

Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. Your faithfulness continues throughout all generations. Your laws endure to this day. If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. So, Lord, I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life. For your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

During my visit this past week to the State Capitol in Tallahassee, my eyes saw something I will never be able to unsee. Five days removed from the sight; the image still bothers me immensely. Within the Capitol Building, there is a lobby on each floor that separates representatives from seniors. In those lobbies, there are plenty of lobbyists (imagine that). That image alone is enough to haunt many people. But what haunted me was a particular group of lobbyists that were not like the others. They were dressed as cats, dogs, and Florida Panthers because they identified as cats, dogs, and Florida Panthers. And they were lobbying legislatures in our state to support the causes of those who identify as cats, dogs, and Florida Panthers in our public schools. They purred, barked, and hissed until they saw a legislator. Then, they figured it was a good idea to start identifying as a human being again by using intelligible words. My immediate thought was “Oh Lord is this what rejecting the truth, believing your own version of things, and then trying persuade others to do the same looks like?”

Friends, we know there will always to be people in the world who reject the truth, believe their own version of things, and then try to persuade others to do the same. That image is as old as time itself and started all the way back in the Garden of Eden. But that’s not the image that should bother us immensely. The one that should is this: people who identify as being a part of the household of faith who reject the truth, believe their own version of things, and then try to persuade others to do the same. For that was the essence of a Sadducee. Consequently, it was that Sadducean approach to faith that became the target of Jesus’ strongest and most direct rebuke on this Tuesday before His death and resurrection.

That begs two important questions for us: (1) Why do people who identify as being a part of the household of faith reject the truth, believe their own version of things, and try to persuade others to do this same? (2) How should we who identify as followers of Jesus respond? In Mark 18:18-27, Jesus gives us reasons three why: (1) Ignorance of the Word of God; (2) Ignorance of the Power of God; (3) Ignorance of the Future. He also greets each reason with the same response: are badly mistaken. We, the body, do not get to redefine reality and persuade others to do the same. We must come to terms with His reality. Doing that requires that we identify areas in our life where we have been badly mistaken. Please turn with me to Mark 12:18-27. Let’s read together.

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 raise up offspring 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 burning 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!”

Why Do People of the Household of Faith Reject the Truth, Believe Their Own Version of Things, and Persuade Others to Do the Same?

1. Ignorance of the Word of God (19-23, 24)

- **The “I’m Not Sure About That” Antenna:** (1) Have you ever heard of the “I’m Not Sure About That” Antenna? (2) It’s the antenna your mom and dad when you told your parents a tall tale in your childhood, and you told it mightily well. (3) There is a reason your “I’m Not Sure About That” Antenna goes up in a religious setting. It goes up because you recognize the one representing the truth is ignorant of the very truth they claim to represent.
- **The Sadducees Had a Limited View of the Bible:** (1) Unlike the Pharisees, the Sadducees only believed that the first five books of the Bible (Genesis-Deuteronomy) were divinely inspired and authoritative. (2) By implication, they rejected Joshua-Malachi. (3) Here, the portion of Bible that they did believe and allude to, they did not even get right.
- **The Sadducees Ask a Ridiculous Question About an Issue that Moses Addresses in Deuteronomy 25:5-10:** (1) The issue was called Levirate Marriage. “Levirate” comes from the Hebrew word “levir,” which means “brother.” (2) Deuteronomy 25:5-10 was given as a way to protect women’s land ownership rights in ancient Israel. If her husband died and they had no son as an heir to inherit the land, then her deceased husband’s brother would marry her, and they would attempt to bear an heir in order to keep the land in the family. (3) They use this concept to ask Jesus a question that is absurd in v20-22: Suppose the first one dies without an heir, then the second one, and the third one, all the way to the seventh one and she dies to. (4) Then they bring it home: “at the resurrection, whose wife will she be?”
- **The Major Problem:** The Sadducees didn’t believe in the resurrection, nor were they really curious about the future because they didn’t even believe in an afterlife. And it all came through ignorance of the Word of God.

- **App:** Ignorance or rejection of a clear biblical principle is the first stop on the road to redefining your own reality and persuading others to do the same. But it doesn't absolve you from it. When we are on that road, Jesus' "you are badly mistaken" is most appropriate.
2. **Ignorance of the Power of God (18, 24, 26-27)**
- **The Survey** (1) I ran across a survey from the Center for Evangelical Pew Research that asked 1000 church members from a variety of mainline Christian denominations one question: "Do you believe in the miracles of the Bible as they are written and stated by the biblical authors?" Only 61% answered yes. (3) Almost half of those who identify as a believer do not believe in the miraculous nature of which our faith is built!
 - **The Sadducees Had a Limited View of the Bible. But They Had Even Less Respect for the Supernatural:** (1) Jesus reminds them as much in v 24: "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God." (2) So great was their rejection of the supernatural that Mark tells us in the introduction to this passage in v18 that the Sadducees "say there is no resurrection." They also didn't believe in angels. (3) He doesn't tell us they didn't believe in a resurrection. He tells us they "say." They tell. They pontificate. They reject the truth. They define their own version of events. And they persuade others to do the same. (3) In that sense, they were a lot like those biblical "scholars" you see on the History Channel rejecting the biblical version of events, redefining them, and persuading others to do the same.
 - **The Second Part of Jesus' Answer to Them Is the Greatest Rebuke of People Who Identify as Being Part of the Household of Faith of All Time:** (1) He quotes from the Burning Bush experience of Moses in Exodus 3 because the Sadducees would have believed this book to be inspired. (3) He says "have you not read" that God told Moses "I am the God of Abraham...Isaac...and Jacob?" (4) He didn't tell Moses I was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when they were alive." He said: "I am," implying that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still living after the ceased from breathing on this earth...Evidence of the supernatural. Evidence of the power of God. Evidence of resurrection. From a book they say accepted as inspired but didn't believe in the miraculous contents of.
 - **App:** For Jesus, belief in the Scriptures and the Power of God were connected. In fact, it's the experience of the supernatural power of God that is the cause to help you accept the miraculous nature of the Scriptures as written. If you can't testify to the power of God, you can't accept the principles of the Scriptures. And if you can't accept the Scriptures, you define your own reality. If you define your own reality, you will do as the Sadducees and persuade others. When that happens, the people of God begin to hitch their wagon to the Sadducees approach to faith.
3. **Ignorance of the Future (25)**
- **Sudoku Puzzles:** (1) I like Sudoku Puzzles and try to solve them frequently. (2) In every Sudoku book of puzzles I buy, there is a common theme: They get harder and harder to solve as you turn the pages. (3) I've waited to the last point to address an issue Jesus raises in this passage concerning marriage in his response to the Sadducees. It's one of the most difficult statements of Jesus in the NT. (4) But again, it deals with a common theme of rejecting truth, redefining it, and persuading others to do the same.
 - **The Hard Saying of Jesus Stated:** (1) Jesus explains in v25 that "when the dead rise" (a way of saying it's going to happen whether you believe in it or not, Sadducees), "they will neither marry nor be given in marriage." Instead "they will be like the angels in heaven." (2) If you are married and, after having heard and read that, are excited about what Jesus just said about marriage in heaven, please call me so that we can schedule a counseling session.
 - **First, When the Dead in Christ Rise and We Reside with Jesus and Those We Love in Heaven, It Will Be Good:** The conclusion of the Bible says: (1) "no longer will there be any curse;" (2) "they will see his face;" (3) "they will not need light because God will give it to them," and (4) And "they will reign forever and ever." (5) Those are beautiful things we know for certain about the future.
 - **Second, There Will Not Be Marriage in Heaven Like We Have on Earth. And There Is a Reason for That:** The Bible speaks often of the return of Jesus as husband coming for his bride. Jesus speaks of that in parables frequently. The end of Revelation is based on that premise. That's the marriage, the union, that God is most concerned about.
 - **Third, It's a Mystery How Our Earthly Relationships Will Play Out in Heaven:** The Bible records for us that Moses, Elijah, Abraham, Lazarus, and Samuel were all recognizable after death. When David lost his son, he looked forward to the day he could go to him. But how that will work is a mystery.
 - **Fourth, It's a Mystery to How We Will Be Like the Angels in Heaven:** That doesn't mean we will get our wings. Angels and human beings are distinct beings. They are supernatural and superior beings while we reside on earth. But they will not be superior in heaven according to Paul in 1 Cor 6. We will be like them in that we will sing praises and worship the Lord forever and ever. It's a mystery. But a great one.

Thoughts for Reflection

1. It's easy to spot the Sadducee approach to faith in others. But hard to see it in yourself. In areas that we reject truth, redefine it, and persuade others to do the same, the message from Jesus to the Sadducees is the one we need to hear: You are badly mistaken.
2. If Ignorance of the Word, Power, and Future are the roads that lead to rejection of the truth, redefinition of it, and persuading others to do the same, then the opposite is also true. Seeking answers in God's Word, personally experiencing God's Power, and being familiar with the Future are the roads that lead to living in truth, claiming it for yourself, and persuading others to do the same.