not to the new husband. This scenario happens 6 times with 7 men died, leaving no children and no heir. The question left is who will she (the 7 times widowed woman) be married to in the resurrection state?

So, they take this law, extrapolate it into an impossible situation for Jesus to explain how this could be rectified in the resurrection state, just to see if he has the wisdom to deal with a complicated legal situation that could have happened but not to the extent that they are discussing.

Their trap is not actually about marriage at the resurrection, which is usually what is talked about when we read this passage, that is the question that people want answered. But this is a secondary reality to the full thrust of the passage.

What they are trying to do is prove to Jesus that they have an “un-winnable” scenario that disproves the resurrection entirely. Whether or not there is marriage at the resurrection is of secondary importance to the issue that is being raised by the Sadducees.

They try to trap Jesus in his own teachings about the resurrection and prove him to be a false teacher.

Honestly, it’s a pretty good plan. They believe they have Jesus cornered.

If Jesus tries to explain whose wife this 7 times widowed woman is, they can bring up other laws around marriage that say she cannot be, and Jesus gets stuck. If he disregards marriage at the resurrection at all, to their mind, they have him stuck in believing there is no resurrection.

When it seems, Jesus would have to play the defensive in their argument, he swaps positions and goes on the offensive.

Mark 12:24-25, “Jesus replied, ‘Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.’”

Our English Bible translations do not do a great job of explaining what Jesus is actually saying.

When Jesus asks this question of them, it is fully rhetorical. He has no doubts at all whether or not these Sadducees are in error. Jesus has created conflict.

Jesus tells the Sadducees that they are ignorant of both the Scriptures, which is true because they reject everything after the books of Moses, or the Torah. It is because the Sadducees rejected the majority of the Old Testament as authoritative, that they denied many of the passages that do speak of a resurrection state in the afterlife/heaven.



The doctrine of resurrection finds Old Testament support in places like Job 19:25-27; Psalm 16:9-11; and Daniel 12:2.

Exalting Jesus in Mark



So, the Sadducees do not know the whole Bible and because of that they disregard the power of God by denying the validity of the whole Bible.

Mark 12:26, “Now about the dead rising—have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’?”

Jesus does something masterful here. Jesus takes the Sadducees who were more Hellenistic, more Greek, back to a Scripture they could not refute. Jesus takes them to Moses in the very first part of Exodus when God expresses to Moses who He is in the account of the burning bush.

“haven’t you read?” - of course they had.

“don’t you remember?” - of course they do.

Jesus quotes Exodus 3:6, ‘I AM - the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’

There are 2 important arguments here:

1. a grammatical argument for us
2. a theological point

The words God speaks to Moses about whose God He is, is a present tense verb. “I AM” presently the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Not that God WAS the God of these deceased ancestors to Moses.

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The message of Exodus 3:6 cannot be that the living God revealed himself to Moses as the “God of the dead.” Rather, he makes himself known to Moses as “the God of Abraham, ... Isaac, and ... Jacob,” that is, the faithful, covenant-keeping, and living God who is always the God of the living (Mark 12:27)

ESV Commentary Series: Mark

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So, it is because the Sadducees reject a God of power who can raise dead bodies to life or continue in relationship with those who have died physically in the afterlife, that Jesus says they do not know the power of God.

Mark 12:27, “He is not the God of the dead but of the living. You are badly mistaken.”

God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. Jesus is citing to them that Abraham Isaac and Jacob, the heads of the covenant people of God, are still alive. Meaning that ALL of the covenant people redeemed by God and holding to his promise are still now alive in God’s presence.

“ Notice that Jesus does not hang the hope of life after death (like the Greeks did) on the idea of an immortal part of us. Rather, He rests in the commitment of God to us (“I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”). This is a very powerful argument for life after death. We have a God who cannot, at our death, scrap that which is precious to Him!

Tim Keller: Exalting Jesus in Mark

While the question that they raise is often the one people want to know the answer to; “will there be marriage in heaven or not?” This is actually not the focal point of the story whatsoever.

Because of Jesus’ own words I think we can argue that no, marriage will not exist as it does now in the New Heavens and New Earth, and while that’s sad for us to think about now, marriage, while beautiful and amazing, will not be necessary.

So, what of this eternity does Jesus argue for?

I realized as I was studying for this message a few things that sort of struck me as alarming.

1. I have a very under-developed view of heaven.
2. I think we all have mis-aligned views of heaven.
3. It’s easy to buy into the cultural beliefs about heaven.
4. We need to think and delight more about heaven.

Here is what the Bible actually says about heaven. While I cannot exhaustively go through this and explain all the beliefs about heaven from what the Bible isn’t clear about, I want you to see some amazing things that the Bible clearly does say.

Jesus Promises a Real Physical Resurrection

- 1 Corinthians 13:12
- 1 John 3:2
- Luke 24:31
- John 20:19, 26
- 2 Corinthians 5:1-5
- Romans 8:18, 21-23
- 1 Corinthians 15:26, 43
- Revelation 7:16, 21:4,27
- 1 Thessalonians 4:16
- Philippians 3:20-21
- Job 19:25-27
- Psalm 16:9-11
- Daniel 12:2.

Because Jesus is our Head and the firstborn among the resurrection and from what John teaches in his Gospel our bodies will be like Jesus’ resurrection body.

Here are the passages that speak about a physical reality after the resurrection from the dead.

1 John 3:1-2, “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

1 Thessalonians 4:16 “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.”

Philippians 3:20-21, “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”

Romans 8:21-23, “That the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

This is just a sampling of what the Bible teaches in regard to a Heavenly Reality of a physical existence.

Heaven is More Glorious than our World Hopes

- John 3:3, 15, 14:3
- Revelation 2:7, 4:2, 14:13, 15:1-3, 21:1-27
- Psalm 16:11, 50:2,
- Ephesians 1:10
- 1 Corinthians 13:10
- Isaiah 44:23

A few details about Heaven from Scripture:

- Heaven is being prepared for us by Christ.
- Heaven is only for those who have been born again.
- A glorious city
- Open and its gates will never be shut.
- Holds the water of everlasting life.
- The location of God’s throne.
- A place of perfect unity and perfect peace.
- Full of the praises and worship of God.
- Has no death, crying, pain, sickness, disease, or suffering.

Heaven is Not our Final Home

- Isaiah 65:17, 66:22
- 2 Peter 3:13
- Revelation 21:1-27, 22:1-5

We sometimes wrongly assume that we will be in a spiritual state in the same way that we view heaven now. Heaven is a real place, but a spiritual place. Jesus is forever physical and is preparing the “New Creation” for us who will be with him in his everlasting eternal presence.

Genesis 1:31, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed.”

Like Eden which was “very good”, we are told several times throughout Revelation that we should expect the world to be ordered in the new creation state as VERY good in the same way. The only difference is that it will be everlasting.

The certainty of this goes all the way back to Genesis 3, where God expels humanity from the perfection of the garden. God banishes Adam and Eve for their own protection. Since they ate from “The Tree of The Knowledge of Good and Evil” and disregarded the authority of God, God removes them, protectively from where they could get into worse trouble, eating from “The Tree of Life”, living forever in their broken and sinful state.

Genesis 3:22, “And the LORD God said, ‘The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.’”

In the New Creation, since evil, sin and rebellion will be done away with once and for all, there will be again a Tree of Life that we can then partake from and enjoy its fruit of eternal life with God.

Revelation 22:1-2, “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”

In the same way Eden was a physical real place and our designed first home, the New Earth will be a real place and designed by God to be our everlasting home.

We can trust Jesus with the future, he was certain about his beliefs in the face of opposition when it came to the resurrection and God’s power to bring it about, and so too can we be certain and trust in him.