

Caesar, Sadducees and God

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Date: 19 February 2017

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[0 : 0 0] up again then at this 13th verse in Mark chapter 12. As some of you will know, we're looking at the section in Mark's account of the gospel, verses 9 through to 12, that four chapters.

And we come then to this section that we read last week, but we didn't actually deal with and touch on, which is the challenge from the Pharisees and the Herodians about paying taxes. Now, of course, in our day and age, it has somehow, in the last few years, become not only fashionable, but almost politically correct to pay your taxes. A little while ago, a few years back, if you could dodge a tax man, or if you could get off with paying less tax, you'd be thought of as quite clever. You'd be thought of as quite, you know, you're a smart guy. Your lawyer managed to find loopholes, or you managed to evade this wee bit of tax, or that wee bit of tax, and save yourself a wee bit of money. You maybe managed to do a job for cash in hand, so you don't have to put it through the books, so you don't have to pay taxes. Nowadays, the political culture is such that tax avoidance or tax evasion is one of the sort of major anti-social crimes that somebody can be guilty of. Not paying your taxes is now tantamount to meaning. You don't want there to be schools and hospitals, you don't want extra nurses for the NHS, you don't want this, you don't want that, you're not prepared to pull your weight and do your bit now. Don't you mean, I think that's a good thing, that this is now the culture in which we live, that this is now the political outlook that we should be paying our taxes. But for us, it's comparatively simple. We live in a reasonably free country. We are governed by governments that we elect, or the majority of people elect themselves. We rule ourselves in that sense, and we elect our appointed representatives.

This was not the case for the people in Jesus' day. Not only were they an occupied power, occupied country, with a foreign invader that was ruling over them, but also there was a sense in which as the people of God, in the Lord's inheritance, the Holy Land, they reckoned that their freedom under God was a sacred thing. And therefore, if they acknowledged any ruler over them, other than God, that that was almost tantamount to idolatry, that they were somehow letting the Lord down. If they acknowledged Caesar, if they acknowledged the legitimacy of Roman rule, and if they paid their taxes, then they were definitely sort of acknowledging that. Now, most people didn't actually go as far as to deny the Roman rulers their taxes. Most people probably paid them grudgingly, or tried not to have to, but most people did it anyway. Very few were prepared to take to the hills and act as sort of freedom fighters or terrorists, depending on your point of view, who had nothing to do with the Roman rule and attacked it whenever they could, and point blank refused to pay their taxes. If your ordinary farmer or vineyard grower or whatever refused to pay his taxes, the likelihood is that after the first time had passed, they would simply send the soldiers round, they'd cart off your harvest, they might burn your house to the ground, or take your wife and kids and sell them in the slave market in order to recover the debt. They wouldn't be squeamish about doing it. So most people probably paid grudgingly. Some people completely collaborated, but it was certainly not regarded as a nice or good thing to do to pay your taxes. It was almost like spiritual treason to say this was a good thing. So when we've got the Pharisees and the Herodians here, you have two groups within Israelite society who would normally despise each other. And, you know, they probably do despise each other even now. The Herodians were courtiers. They were the ones who were at Herod Antipas' court.

They would be worldlings. They would live in luxury and pleasure and probably immorality as well. Their position, their wealth, the enjoyment of the privileges of their life depended on Herod Antipas' courtiers. They were both in the United States and Herod Antipas' courtiers, their position in general, their lives of their lives of other people, their lives of other people.

[4 : 3 8] Their taxes were paid that people acknowledged the Roman power because the Roman power was what kept Herod in power. And Herod being in power is what gave them their position as

his courtiers, as his party, as his followers.

The Pharisees, as we've said in the past, were mostly laymen as opposed to priests. They were those who devoted every aspect of their life to keeping the minutiae of every detail of the law and of the traditions of the elders and so on.

And that obviously required sometimes avoidance of the nitty-gritty of working life. So often the Pharisees tended to be composed more of richer men because they were those who could afford not to have to work or work too much or get their hands too dirty or become ceremonially defiled. But they weren't too bothered about who ruled over them as long as they were free to obey the law, to serve the Lord, to get on with their religion.

Clashes between the Jewish population and the Roman rulers happened when people did silly things, like Pilate at one stage attempted to bring Roman eagles into the temple and there was an absolute riot.

[5 : 56] Graven images in the temple. All the factions of the Jews were against him. It was very, very bloody putting it down. Now, Rome didn't say, Oh, well done, you did great.

You put down that revolt really well. What they looked at and saw was, You caused that riot. You provoked that. This is trouble. This is turmoil. We don't need hassle. Just keep the peace. Keep things straight. So as far as possible, the Romans didn't tend to try and upset the apple cards. But they did demand their taxes.

They weren't going to be overly provocative, but you paid. Now, taxes then were a major political hot potato. The Pharisees would tend to be Jewish nationalists, up to a point.

They believed in the Holy Land. They believed in the Lord's relationship with the Jews. They would be people who would serve, not like paying the taxes. They'd probably do it, but they didn't like doing it.

[6 : 54] They thought Israel should be free, that Israel should be under God, and that was it. The Herodians, the opposite camp. So it is quite possible that these two groupings have not come together to challenge Jesus as a team, but rather it may be that these two halves of opposing factions have agreed to meet and say, well, let's see what Jesus says about it.

Let's see which side he takes in this. But most likely of all, it is that both of these groupings of people had a grudge against Jesus for one reason or another.

Jesus is telling people that they don't need to worry about the traditions of the elders as long as they're obeying God's law in spirit and truth. In the Sermon on the Mount, he has cut through all the traditions, the man-made oral traditions of men.

He has said, you know, this is when you go back to what God says, and you don't just obey it in the letter, you obey it in the heart. You don't just not kill people. You don't be angry with them. You don't just not commit adultery.

You don't even lust after people. If somebody treats you badly, you forgive him. This was sort of really radical take on the law of God. It wasn't breaking it. It was going almost beyond it, but it made the Pharisees look not great.

[8 : 15] And obviously, if he is calling people to purity and to faithfulness and to obedience to God doesn't make the Herodians look great either. So they've each got a grudge against him.

And really, this was, although we're so used to Jesus winning the day and always getting the better of opponents, this was actually quite a masterly question to put in the presence of all the gathered crowd, both of whom there would be those who were sympathetic to the Romans and most of whom were not.

And so no matter how Jesus answered this, if he said, no, don't pay taxes to Rome, idolatrous Caesar shouldn't be here. God is your only king.

Then, of course, they just go and report him to the governor and Pilate will have him crucified by the end of the day. So they think they've got him that way. But if he says, yes, actually, you should pay your taxes to the Romans, then all the people who have been hanging on his every word will say, oh, for goodness sake, he's just one of those, and they'll walk away.

He will lose credibility in the eyes of the people if he comes out and out for Caesar and for paying taxes. One way or another, his power is going to be broken.

[9 : 31] Either he's going to be a heater to the people, but dead, because the Romans will kill him, for inciting people not to pay their taxes, or he's going to say, yes, pay your taxes, and the people will say, oh, we'll stuff that if that's the kind of person he is, and he will lose his credibility and his

following.

So they reckon they've got him, no matter how he answers this question. Now, as we've said, taxes may or may not be a big deal to us, but they were a huge issue in the first century Palestine.

And it wasn't just a case of, you know, you turn up, you do your tax once a year, whatever. There were at least three kinds of taxes that the Romans levied. There was a land tax, in which you paid 10% of all grain that you might grow on your land, or 20% of all wine and fruit products.

So let's say you had an orchard, you had 100 apples from your trees, then you're paying 20 of those apples to the Roman governor. If you've got a field and it produces, you know, 100 bushels of grain, then 10 of those bushels are going off to Caesar or to the Roman authorities.

That's your land tax. You've also got an income tax, so that 1% of whatever your income is, whether it's big or small, 1% of it, you pay that to the Romans.

[10:55] And then just in case you happen to be too poor to have any real income, or whether you don't really have any land, there was also a poll tax, literally a head tax, which was paid by every male from 14 to 65 years of age.

So children didn't pay it, and really old people didn't pay it. Females of 12 to 65 also paid it. So if you're a male, 14 to 65, or a female, 12 to 65, you paid the poll tax, and you paid it regardless, just for the privilege of existing.

So if you didn't pay the land tax, you still have to pay the income tax. If you didn't pay the income tax, you paid the poll tax. If you were really unhappy, you were paying all three. So people were being hit from every direction.

No wonder the tax collectors were unpopular with the people at large. They were hated, because they were always at them for money, always at them for paying this tax, paying that tax.

The poll tax, which every single person paid, was one denarius, the Greek term a penny. A penny. Now we say, well, a penny doesn't sound like much.

[12:09] Remember that, you know, a penny was, a denarius was a day's wage for a labourer, for a working man. If you think of Matthew chapter 20, where you've got the parable of the labourers in your vineyard.

You know, the kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

And then when it came to pay them, and even was come, the lord of the vineyard said to his steward, call the labourers, give them their hire, beginning from the last time to the first. When they came, it was hired at the seventh hour.

They received every man a penny. So a penny was a standard labourer's day's wage. One day's work, one penny, one denarius.

You could buy a certain amount of it. It wasn't just like a decimal penny. Now this term denarius, just as a wee point of interest, this continued, of course, in use right into our own country.

[13:07] Some of you will be old enough to remember before decimalisation came in. It was quite wee when it came in. And I do remember some of the old money or throtly bits, old pennies, two shilling pieces and so on.

And if you remember old stamps, with the queen's head, the beautiful looking queen in those days, it might say 4D, or 2D.

And it used to be D that you had for pennies because it was D for denarius. Now when decimalisation came in, the decimal penny, the new penny became, you know, 1p, 2p, 50p, but the old money, the old was D, 4d, 6d, 1d.

And that would be what was on stamps, and that would be what would be on prices in the shops because D was denarius, which was a penny. Now the penny that you then paid in this pool tax, this had to be paid in particular coinage.

Different taxes, you know, temple tax was paid in a temple shekel, but road taxes were paid in Roman coinage. So when they said, we know that you're a teacher's infant, but we know there are true cares for no man.

[14:18] You're not going to be biased one way or the other. So you don't regard the persons of men, but teach us the way of God in truth. This was flacky. It's absolutely true, of course, but it was just flacky.

Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not? Shall we give or shall we not give? And they thought they'd got him. Because as we said, this is quite a masterly question.

The horns of a dilemma from which it seemed inescapable. He has to give one answer or the other, and he's going to alienate one set of people no matter what he does. But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me?

Bring me a penny, the denarius, that I may see it. And they brought it. And he said unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's.

Now, of course, this is the same as if you look at any coin of the realms, a pan and coin or something, and you'll see the queen's head of it. And the queen's head will be there with a little legend written around the side. It'll say, Elizabeth.

[15:20] Sadly, it'll have the numeral two, which it shouldn't, of course, have in Scotland, but the numeral two will be there. Elizabeth II, DG, Reg, FD, and then the date. Now, these things all mean DG.

DG is for Dei Gratia, by the grace of God. Reg, Regina, Queen, FD, Fidi Defensor, Defender of the Faith, and then the date.

That is the superscription that is round the coin of the realm in our day. And it'll be the same superscription that is there round all British coins now under the queen's reign.

Again, if you're old enough to remember her father, George VI, her grandfather, George V, there were other little things that were added that made it more interesting in those days. They'd have little sort of, you know, Rex, Omen, Brit, which was, you know, king of Omnia, Britani, all the Britons, or sometimes perhaps George VI or George V, you know, India Imperator, Emperor of India, all these interesting things they had in olden times.

But nowadays, it's pretty simple. DG, Reg, FD, and then say 2006, 2010, whatever it may be, with Elizabeth and the numeral, with the queen's head.

[16:33] So, in a sense, because it's all produced by the royal mint, all this money belongs to Her Majesty. It's her money. In a sense, so if we're called upon to pay our taxes, to whom do we pay our taxes to HMRC?

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. It is her money, her taxes, her income, you pay it to her.

That's the sort of idea we think, oh, we don't enjoy paying taxes, but it's not a big deal to the Jews.

This is a huge deal. But Jesus says, give me a coin. So they gave him a coin. Whose is this image in super-scription? It doesn't have coin. Elizabeth's head, of course, it's got Caesar's head.

And it's got his name around it and the little details and so on. So, who is this image in super-scription? It's got Caesar's. And Jesus, as I said, said unto them, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.

Master of Christ, really clever that he's got here. He put them all to silence because it's like, you know, a teacher comes into a changing room. There's two little children fighting over their jersey or something. And they say, oh, it's mine.

[17:39] No, it says, well, who's this? And she takes the jersey and she looks and it's got somebody's name in it. And it's the name of one of the children. That's all right, give it to him because it's his. It's got his name on it. It's got name tied.

It's sold into it. It's his jersey. It's got his name in it. Give it to him. End of the argument. You give to the person what belongs to them. Jesus says, this has got Caesar's name on it. It's got Caesar's name and Caesar's image on it.

It says, give it to him. But at the same time, give to God's. What is God's? So, what does he mean there? Well, obviously, he's talking about the image of Caesar.

Now, what does God say in Genesis, chapter 1? He'll let us make man in our image. And he created man, name and female, and the image of God created the heaven.

In other words, whatever form God takes in glory. We know that there is now a man in heaven, the person Jesus Christ. But at the same time, even before Christ was incarnate in the world, God clearly, albeit a spirit, had some kind of form.

[18:46] And he made man in his image, male and female. In other words, we bear the image of God. We have the image of God stamped, imprinted upon us.

Therefore, to whom do we belong? To whom ought we to render our lives, our service, our faithfulness, all that we do?

To whom should we render all these years of our lives, all the work that we do, all the service we undertake, if not to the person who owns us? And some of us, of course, have been baptized as well.

That means the name of the Lord has been put upon us. The name of the Holy Trinity. So and so, I baptize thee in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. We have the name of God upon us.

His name, His image. We belong, not to Caesar, but to God. Now you see, these two are not mutually exclusive.

[19 : 49] because, as let's say, our queen in this country or Caesar in that particular empire in those days, these are more like concentric circles rather than things that are at odds with each other.

Because a faithful Christian nowadays will also be a loyal citizen of their nation, their country, provided it's, you know, legitimate government and it's set up and their powers that be are ordained of God.

So, whatever nation we belong to, it is incumbent upon us just as, you know, Jeremiah was instructed to tell the people of Israel in their exile, he said, you know, pray for the city to which you've been brought.

Pray for its well-being, pray for its rulers, build houses, plant your vineyards and your gardens, grow your crops, you know, give your sons to wives and wives to your sons and marry and bring up children, you know, pray for the good.

Of that land. Then you might think, well, why would we pray for the good of Babylon? You know, why would we want Babylon to prosper and its rulers to prosper when we're here in exile? Surely we want to go home.

[20 : 56] And no doubt, what Jeremiah would be getting at under God's direction is that you are there regardless. God has put you there. So you can either have a rubble time there or you can have a good and prosperous and safe and blessed time there.

God can do you good in that country so you pray for the good of that country and you pray for the rulers of that country and you seek to become loyal servants and citizens of that country because God in his inscrutable providence has put you there.

You may be exiles, you may be mourning for your homeland, but this is where you are just now. Therefore, pray for it. Serve it. Serve the nation, serve the people, pray for the rulers and be a faithful citizen of that land for as long as the Lord leaves you there.

Now, we may have a diversity of thoughts or feelings about our own country or about whether it should be ruled from Edinburgh or London or wherever else it may be.

Whatever our politics may be doesn't alter the fact that we have a biblical responsibility to pray for those set over us in authority over us, for the powers that be ordained by God almost 13 times of stone.

[22 : 12] And we have an obligation to pray for the good of our own kingdom, the good of this land, the good of this nation, to be responsible citizens. Yes, to pay our taxes, yes, to serve our communities, yes, to be faithful members of society in seeking to do good in the midst of it.

We don't seek the destruction of our communities, of our land, of our nation. We seek its good. And that is not at odds with being a Christian. That is complementary to being a Christian.

We serve our nation or our queen or our land or whatever it may be because we serve the Lord. It is God who instructs us to be faithful employees, to be diligent and responsible citizens, to be better husbands or wives or children or brothers or sisters or whatever it is we are called upon to be.

It is God who has placed us where we are. We have no control, any of us, as to where we were born. We have no control of the fact we were here in Europe, in Scythia, in the Western Isles, as opposed to in Africa or Mongolia or the Americas.

By the time we were born and growing up, this is just where we were. This is where the Lord and His providence has placed you. This is where the Lord intends you to live, to serve, to be the person He's called you to be.

[23 : 37] Therefore, render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and that is much in this world but may seem to belong to Caesar. Fine. Render it. But remember whose image and superscription you and I bear.

Whatever may be in our coinage, what is imprinted on your heart and in your life is the image of God, the superscription and name of God.

Render, therefore, to the Lord that which is His. And yes, you can worry about Caesar below that. Caesar in his place but God in his upon his throne.

And they marveled at him that these two were not seen to be contradictory but rather that God should always take primacy of place.

Even the most devout Jew could not argue with that. Even the most collaborationist Herodian could not argue with it. They marveled at him and he escaped their clutches.

[24 : 43] Then come unto him the Sadducees which say that there is no resurrection. And they asked him saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us if a man's brother die and leave his wife behind him and leave no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up seed unto his brother.

Now this is amongst other verses. This is based in Deuteronomy chapter 25 at verse 5 but it specifies in the law of Moses if brethren dwell together that on the same farm or in the same house and one of them die and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger but her husband's brother shall go in unto her and take her to him to wife and perform the duty of her husband's brother unto her and it shall be that the firstborn which he beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead that his name be not put out of the swale.

And the objective there was that the land, the inheritance should stay in the families, stay in the same tribes, stay in the same families. And the Sadducees took this to mean well if there was a resurrection you know if there was a heaven or an afterlife God wouldn't have been so concerned to make sure that his people inherited the land here and now.

This is all about saying you know it's important what we do here, what we do now, this land, this world, this earth. As we've said in the past Sadduceeism at its best sought to create a just and right world and society here on the basis that there is no afterlife, there is no second chance, this is the only one you get, God expects you to be faithful here and now where you are and there wasn't anything to come afterwards as far as they thought.

They took as their authority, it seems to be accepted most generally, but they took as their authority only the first five books of the Bible, the books of Moses. They knew about the prophets and the other writings but they didn't take them as authority.

[26 : 46] And so whenever they clashed with the Pharisees who did believe in the resurrection, they wouldn't accept any arguments that the Pharisees had from Isaiah or the prophets or anything like that, it had to be from the books of Moses.

And they were never able to come up with anything sort of convincing because the Sadducees took the line, there's nothing in the law of Moses, nothing in the first five books that says there's a resurrection.

It doesn't talk about an afterlife, it doesn't talk about spirits or whatever it may be, it's just the land, the world, even now. So the land healing now, there's marriage, there's giving in marriage, there's having children, there's all the rest of it and so on.

So what happens if there's a resurrection, if there's an afterlife, whose wife will this poor woman be? And so then Jesus answering said unto them, Do you not therefore err, because you know not the scriptures, neither the power of God.

Now this would be quite a sort of boot down, you don't even know the scriptures, let alone the power of God. For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels which are in heaven.

[27 : 59] Now this is a statement then that there is that the afterlife, the heaven, the resurrection, it is completely different in its life and style from what we have here.

For one thing, there is no marrying and giving in marriage because, in a sense, there is no need for it. One of the reasons that marriage is given upon earth is, yes, for the companionship of one or the other, but also for the propagation of succeeding generations.

You don't need succeeding generations in heaven. They are gathered in, the succeeding generations from earth of the saved are gathered into heaven. When the number of the elect is complete, the earth ceases.

God has his perfect and complete number of his elect there. You don't need more generations. You don't need more kids. You don't need marrying and giving in marriage. You don't need any childbirth up there.

All the children that are saved are already going to be there. All the young people, all the children, all the old people, whatever age we appear at in heaven, everybody is there.

[29 : 07] Everybody that's going to be there is going to be gathered there. You don't need marriage. You don't need that kind of companionship uniquely one to another because the kind of relationship you will have is even more spiritual than what the angels have because you're redeemed, which they are not.

But also it is more close, more intense, more beautiful in heaven than anything here could be. And we might find that difficult to believe.

Perhaps if you're happily married yourself, you can't imagine anything being closer and more intimate and more special than the relationship between husband and wife.

But you know, not everybody is in that situation. Not everybody's marriage will be ideally happy. Not everybody will be married. But once you're in heaven, everybody is in the same kind of relationship. We are brothers and sisters in Christ redeemed by his precious blood. Now I know that down the generations this causes some people anxiety.

[30 : 12] It causes them trouble. They think, yeah, but that means I won't see my husband or wife again. But it means they won't be my husband or wife there. They will still be those who were your husband or wife.

Just as when we get to heaven there will be those who were Jews. And those who are Gentiles. And those who are Scottish. And those who are English. And those who are of different and diverse churches.

It's not going to matter when we get there. That will be the past. And the past will be known about. It will be honoured. Yes, but it is not the substance of heaven in its glory.

How can that relationship be better than what we've got here? How can it be fuller? How can it be more spiritual and better? Well, the only way I can do this is with an illustration that's earth bad. that's what is going to be. If two young people are going out. The relationship develops. And they become engaged. And everybody's delighted. And they're together planning a wedding.

[31 : 13] And they're engaged for a few months. Or maybe a couple of years of long engagement. And then the day comes. And they get married. And on the day they get married, as I mentioned in the past, the engagement, the betrothal is really over.

And although people do cry at weddings, they're not really crying because it's sad, isn't it tragic, the engagement's over. And they were engaged. They were such a lovely couple when they were engaged. And now, oh, the engagement's over.

Now they have to be husband and wife. Now they're married. Isn't it terrible? Isn't it awful? Nobody is crying over that. Nobody is saying and breaking their heart over the fact the engagement is over. Because now the whole reason for the engagement has come to pass. The fulfillment is now there. The marriage is now taking place.

They're not just a betrothed couple anymore. They're a husband and wife. That is what the betrothal was all for. And the love now that they will share and the intensity of relationship they will have together as a unit as they go through life will be even better than however romantic or beautiful or loving their lives might have been as an engaged couple.

[32 : 22] It is deeper. It is fuller. It is more intense. There may be fruitfulness out of it with children or whatever the case may be or their main thoughts. But the point is it is more.

It is better. It is deeper. And nobody breaks their heart over the fact that the engagement has now ended. So likewise, when they get to glory, the marriage, the old earthbound marriage is over. But once you get to heaven, nobody is going to be breaking their heart about that. Because let's say a husband and wife are both believers and they see each other in heaven and it's not going to see each other, it's great, but they're not going to be in the same kind of relationship.

Because the intensity of love that they will share there is a different kind of love. It is a kind of love that there will be the same kind of intensity with all of the redeemed brothers and sisters and black and white and yellow skins and whatever they had when they were on earth.

It's not going to matter when we get to glory. It's not going to be worse. It's not going to be, oh, how sad we're no longer in that state we were in now. We are now in a state that is better.

[33 : 33] We're now in a state that is glorified. We're now in a state where we are part of the one, superb, fulfilled, complete, spouse, bride of Christ.

If there is a marriage in heaven, by the way, told that there is, it is the marriage of the lamb and his wife, his bride, the church. And we are part of that.

And everybody is part of that regardless of whatever their status may have been down here. So Jesus says, you know not the scriptures, neither the power of God.

For they that shall rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels which are in heaven. They are spiritual in heaven.

When their bodies rise at the last day, their bodies are joined to their glorified souls, but they still, they're in a different state, a different condition from what they were on earth.

[34 : 33] And it is better, it is fuller, it is deeper. We cannot say, well this aspect of heaven, that's not going to be so good. How sad, they're not going to be married in heaven like that anymore.

There will be a marriage in heaven, but it is not to your own spouse, it is to Christ. And we are part of his holy and sanctified bride, as the angels which are in heaven.

And as touching the dead, that they rise. Have you not read in the book of Moses? Now it's important that Jesus here specifies the book of Moses. Because he's talking about Exodus here, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, all the books of Moses.

And these were the ones that the Sadducees took as being authority of. It says, have you not read in the book of Moses? How in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

Now it would be a Sadducean phrase. God cannot be the God of those who have died, because he's not the God of the dead, he's the God of the living. This would be a little mantra that they would chant, as it were, saying, you know, I can't be right, because here and now we're alive, God is the God of the living, not of the dead.

[35 : 50] And in a spiritual sense, you could say that is also true. Those who are dead in trespasses and sins, they don't acknowledge God as their saviour, they don't acknowledge him as their God, they carry on as if there was no God.

In a true sense, you could say, he's not the God of the dead, but of the living. And yet Jesus says, but, when he speaks out of the bush, he says, I am the God of Abraham, now, I always would read that and think, yeah, okay, that just means he was the God when Abraham was alive, and Abraham's dead now, and then he was the God of Isaac, and then he was the God of Jacob, so all he's saying is, I'm the God who was the God that spoke to Abraham, I'm the God who was the God that spoke to Isaac, that's how I might have understood it, but Jesus takes this and says, no, he says, I am what I was, I am still the God of Abraham, Abraham is still my servant, I am still his God, in other words, Abraham must still be alive, because God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, if he's alive, he's not alive on earth, we know that his death is recorded in Genesis, he's buried, and yet he's described as being alive, before Abraham was, I am, Jesus said, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, these patriarchs must still be living somewhere, and if they're not living on earth, they must be living in heaven, he's not the God of the dead, but the God of the living, you therefore do greatly earn, of course, there might be some smart aleck somewhere who will turn around and say, ah, yes, but if he's not the God of the dead, it says in Colossians, doesn't it, for you're dead, and your life is filled with Christ and God, so how do we get past that one, if we are dead, we are dead to the things of the world, we're dead to the old self, because it goes on to say, when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory, and then it goes on to say, in Colossians 3 there, mortify therefore, put to death your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry, for which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience, in the which ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them, it's that old life that is dead, it's not you if you're in Christ, it's not your soul, it's not your spirit, it's not your heart which is dead, it is your old sin which is dead, it is your old self which is dead, it is the dead that lived in these things, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, covetousness which is idolatry, for which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience, in the which ye also walked sometime when ye lived in them.

Now all of us, before we were converted, we lived in the thoughts and things of this world, the world had glamour, the world had light and dazzlement and interest and colour and the Lord and religion seemed so dead, but that was before we knew Christ, that was before we came to know him as the lover of our souls, that was when the world was all we knew, and now we see the world for what it really is, that which is of the clay, that which is passing away, and we see Christ for what he really

is, there is no comparison, the old world, yes we say that is dead, ye are dead, and your life is fed with Christ in God.

Christ, having died once, dieth no more, having risen again, he doesn't die anymore, God is eternal, he never dies, our life is there with the eternal, which never dies, which will never die again, we are dead only to the old things of the world, we are alive unto Christ, he is not the God of the dead, but of the living, that is what Jesus says here, ye therefore do greatly bear.

[40 : 11] We err if we consider that heaven is simply a cheap imitation of what we have here, we err if we consider that heaven is just as good, maybe worse, than what we have here, it is indescribably better, it is always going to be more, it is always going to be fuller, it is always going to be sweeter, it is always going to be more rich, more blessed than anything we could ever know here.

And a happy and blessed marriage may be one of the sweetest blessings that this earth affords, but what the world to come affords will leave it standing in the shadows.

God isn't going to take us back to those old things, which have a place and a time and a need and a fulfilment here upon earth, but what is on earth to come, in the world to come, the heaven and the earth that is new that Christ will make?

There is only one wedding there, only one marriage supper there, and to that sinners are all invited. But we know the parable of Jesus told, don't we?

He made excuses. Tell all about this field I have to go and look at it, what, 12 yoke of auction? I've got this to do, I've got that to do. Lord, I'm too busy. I can't come to your marriage.

[41 : 34] I can't come to the supper. I'm not going to do it, or I'm not going to do it today. You may pass up in doing so the opportunity not only of a lifetime, but all an eternity.

there is a marriage supper there that waits for all of us if we will receive and accept the bridegroom as Christ.

But whatever may have been our condition or our marriage status here, Christ isn't interested in a sense in that. Yes, of course, he wants you, if you are married, to be the best possible wife, the best possible husband.

He wants you to be faithful to your spouse. He wants you to do all you can to fulfill and bless that marriage. Yes, but you're not saved or lost or redeemed or not on the basis of your status down here.

You're saved and redeemed depending on your response to Christ. And this is his invitation to recognize the one marriage supper that will count and to which we are all invited.

[42 : 43] Because whatever may be the image and superscription on the coins of Rome, it is the image of God that is planted upon you.

It is the superscription of God, his name that is placed upon you. And it is to him that we must render that which we all first, last, and always.

Let us pray. Okay. then we shall um. So Hebrews.