**Matthew 22:29-33**

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-22/matthew-2229-33/>

Jesus answers the Sadducees loaded question about the resurrection by pointing out their error. He then proceeds to explain how people are not given in marriage in the resurrection, before demonstrating the resurrection from the books of Moses. The crowds are amazed at His answer.

The parallel gospel accounts of this event are found in Mark 12:24-27 and Luke 20:34-38.

The Sadducees had just asked Jesus a preconstructed, hypothetical, extreme, logically-loaded, gotcha-question. Their question was whose wife would a seven-times widowed, childless woman be in the resurrection if she married seven consecutive brothers (Matthew 22:25-28). They referenced Moses’s law from Deuteronomy 25:5-6 that said a brother should marry his deceased, childless brother’s widow to construct their exaggerated scenario (Matthew 22:24). The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection (Matthew 22:23). They were trying to outsmart Jesus and make Him look foolish, while justifying one of their primary distinguishing beliefs.

But Jesus rejected their framing and cleverly disarmed their trap before answering their question.

Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken…” He directly pointed out that what the Sadducees believed about the resurrection was incorrect.

Their mistake was a result of not understanding two things

1. the Scriptures
2. nor the power of God.

Jesus could have meant several things when He told the Sadducees, you do not understand the Scriptures.

Jesus could have meant that their understanding of the Scriptures was too restrictive. It is thought that the Sadducees only accepted the first five books of the Old Testament (the books of Moses) as canon. The first century Jewish historian, Josephus, wrote that the Sadducees “admit no observance at all apart from the laws [of Moses]” (Antiquities 18:16). While the books of Moses do not expound upon the doctrine of the resurrection, it is present, but the Sadducees’ hyper-narrow understanding of what the Scriptures include have shut themselves off from the clarifying light in other portions of God’s word. That is why Paul would later teach Timothy to value the totality of the Scriptures and not neglect any part of it.

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

(2 Timothy 2:16-17)

When we pick and choose which Scriptures we will follow and which Scriptures we won’t, we distort God’s word and try to subordinate His will to ours. When we deny portions of the Scriptures we replace what is absolutely true, with what our finite perspective dimly sees (Psalm 119:30); and replace divine insight for human blindness and confusion (Psalm 119:105; Matthew 15:14). When we cut and paste the Scriptures to our tastes, we are not following God; We are worshiping ourselves and we lack faith which pleases Him (Proverbs 3:5; Hebrews 11:6). We must be careful to not embrace (only) what we like from the Bible while neglecting or rejecting its hard edges—lest we become like the Sadducees.

Had the Sadducees accepted the later books of the Scriptures, namely Joshua through Malachi, with its history, wisdom, and prophecy, perhaps they would have had an easier time understanding things like the resurrection, angels, and the spirit of man (Acts 23:8).

Second, Jesus could have meant that their interpretation of the Scriptures themselves was mistaken. In other words, they did not understand or interpret the Scriptures correctly.

And Jesus may have referred to both their overly-restrictive understanding of which books the Scriptures included and their misunderstanding of what those Scriptures said.

Jesus explained to them the reason they were mistaken was because they did not understand the power of God. They did not understand how the resurrection was possible or how it made sense. And because they lacked an explainable understanding they chose not to believe. They were relying on their own understanding instead of God’s (Proverbs 3:5). We too can be like these Sadducees when we trust in the finite understanding of what makes sense according to human logic instead of trusting in the infinite and infallible wisdom and power of God. As noted in Ecclesiastes, when we rely on human reason and experience to gain meaning in life, we can expect a result of madness, folly and wickedness (see commentary on Ecclesiastes [1:12-15](https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/eccl/eccl-1/ecclesiastes-112-15/)).

By pointing out and explaining how the Sadducees were mistaken, Jesus had unloaded the ammunition from their loaded question about whose wife the widow of seven brothers will be in the life to come. By acknowledging their mistake and their false assumptions that led to it, Jesus was now free to explain what was true.

He told them, For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. People are not married in wedlock in the life to come. Marriages come to an end when one or the other of the husband and wife die. Those who are risen are not married. When those who were married live on in the resurrection they are like angels in this respect, Jesus explained.

After Jesus disarmed and answered the Sadducees’ gotcha-question, Jesus then went on to demonstrate how the Scriptures from the books of Moses taught the resurrection of the dead.

But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’?

Jesus’s question: have you not read implies that these religious leaders had not read them, or if they had read them that they failed to understand its meaning as it regarded the resurrection of the dead. In either case, it was an accurate and embarrassing charge against the Sadducees who were not only the authorities of the Jewish temple but who also fancied themselves to be experts of the books of Moses. And Jesus chose examples from the first five books, which were the books the Sadducees believed to be authoritative.

Mark’s gospel account quotes an extra dig from Jesus when He asked the question: “have you not read in the book of Moses about the passage of the burning bush, how God spoke to him…” (Mark 12:26). The passage that Jesus cited was Moses’ famous encounter of the burning bush (Exodus 3:6). Practically every Jew over the age of three would have been familiar with this passage. By implying that they had never read a Scripture so well known as this with understanding would have been extra insulting.

Back to Matthew’s account, the phrase, spoken to you by God, indicates that it was not Moses who spoke these words, but God, Himself. This is true in a general and a particular sense. It is true in a general sense that God spoke these words, because God is the divine inspiration and authority behind **all** the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 8:3; Psalm 119:160; Proverbs 30:5; 2 Timothy 2:16)—including the five books of Moses. The gospel writer John said something to this effect in the prologue to his gospel account when he wrote: “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ [God become human]” (John 1:17). In this sense, all of God’s words recorded in the Scriptures are spoken to you—that is the entire Bible includes His message to us for our benefit (Luke 11:28).

But while there is a general sense in which the Scriptures are a record of what was spoken to you by God, Jesus also cites a more direct encounter and specific sense in which God spoke about the resurrection of the dead. He quoted Moses’s famous encounter of God at the burning bush in Exodus 3. When Moses saw the burning bush and turned aside, God literally spoke and called to Moses. When God introduced Himself to Moses, He said, “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exodus 3:6).

Jesus then explained how what God had spoken to Moses at the burning bush pertained to the resurrection of the dead: [God] is not the God of the dead but of the living.

When God told Moses I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, He was speaking in the present tense as though these men were alive. These long dead and buried patriarchs were living and alive. This tells us that even the tenses in scripture are packed with meaning. Jesus’s answer depends on noting that in this phrase from scripture God speaks in the present tense.

Remarkably, even though Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died and were buried roughly four hundred years before God spoke these words to Moses at the burning bush—they were somehow living when God spoke to Moses. How could these men still be alive after they had died and were buried, unless God had resurrected them from the dead?

Other Scriptures teach the resurrection of the dead in more detail, but Jesus likely chose this passage from Exodus (one of the five books of Moses) because the Sadducees likely only accepted the books of Moses as authoritative. Even though they were wrong to deny the rest of the Scriptures, Jesus was willing to use the portion they believed to show them that there was a resurrection of the dead. After explaining this to the Sadducees in Mark’s account, Jesus added one final kicker: “you are greatly mistaken” (Mark 12:27).

The resurrection is central to Jesus’s identity (John 11:25) and plan of redemption (1 Corinthians 15:1-5; 1 Corinthians 15:12-19; 2 Thessalonians 4:14). Jesus taught that His resurrection would be the clear sign proving He was the Messiah from God (Matthew 12:39-40; 16:21; 20:19; John 2:18-22). If the Sadducees or anyone did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, much of what Jesus taught would not make sense and it would likely carry less appeal.

When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at His teaching. Matthew does not explicitly say why they were astonished as he did when he concluded Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount: ‘and they were astonished that He taught as one having authority’ (Matthew 7:28-29).

They could have been astonished because what He said about the resurrection was new to their thinking—and insightful. They could have been astonished because Jesus had answered the Sadducee’s trick question so well. They could have been astonished because Jesus challenged the authority of the Sadducees, exposed their ignorance of the Scriptures, and humiliated them in the temple. Or they could have been astonished for some other reason. It was possible they were astonished for all these factors.

**Biblical Text**

**29 But Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 31 But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: 32 ‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB’? He is not the God of the de**