

### **Three Things to Avoid Deception: Understand the Scriptures, Experience the Power of God, and Watch.**

Mark 12:18-27 (New American Standard Bible)

<sup>18</sup> Some **Sadducees** (who say that there is no resurrection) \*came to Jesus, and began questioning Him, saying, <sup>19</sup> “Teacher, **Moses wrote for us** that if a man’s brother dies and leaves behind a wife and does not leave a child, his brother is to marry the wife and raise up children for his brother. <sup>20</sup> There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife and died leaving no children. <sup>21</sup> The second one married her and died leaving behind no children; and the third likewise; <sup>22</sup> and so the seven together left no children. Last of all the woman also died. <sup>23</sup> In the resurrection, which one’s wife will she be? For each of the seven had her as his wife.” <sup>24</sup> Jesus said to them, “Is this not the reason **you are mistaken**, that you do **not understand the Scriptures nor the power of God?** <sup>25</sup> For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. <sup>26</sup> But regarding the fact that the dead rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? <sup>27</sup> He is **not the God of the dead, but of the living**; you are greatly **mistaken.**”

#### **Introduction**

One day the disciples asked Jesus in private, “Tell us, **when** will these things happen, and **what** will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” <sup>4</sup> And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one **misleads** you” (Matthew 24:3-4). Right after that, He went on instructing them how to prepare for the end times. Now, please note here that Jesus begins His instructions with a warning: See to it that no one misleads you (Matthew 24:4). The key word is ‘to mislead.’ That means, in the end times, someone will definitely mislead us God’s elect unless we are careful (Matthew 24:25).

That’s what we are going to talk about this morning: the spiritual deceptions that would mislead us in the end times and how to avoid them.

#### **Content**

Definition of deception: *the action or a thing that causes us to believe something that is untrue.*

Definition of misleading: *leading in a wrong direction or into a mistaken action or belief.*

In today’s world, we do have plenty deceptions all around us: political, financial, emotional, and even spiritual. E.g. Phishing phone calls and emails abound. My new phone allows me to block ‘14,000’ robo-callers and telemarketers!

Even in the Church, we have false prophets and teachers who would lead God's people astray. It is nothing new, though. Throughout the Church history, plenty of stories of false Messiahs and prophets are out there. Even in Jesus' time, misinformation, disinformation, and rumors galore. One of the groups that was theologically misled big time for two hundred years was called Sadducees.

Who were the Sadducees?

*Sadducees were a Jewish priestly sect that thrived for about two centuries and ceased to exist with the destruction of the Second Temple of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.*

*They consisted of "high priests, aristocratic families, and merchants—the wealthier elements of the population." They cooperated with the Roman rulers of Palestine for which they were hated by the common folks. "They dominated the Temple and its priesthood."*

*The Sadducees and Pharisees disagreed with each other, especially "over the content and extent of God's revelation to the Jewish people." Unlike the Pharisees, the Sadducees refused to go beyond the written Torah (first five books of the Bible) and "thus denied the immortality of the soul, bodily resurrection after death, and the existence" of angels.*

*The Sadducees considered Jesus a considerable threat to their power and status that they condemned Him to death. (Britannica.com)*

Let's go back to our text this morning. One day, some Sadducees brought a tricky question to Jesus to prove their belief that there is no resurrection after death. They were using a question of levirate marriage.

What is levirate marriage? It is a marriage system in the Law of Moses where the brother of a deceased man is commanded to marry his brother's widow when he has left no son to the widow (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). Referring to that law of Moses, Sadducees argued: *if all seven brothers were married to one woman, at the resurrection, whose wife is she going to be? Since you cannot answer that question positively, there can't be resurrection.*

Folks, such ways of reasoning are faulty. A similar argument goes like this: *since you cannot see God with eyes nor prove His existence scientifically, there is no God.* E.g. A teacher says to the class—"You see no God in the sky. Therefore, there is no God." A student says to the class, "Do you see the teacher's brain? No, so, he has no brain." The truth of the matter is that no one can see God who is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18) and still God exists.

Back to today's story: Jesus twice declared to the Sadducees, "You are greatly mistaken (v. 24, 27). The reason why you are misled is because you don't understand the Scriptures or the power of God. If you say there's no resurrection, that means, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are dead too. God would not call Himself their God, because He is not the God of the dead. He is the God of the living. The reason why He calls Himself the God of

your forefathers is because Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are all alive before God's eyes. Therefore, there's resurrection."

Had the Sadducees understood the Scriptures, and had they experienced the power of the living God, they would have escaped such a great theological deception that kept them in total darkness and ignorance for two centuries.

Now, based on Jesus' explanation, I am going to briefly touch three things that would keep us from falling into deceptions in the last days: Understand the Scriptures (Mark 12:24). Experience God's power (Mark 12:24). Watch (Matthew 24:4).

**Understand the Scriptures.** God says His people perish without the knowledge of their God (Hosea 4:6). Without knowing God in the Scriptures, we perish. In the Old Testament times, people had an excuse for the lack of knowledge of God. They didn't have access to the Bible.

However, not us. We have no excuse of not knowing God in the Scriptures, do we? How much effort do you make to know and understand your Heavenly Father in the Scriptures? Do you hear in your heart the prompt and call from God's Spirit to hunger for God's Word? Do you long for God's love letters to you? No beloved child neglects love letters from their loving parents. Neither must we. Know and understand the Scriptures.

**Experience God.** Jesus chided the Sadducees for not understanding or experiencing the power of God. In fact, they didn't care about walking with God in their lives. All they cared about was to maintain their social and religious privileges among the people. They did it well for two centuries. But at what expense? The loss of salvation, right? In terms of experiencing God's miracles, signs and wonders, they were outsiders. Worse, they were not interested in those things at all. Neither were they interested in God's kingdom on earth. In fact, they didn't want God to come as their King. To such people, God wouldn't show His miracles. Even all the miracles of Jesus couldn't convince them that Jesus was the Son of God. Jealous and fearful of Jesus, they falsely accused Jesus as the ringleader of riots against Rome and their system. They put Him on the cross. The tragedy of lack of experiencing the power of God.

Folks, the core of Methodist religion is experiencing the living God. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, didn't know God personally until he experienced Him one night on Aldersgate Street in London. As he was listening to the Word of God read, he felt his heart strangely warmed. From then on, he came up with the teaching known to us as "the Quadrilaterals: *Experience, Tradition, Reason, and Scripture.*" From your Christian experience, can you honestly say that God is alive? Have you experienced the power of God and the God of power in your life? Have you experienced His peace, love, joy, and self-control? Have you experienced the power of God's Word that totally changes your life?

**Watch.** No sentinel is supposed to fall asleep during his watch. Neither are we in our spiritual journey. We cannot stay awake without prayer. Do you want to be ready for Christ's coming? Then, stay awake in prayer. Do you want not to fall into temptation? Keep watching and praying (Matthew 26:41). If we don't pray, we are spiritually asleep. If we are asleep, we will miss the Coming Groom and the marriage banquet in Heaven between the Messiah and the Church (Matthew 25).

Unless we do all of the above, chances are we may be scared with the signs of end times. Unless we understand the Scriptures and God's power like the Sadducees, we may be deceived and misled by false Christs, false signs and teachers and lose our salvation.

### **Conclusion**

As for closing, I would say this. Nowadays, we experience a lot of fears and anxieties. But, when we pray, rooted in God's Word, and experience the living God and His power, we will be strong in the Lord. May God help us.

Amen.