

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Mark 12: 18-27

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. We'll continue to read Mark chapter 12, verses 18 to 27.

Jesus' last teaching in the temple began with the Jewish leaders, including the chief priests, scribes, and elders, challenging Him regarding authority. Jesus took this opportunity to reveal the responsibilities leaders should have. Next came the Pharisees and Herodians, testing Jesus with a political question about whether it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar. Although these two groups had opposing views on this issue, they joined forces to test Jesus, seeking to find flaws in His words to trap Him. Unexpectedly, Jesus easily handled this dilemma with just two simple sentences: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." These words have become a fundamental principle for modern churches in dealing with political issues, aiming to protect the church from political harm.

Today's passage is another test, concerning people's understanding of God's word, which is a matter of faith. Jesus' response is also very practical for today's church. The Bible was written nearly two thousand years ago, and compared to that time, today's technological civilization has advanced significantly. Some may think that the Bible's accounts are outdated and cannot withstand scientific verification and rational analysis today. They may attempt to rationalize some of the supernatural accounts in the Bible with today's scientific knowledge. However, this is entirely unnecessary. We must recognize that after the fall of man, our rationality has also been limited. We can only seek out some laws based on our experiences in time and then use these laws to explain the phenomena we observe. However, God is beyond time; He is self-existent and not bound by time, nor is He constrained by the experiential laws deduced within time. Regarding matters of faith, we must recognize Jesus Christ, who is the only begotten Son of God, who has always been

God. Two thousand years ago, He became flesh; in essence, it was God entering into time. He lived a human life for 33 and a half years, setting a perfect example as a human being.

The first Adam, created by God, fell due to being tempted by the serpent. In 1 Corinthians 15:45, Jesus is referred to as the last Adam. He perfectly exemplified the life that God originally intended for humans to live. To save humanity, He died on the cross to accomplish redemption. Afterward, He resurrected and ascended into eternity. Following Jesus' completion of redemption, those who believe in Him receive eternal life. Their lives on earth become a process of exchanging limited time for the growth of eternal life, preparing for the day when they too will enter eternity. Only with such a mindset towards everything that happens to us can we truly understand God's intention for us.

Verse 18: "Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying:"

Yesterday, the Pharisees and Herodians came to question Jesus about whether taxes should be paid to Caesar. Jesus used very wise words to resolve the dilemma at that time. Later, another group of people came to Jesus. The Sadducees were the liberal faction in Israel society at that time. They upheld reason, rejected tradition, and only believed in the books of the law. They did not believe in resurrection or in spiritual matters such as angels. They were very flexible in dealing with matters and quickly became the wealthiest class in society because of their rationality and moderation. They gradually gained the greatest influence in the religious sphere. At that time, the high priests were all Sadducees because they did not believe in resurrection. Therefore, they questioned Jesus about this matter.

Verse 19: "Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother."

This statement is entirely accurate; it's just that the account in the Law of Moses is in Deuteronomy 25:5-6, and in Genesis 38, it records the incident of Judah's son marrying Tamar and then marrying his brother's widow. After that, the Sadducees used a hypothetical situation to try to trap Jesus.

Verse 20-23: "Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. Then the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. So, the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife."

These Sadducees thought they were very clever. They invented a fictional story about a woman who had been married to seven brothers in succession, each of whom died without having children. Their question was: if there is a resurrection, whose wife will she be after they rise, since all seven had married her? The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection; they fabricated this story to highlight what they saw as the absurdity of the concept of resurrection. Now let's see how Jesus responded.

Verse 24: "Jesus answered and said to them, 'Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God?'"

Jesus indeed demonstrated great wisdom, addressing their question directly. He said, "You are mistaken because you do not understand the Scriptures or the power of God." In fact, this is also the main reason why we today do not understand God's will and do not know God's greatness. There are two main reasons: first, not understanding the Scriptures, and second, not knowing the power of God. God has given us the Bible, where His words are recorded, and His intentions are hidden within these scriptures. Therefore, we must spend time studying the Bible to understand God's word. Of course, we know that if you truly read it with sincerity, you will discover many things that you cannot comprehend.

So, just having the Bible is not enough; we also need to know the power of God to truly understand and comprehend the Bible in our hands. We need the presence of God's power within us to help us overcome the limitations of our wisdom and the deficiencies in our understanding. We must remember that humans are fallen, and we all have a sinful nature. Therefore, our thoughts and understanding often do not align with God's standards. If we truly want to understand God's word, we need His power.

Thus, when we come to the Bible, it's best to start with prayer, asking the Lord to open our eyes and grant us wisdom so that we can truly understand what God wants to say to us in His light. This way, the Bible becomes not just words on a page but the living word of God. So, Jesus' response first pointed out their mistake because they did not understand the Scriptures and did not know the power of God. Afterwards, Jesus straightforwardly told them what they should do.

Verse 25: "For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."

Because the Sadducees also did not believe in angels, they had no way to understand what resurrection meant. Jesus said, "When people rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage; they are like the angels in heaven." This also indicates that our marital relationships today are earthly. On earth, under God's sovereignty, we form families with husbands and wives. However, the true meaning of marriage, as mentioned in the book of Ephesians, is about Christ and the Church. When Paul tells husbands to love their wives and wives to submit to their husbands, after discussing this, he says it is a great mystery, but he is speaking about Christ and the Church. This means that the best and highest principle for marital relationships today is like the relationship between Christ and the Church. When we all sleep one day, when we rise in the resurrection, earthly marital relationships will end. If both spouses are Christians, they will both be in the New Jerusalem. Their relationship will no longer be marital but as brothers and sisters. After addressing the first question, Jesus continued.

Verse 26: "But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'?"

Jesus knew that these Sadducees believed in and were familiar with the Law of Moses. Therefore, Jesus quoted from the Pentateuch, specifically from the burning bush passage when God called Moses and revealed to him who He was. God said to Moses, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." This is recorded in Exodus 3:6.

Verse 27: "He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken."

Let's examine Jesus' interpretation, which truly displays great wisdom and insight. During the time of Moses, Abraham had passed away almost five hundred years earlier. For Moses, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were no longer alive. Yet, how did God speak to Moses? He said, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." In English, He used "I am," not "I was." The tense is present, indicating that He is still the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Though five hundred years have passed, it seems as if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are not with you anymore, but I am still their God. In other words, just because you cannot see them, do you think they are dead? They are not dead; they are still alive. Therefore, Jesus immediately added that God is not the God of the dead but of the living. This signifies our current form: today, we have a soul-bound body on earth, which is corruptible, shameful, and weak. One day, this will pass away, but we will not die. In the resurrection, God will give us a different form, a heavenly one, incorruptible, glorious, and strong. Paul referred to it as a spiritual body, which is in a completely different realm from our earthly bodies.

Today, in our earthly, soul-bound bodies, within our physical limitations, we cannot fully imagine what our bodies will be like in the resurrection. What kind of glory will we have? Of course, in the Scriptures, especially in the New Testament, God, in His wisdom, gives us a glimpse. After Jesus rose from the dead, He spent forty days with

His disciples. During those forty days, He appeared to them in ways they could not have imagined. This demonstrates our limited knowledge and understanding on earth; we cannot fully comprehend the resurrection. Jesus unequivocally tells us that God is not the God of the dead but of the living. Therefore, we are fully convinced that one day, after we've laid aside the toils of earth and shed our earthly bodies, we will sleep, waiting for the day when Jesus returns. We will all be resurrected, clothed with a spiritual body. At that time, we will live a heavenly life together with all our beloved brothers and sisters in the resurrection.

Let's pray together: Lord, thank You that through the Sadducees' questioning about the resurrection, we are truly blessed. Not only do we have Your presence and provision every day on earth, but You also give us the hope of resurrection, to enjoy the eternal glory in heaven in the future. Thank You for helping us to live each day on earth with the hope of resurrection in heaven. May we no longer focus on earthly matters, which are temporary, but help us to approach everything we do, every situation we face, from the perspective of eternal glory in heaven. Help my day to be peaceful and joyful in Your presence. I pray in Jesus Christ's holy name. Amen!