

# Meet Jesus: You can't trap him with clever arguments

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Preacher: Alex Bedford

[ 0 : 00 ] So if you'd like to open your Bibles, we're in Mark, and we're in chapter 12. Mark chapter 12, and we'll be reading from verse 18.

It's on page 848 in the Bibles. Mark chapter 12, reading from verse 18. And the Sadducees came to Jesus, who say that there is no resurrection.

And they asked him a question, saying, 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.

There were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and when he died, left no offspring. And the second took her and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. And the seven left no offspring.

Last of all, the woman also died. In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be?

[ 1 : 11 ] For the seven had her as wife. Jesus said to them, Is this not the reason you are wrong? Because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.

For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven. 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, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong. We've got three points from that passage, and I've entitled the talk, You Can't Trap Him With Clever Arguments.

The first point is the authority. That's in inverted commas. The authority of the religious. The second point is the authority of Jesus.

And our third point is the authority of Scripture. So first of all, the authority of the religious. Let's just get a feel for the reaction that these religious people have in Mark's Gospel to Jesus' ministry.

[ 2 : 35 ] Let's just have a look. Chapter 11, verses 17 and 18. Just turn back a page. Chapter 11 from verse 17.

And Jesus was teaching them and saying to them, Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations, but you have made it into a den of robbers. He doesn't mince his words, does he?

And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to what? Can you see? What were they seeking a way for? To destroy him. For they feared him. And look at the reaction of the crowd.

All the crowd were astonished at his teaching. So the religious leaders, well, they can't abide his teaching. They want him, don't they?

They want him dead. And that's been simmering away, if you remember, from chapter 3, verse 6. And now in chapter 11, verse 18, it's the chief priests and the scribes who join the fray.

[ 3 : 34 ] They join the Pharisees and the Herodians. What a coalition that is, really. Just think of that. You know, these four religious groups, suddenly united together in one cause.

They want Jesus dead, don't they? Do you see? And this is authority they don't like. Who does he think he is?

Chapter 11, verses 27 and 28. Can you see? Page 848, top left. And they came again to Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders, what a group that is, came to him.

And they said to him, by what authority? Do you see the issue? By what authority are you doing these things? Or who gave you the authority to do them? It's like Jesus.

It's like Jesus has invaded their territory. And they don't like it. I guess it's a bit like Barra's Market when the police turn up. You know, the tables are there, all the counterfeit goods, the DVDs, the CDs, what else do they have on?

[ 4 : 42 ] Watches. It's all there. And the hackles are up, aren't they? When the police are walking around, the police can spot the counterfeit goods a mile off. And everyone's anxious.

And Jesus is striding his planet, shining his light, friends, on counterfeit lives. Isn't he? And it's not comfortable.

They want him out of the way. Chapter 12, verse 13. And they sent him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians. What? To trap him. It's an ambush. To trap him in his talk.

Whoa, just think of that. It's a little bit like, isn't it? Wave after wave of bombers in wartime. All you need is the air raid sirens with this. And we arrive at our passage, don't we?

The Sadducees, these religious delegations, that seem to be coming one after the other. And the Sadducees, well, they were Jesus' arch enemy.

[ 5 : 45 ] You know, he threatened their whole identity. Jesus raises the dead. They say there's no resurrection. Can you see the confrontation?

They were Sadducee. There's a confrontation, isn't there? Before us, here. So along they come. And they've got a riddle for Jesus, haven't they?

Who's not heard of a seemingly watertight case against Christianity? You ever had someone present to you some argument they think is a watertight case?

I get it almost daily. You know, folk present their objections. And sometimes they're genuine, aren't they? And we need to give folk time and understand their objections.

But sometimes I think that the questioner knows that the objection doesn't hold water. And he knows that I know. It's a funny old thing, isn't it?

[ 6 : 48 ] The human condition. Richard Dawkins wrote his book, didn't he? Here it is. The God Delusion. I've got it on eBay. I didn't want to pay the full price on the shelves at Borders.

And these Sadducees, well, they've got an ingenious argument. If they were to put it in book form, it would be called the Resurrection Delusion. And they approach Jesus, don't they?

With it. Perhaps they've been planning it for weeks. And the question is based on the Mosaic law. The importance of procreation, you know, of having children.

That's what the argument is based upon. And you can read more about it in Deuteronomy, chapter 25. And these Sadducees, well, they've come across this word in Deuteronomy.

And they've reshaped it, haven't they? They've changed it into a tool, into a weapon against Jesus, do you see? So they've concocted this argument.

[ 7 : 50 ] They think they've got a watertight case. And this particular Sadducee comes up to Jesus and he's their spokesman, isn't he? He's been rehearsing his lines. And he's rather proud of the logic that he's strewn together.

You know, it's not just, think about this, it's not just two husbands. It's seven husbands, isn't it? Not just two, seven.

Think about that. Two would carry the logic of the argument. Seven is mocking Jesus, isn't it? And the concept of the resurrection. It's sort of rhetorical overkill, extending the argument into the ridiculous.

And you can just imagine the confidence, can't you? Of this Sadducee as he strokes up to Jesus. It's like the concluding argument of a lawyer, isn't it? In a court case, just before he sits down.

Q-E-D. And he sits down, doesn't he? Arrest my case. Checkmate, he thinks to himself. And all his pals are confidently smiling, aren't they?

[ 8 : 56 ] At each other. Perhaps they expected Jesus, you know, to sort of throw in the towel at this point. What do you think? But in the blink of an eye, Jesus confidently refutes their trick question.

Verse 24, Jesus said to them, Is this not the reason you are wrong? Because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. Well, that's a double whammy, isn't it, friends, there?

James Edwards, in his commentary, says this about Jesus' response. In magisterial authority, Jesus asserts that what the Sadducees claim to know best, they in fact know least.

And so Jesus sort of pulls the rug, doesn't he, from under the feet. Think about this. If you don't know the scriptures, and you don't know the power of God, there's not much left that you do know,

is there?

Well, don't we all know folk, friends, like that? Do you know friends like that in your life? They can present clever arguments, but they never grapple, do they, with God's word?

[10:13] Never give God a chance. So our presuppositions, think about this, you'll just need to concentrate here, just think about this, our presuppositions can dictate, can't they, our reading of the Bible.

Does that make sense? We can take a text out of context, or distort it, to make it mean what we want it to mean, do you see? And the question is, what will we believe?

Will we believe religion, or will we believe God's word? You know, do we read the Bible through something else? Or does God's word have the authority?

Think about this. Last year's General Assembly, in the Church of Scotland, was about this issue, wasn't it? The authority of scripture. It's very close to home, isn't it?

This sort of thing. So, that was our first point. The authority, of the religious. And our second point, is the authority of Jesus.

[11:17] Just one verse. Look at verse 25. Very interesting verse here. For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven.

One verse, and the one who's come from the heavenly realms, gives us inside information, doesn't he? Isn't that marvelous? About his father's house.

I couldn't find an Old Testament cross-reference to this. It's just an eyewitness account, isn't it?

From the heavenly realms. This is the Son of God, before us, friends, here.

From heaven you came, helpless babe, your glory veiled. And here he is, revealing himself to us.

And he gives us inside information, doesn't he, friends?

From his father's house. He says marriage, just for our short allotted times here. It's not our ultimate relationship. And the Apostle John says, no it's not.

[12:23] Not when you're the bride of Christ. And friends, don't you just have to be amazed at the revelation of Jesus here to us today.

Isn't it what we've all been waiting for all of our lives? inside information from outside of our world. And here it is before us.

So we've thought about the authority of the religious, we've thought about the authority of Jesus, and now we're going to look at the authority of the Bible in our final point.

Just look with me at verse 24. Jesus said to them, is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God.

What could have Jesus said? He could have said, isn't this the reason you are wrong? Because you've not seen me raising the dead. Didn't you hear about me raising Jairus' daughter?

[13:25] Haven't you heard all the accounts of that? But he doesn't, does he? He goes to scripture, to God's word, doesn't he? To God's revelation. So he redirects the Sadducees back to the word of God, doesn't he?

Look at verses 26 and 27. And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses? Don't you know your Bibles? Says Jesus. 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.

He's not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong. Moses had stood before the burning bush, hadn't he? Exodus chapter 3.

And God said to him, I am the God, present tense of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, hundreds of years previously. And it's like God, through the years, has been sweeping people into his kingdom, friends.

Isn't it? The kingdom where death is left behind. And so, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are alive with God in his kingdom together.

[14:41] Revelation chapter 7, all together in Christ. Or it's Mark chapter 9, isn't it? The transfiguration, where Jesus is there with Moses and Elijah.

See how Jesus, think about this, is the integration point, isn't he? Between this world and the next. Between the time we have here and eternity.

Margaret McCall. She died, she was a member of our church here. She died in February this year. And shortly before she died, she was in hospital and she heard about somebody else who'd passed away and somebody was relating it to Margaret.

And this particular person who passed away, he was a humanist. And they'd had a humanist funeral. And the person that was talking to Margaret said, well it was a great send off. And Margaret, listen, she said, to where? Wasn't that a pertinent word for them? And the Bible is clear, friends. If we reject Jesus, we're rejecting salvation.

[ 15 : 54 ] And so we'll meet him. He will raise us from the dead. We'll meet him as judge. But if we've rejected him in this life, he'll reject us then for all of eternity.

Just look down, friends, at the text again. Verse 27. Can you see the beginning of verse 27? I'd like that chiseled into my gravestone, I think.

He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. What a sentence that is, isn't it? That would provoke curiosity. Just imagine it chiseled into someone's gravestone.

He's not the God of the dead, but of the living. And it's the power of God, friends, isn't it? Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?

And Jairus, well, he knows Jesus has got something up his sleeve. Chapter 5. People are outside their house and they're mourning, they're wailing, because inside her bedroom, well, there's no movement.

[ 16 : 58 ] Jairus' daughter, well, the sheets of her bed are like ice. That's why people are laughing when Jesus said, she's only asleep, but they closed the door, intimate moments, with the Son of God and a wee girl.

A bit like in the garden, when he was alone with another woman. He says, Talitha Kumi, I don't know if they were the words that he used when he spoke Eve into life.

And the wee girl's eyes open and her father's are almost popping out, aren't they? Get us something to eat, says Jesus. And it's the power of God, friends, striding our planet, isn't it? Banishing our ultimate foe. So we look into the scriptures, friends, and we see resurrection, and we see Jesus, I am the resurrection and the life.

Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. and here he is, this lunchtime, offering life to a dead world.

[ 18 : 11 ] Is that good news? If you don't think that's good news, you've not understood it properly. The Sadducees, well, they thought they were clever, didn't they? But there's only four words that sum up their lives.

They don't repent. The last four words, can you see, of our passage in verse 27? Can you see that? Don't let that be a summary of your life, friend.

Shall we pray? Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for sending your son into the world. we thank you that he died at Calvary to take our rebellion, to take our sin and the punishment that that would normally attract, so that we have a clean sheet, that we're liberated.

And more than that, Father, he rose from the dead, and we give you thanks for his resurrection.

And for our eternal life, which is there by accompanied, the resurrection of your son.

[ 19 : 31 ] So we pray, Father, that you'd enable us to understand this truth, that you'd dwell with us through your spirit, and you'd enable us to live lives in this confused world, that look ahead to the eternal priorities of your kingdom, to the new creation, and so thereby, Father, we radiate your son, Jesus Christ, as we go about our day-to-day duties.

So, Father, to that end, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now, this day, and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen.