



**Sermon Notes: Steve Stanis,
"Changes as living in God!"**

04 February 2024

Readings: Psalm 16:1-11; 1 Peter 1:3-9; Matthew 22:23-33

How are you with change?

Is it something you find easy, or are you a blocker; someone who finds reasons why the change shouldn't occur?

I remember when the idea of developing the Church Point Centre was introduced.

To us sitting here (in the CPC), this building is normal.

Back then, there was push back.

"Why change what's not broken?"

"It costs too much!"

And yet God's call took us in this direction.

Today we sit in this lovely facility but more so, God has brought together this warm community we all enjoy.

Change is challenging, especially when it disrupts the status quo.

Sadducees missing ordaining God's changes!

The Sadducees did not want change. They were trying to block Jesus.

The Sadducees were a separate religious group. They were not the same as the Pharisees.

Sadducees were a small group of religious leaders: extremely wealthy, well connected, and powerful. The great high priest came from this group.

The Sadducees also differed from the Pharisees in terms of belief in the authority of Scripture. The Pharisees generally believe Moses, Psalms and the Prophets are the very authority of God's Word.

However, for the Sadducees, they believed that the first five books of Moses are authoritative, but the rest are not quite the same: so, they believe Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy - these five books of Moses are authoritative.

But the rest - like Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah - not quite.

This directs their question today about marriage and law. The Bible provides a reason why religious leaders opposed Jesus.

In (John chapter 11:48) it says;

"If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

Leave things the way they are.

Don't interrupt the status quo.

The blockers; those not wanting change, are more prevalent in the last week of the life of Jesus Christ on earth, before He goes to the cross.

And in this last week, He's going to meet a lot of opposition, a lot of interrogations.

There will be people who will come to test Him with blocking questions. This is the sceptical world Jesus lived in.

Last week we examined the Pharisees trying to trap Jesus with questions about paying taxes to Caesar. This week we consider Jesus' interaction with the Sadducees, about the resurrection in (Matthew 22:23-33). The Sadducees try to trip Jesus up with a silly question about a woman who marries seven brothers. The Sadducees are not interested in marriage itself. They are trying to use an apparent Scriptural contradiction to expose flaws in Jesus' teaching.

Trying to trap God like they did with Jesus!

They quote Old Testament teaching from (Deuteronomy 25:5):

“If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband’s brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her.”

They then postulate a “what if” in which this process occurs several times with a woman....

If this law of marriage holds, as set out in Deuteronomy, one of the first five books of the Bible... then this woman would be married to seven men in the resurrection, which contradicts Mosaic law.

In effect, the Sadducees do not believe in the resurrection and suppose that such a situation would obviously falsify the resurrection since she can't be the wife of seven men in heaven.

They think that this pushes Jesus into a corner, pitting Scripture against Scripture... Either levirate marriage is Scriptural, or resurrection is Scriptural, but not both, since (they think) a contradiction of Scripture arises.

Jesus is not distracted by the trap set. As Jesus does, He goes to the heart of the matter and speaks the truth these people need to hear.

He reaffirms the witness of Scripture, and provides clear insight into how the resurrection is the new covenant He is ushering in, to fulfill the Law of the present covenant.

Fulfil & Live Within God’s Changes in Your Life!

Let's listen to (Verses 29-31) again, verse 29 *Jesus replied,*

“You are in error, because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God”.

“Ouch” to (Verse 29).

That must have stung the Sadducees.

Then notice what Jesus does in Verse 30:

“At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage: they will be like the angels in heaven.”

He answers the silly question about marriage in heaven.

If they knew the Scriptures and God's power, they would know that marriage is earthly, but our heavenly existence is of another sort altogether.

In the “resurrection from the dead” humans will no longer be subject to death. The fullness of the people of God, both Jew and Gentile, will be reached.

We are not marked by this world but by the new creation Jesus ushers in. And remember, it is God's Kingdom. We don't decide who will be there. God does. We will be “equal to angels”, whose existence is eternal.

Importantly, the redeemed will be defined as “Children of God”, co-heirs with Christ. We will no longer see dimly but will encounter the presence of God in the face of his Son forever.

(Verses 31-32) are critical here.

“But about the resurrection of the dead - have you not read what God said to you, “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.”

Then the response in (Verse 33) declares.

“And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at His teaching.”

Jesus says to read the Bible.

Notice specifically the question, “have you not read what was said **to you** by God...?”

The Bible does answer all our questions as it changes you/us!

Jesus presupposes two things here, that help us to read our Bibles.

First, Jesus suggests we should read our Bibles as a present tense, personal address.

“What was said *to you*...” The text he quotes is Exodus 3:6, where God speaks to Moses from the burning bush.

But Jesus says the Sadducees should have understood that as an address to them centuries later! That text had their names on it. And so every text we read, properly interpreted, has our name on it, too. God is addressing us personally, even though it is not primarily about us.

It is God’s revelation of Himself that draws us back into right relationship with Him. This is personal and enduring.

Second, Jesus suggests we should read our Bibles as a conversation with the living God.

Notice again: “What was said to you *by God*...”. Just as God spoke to Moses in Exodus 3:6, Mark reiterates in 12:27 that God

“is not the God of the dead, but the living.”

God lives and He speaks.

Most fundamentally we are not being addressed by human authors when we read the Bible. We are being addressed by the living God.

At least that’s how Jesus read the Bible.

The Exodus account becomes a word from God, in print, addressed to Sadducees and then to Christians centuries later. Jesus presumes we should hear God’s voice and discover God’s mind when we read our Bibles.

Our *reading* is God *speaking*. That makes sense, if we understand that God breathed out the Scriptures as the true Author.

(2 Tim. 3:16-17), “*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*”

Grappling with the Bible; balancing God’s changes in our life by faith!

There are a couple things I have to do in order to hold onto these realities.

First, I have to keep reminding myself that God is alive and that He is talking to me. The Bible is not a history book; it is the living Word of God. God is speaking to me, personally, as I read His word.

God is not speaking generally; to no one in particular, about things in general. **I need to be present.** God is addressing me personally and specifically. My response should be prayerful and thoughtful. As I read the Bible, the Holy Spirit transforms me. God is at work shaping me to be holy.

God's will is to give us his Spirit and transform us into His likeness, to become like Him and live with Him eternally. He desires to complete what He began in the Garden.

He proved His passion for us through the incarnation of Jesus — God literally sent heaven to earth.

Second, we are exhorted to read the Word of God together.

Graham Cole, an Australian theologian and author, points out that *“No one reads Scripture in a vacuum.”*

God gives us the Scriptures so that we can *grow up together*, a truth known from the earliest days of the church:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer ... They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all people.

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”
(Acts 2:42, 46-47)

“Let the word of Christ dwell among you [plural] richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.” (Colossians 3:16)

This is how Christ builds His church.

We listen to God's Word and share it with one another; we ask questions, and we discuss it together; we turn it into prayer and praise, and we *spur one another on to love and good deeds* as our lives are conformed to God's truth.

Thirdly, if we know the Scripture and God's power, then we are obliged to live with integrity.

Consider Paul's declaration in (Romans 1:16), *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation”*.

Scripture and God's power are closely related—one cannot fully be experienced without the other. Evidently Jesus sees knowing the Scriptures as important.

But knowledge is not the only thing Jesus considers important. He also calls us to live with integrity.

Jesus is challenging the Sadducees about their hypocrisy.

It is clearly important to Jesus that people live with integrity. Belief must match behaviour; doctrine should align with deeds.

Knowing the Scriptures and living with integrity is compassionately demanded of us by our Saviour.

Integrity is described in Galatians 5:22-23.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law”.

The living God changes you, preparing you by faith for His Kingdom!

When we live this way we see God's promises of justice, peace and new life begin to take effect in today's world.

God's Kingdom, not controlled by death but by the power of God, transforms our perspective and priorities to those grounded in eternal purposes.

The kingdom of heaven is God's way of thinking, living, and being.

His very essence.

God's love and grace are intricately entwined with the gospel because God's character is salvation, just as it is mercy and righteousness.

God's Kingdom begins here on earth, as it is in heaven, as we are transformed to God's way of thinking, living and being.

So, to all of us today, as Psalm 31:21 urges us...

"Rend your heart and not your garments.

Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love."

Let's go from here intentionally sharing the Kingdom of God.

Be ongoingly transformed, prayerfully seeking connections, that God will use for His glory!

Grace and peace be upon you all,

Steve