

October 14, 2012 by Steve Brandon



Trying to Trap Jesus

Mark 12:13-27

1. Taxes (12:13-17)

2. Theology (12:18-27)

The elections in the United States are fast approaching -- 23 days away. On November 6, 2012, Americans will go to the polls and vote for their governmental leaders. Of course, the largest race of them all is the presidential race. As a result, it is the season for presidential debates. There was a presidential debate a week and a half ago (October 3, 2012). There was a vice-presidential debate this past week (October 11, 2012). There will be a presidential debate on Tuesday (October 16, 2012). There will be another one a week after that (Monday, October 22, 2012). In these debates, questions come that the candidates are expected to answer. Topics range from taxes to foreign policy to the economy to ideology.

And in a debate, there are several things that you want to happen. First of all, you want your candidate to answer the questions well. Second, you would love to see your opponent mess up or say some things that would discredit him. Depending upon the results of the debate, the political winds of the day may be turned one way or another.

As we come to our text this morning, we see a political debate, or sorts, taking place. Only it's not a debate between two parties. I guess it's more of an inquisition.

Jesus is on the hot seat and his opponents are firing questions at Him. These questions aren't coming from a desire to know more about Jesus. Rather, these questions are coming from a desire to trap Jesus in what he says, thereby swaying the political winds of the day against Jesus that He might be destroyed. And yet, we see Jesus answering the questions with great skill, turning away the political desires of His adversaries.

Our text this morning is Mark, chapter 12. It begins in verse 13 and carries down to verse 27. Let me read the text, ...

Mark 12:13-27

Then they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Him in order to trap Him in a statement. They came and said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay or shall we not pay?" But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to look at." They brought one. And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" And they said to Him, "Caesar's." And Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were amazed at Him.

Some Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection) came to Jesus, and began questioning Him, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves behind a wife and leaves no child, his brother should marry the wife and raise up children to his brother. There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died leaving no children. The second one married her, and died leaving behind no children; and the third likewise; and so all seven left no children. Last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had married her." Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures or the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, 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, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; you are greatly mistaken."

In our text, we see two questions asked of Jesus. The first concerns taxes (verse 15). The second question concerns the resurrection (verse 23). Thus, the two points in my message this morning.

Now, this isn't the first time that Jesus has been drilled with questions. We saw one last week. Remember back in chapter 11, verse 28? The religious leaders asked Jesus, "By what authority are you doing these things?" (Mark 11:28). Nor will this be the last question that Jesus is asked. Next week we'll look at the question that one of the scribes asks Jesus in verse 28, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" (Mark 12:28).

And there is a reason why they are asking Jesus all of these questions. It is because they hated Jesus, because they wanted to arrest Jesus, because they wanted to destroy Jesus. Look at verse 12, "And they were seeking to seize Him, and yet they feared the people." The religious leaders wanted to arrest Jesus, but the people were loving the words He was speaking to them. We will see in verse 37 that, "the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him." So, to arrest Jesus would place the Pharisees in trouble with the people.

And so, they sought to sway the political winds against Jesus, by trapping Him in what He might say. This is what verse 13 says, ...

Mark 12:13

Then they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Him in order to trap Him in a statement.

That's why they were asking Him so many questions. They wanted to trap Him. They wanted Jesus to have a verbal gaff. But, Jesus, as the God-man, was up to the task, as always.

Now, the first question that comes has to do with Taxes (12:13-17) They were trying to trap Jesus regarding His view on taxes.

This is my first point.

1. Taxes (12:13-17)

It is a timely subject for us this election season. If you want to stir anybody up, all you need to do is talk about taxes.

Now, you can see how desperate they are to trap Jesus in who came to ask the question. Verse 13 tells us that "the Pharisees and Herodians" came to ask Jesus a question. These groups were enemies of each other. The Herodians were those favorable to Herod the great. These were the pro-government people. In many instances, they held governmental positions of power and authority. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were anti-government. They hated the Romans. They hated Herod.

These two groups were on the opposite end of the political spectrum. If you are looking for a comparison in our country, don't think Republican and Democrat. These guys always hover around the middle for the independent vote. Rather, think Communist and Libertarian. Communists are for big government, who will run everything. The Libertarians, on the other hand, are for small government. Just provide what we need to live in safety.

Such were the extremes of the Pharisees and Herodians. And yet, here they team up because they have a common enemy: Jesus. And they can team up because they have similar goals: they want to keep the status quo. The Pharisees had a nice little religious system going on. They had power and influence. Sure, everything wasn't totally as they would like it, but they didn't like the direction that Jesus was taking things. Likewise, the Herodians were supported by the government. They also had power and influence. They didn't want a revolution.

And so, they came to Jesus with a polarizing question. Verse 14, ...

Mark 12:14-15

They came and said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay or shall we not pay?" ...

They preface their question with flattery. "O Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth." Proverbs 29:5 gives us insight: "A man who flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his steps." This is exactly what they were doing. They were flattering for the purpose of setting a net.

Jesus could sense this trap from a mile away. When an enemy comes and begins to sweet talk you, you know that trouble is brewing. Jesus wasn't fooled. That's why Mark adds in verse 15, ...

Mark 12:15

... But [Jesus], knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why are you testing Me?"

Over the years of pastoring, I've seen similar things. I have seen people who were very angry with me for some reason or another, whether it be my sin or maybe the church is going. They suddenly begin to address me differently. Whereas they used to call me, "Steve" (which is totally fine with me), they begin to call me, "Pastor Steve." "O Pastor Steve ..." they say. And what they are telling me is this: "I'm not on your side in these matters, but I want you to know that you are a pastor. I know that and I respect that and I want you to know that I know. blah, blah, blah, blah, ..." And then comes the trap.

I've seen this take place more than once. I'm sure that I'll see it again.

In Jesus' day the trap had to do with the poll tax.

Mark 12:14-15

... Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay or shall we not pay?" ...

The poll tax was the denarius that every man owed the Roman government. And every adult male in Judea paid this tax on a yearly basis. It went right into the imperial treasury.

The Pharisees despised this tax. It's not so much that the tax was so large and excessive. It wasn't. It was only a day's wage each year. But, the thought of paying this tax was "an admission of the Roman right to rule over them." [\[1\]](#) And, as they hated the Roman rule, they hated this tax.

They had to pay for this tax using a denarius, a coin that represented a typical day's wage for a common laborer. They hated this coin. It bore

the image of the emperor, "who ascribed divinity to himself and claimed to possess supreme authority", [\[2\]](#) politically as well as spiritually. Thus, to use the coin, they thought, was tantamount to emperor worship.

This tax signified all of these things to the Jew of Jesus' day. And there was great discussion as to whether or not this tax should be paid. Although they did pay it, but not without protest.

Do you remember the circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus? Mary and Joseph travelled from Nazareth (in the north) to Bethlehem (in the south), even when she was soon to give birth. They went in submission to the government, because they had to register for the census (Luke 2:2-3). Why do you think Quirinius wanted a census? So he could impose this poll-tax (among other taxes).

Shortly after this time, there was a man named Judas of Galilee (not the same Judas who betrayed Jesus) who led an insurrection against Rome against this tax. He claimed that "Taxation is no better than downright slavery." [\[3\]](#) He was the Patrick Henry of his day. His revolt ended when he was killed (Acts 5:37).

So, this question was a question up for modern day debate. But you see -- that's why the Herodians were present. They were pro-government people. They had the authority of government on their side. They may well have had the authority to enforce the laws of the land. The laws of the land said that this tax must be paid.

So, do you see why this question was asked? For Jesus to side with the Pharisees in protesting this tax would get Him in trouble with the Herodians, who stood ready to arrest Him if He would prove Himself a lawbreaker. But, for Jesus to side with the Herodians and say that it was lawful to pay the tax would get Him in trouble with the Jewish people, who hated this tax. The trap had been set. And now, they were looking to see if they could catch Jesus in the trap.

The response of Jesus was amazing. He said, ...

Mark 12:15
... Bring Me a denarius to look at."

Jesus was going to answer the question with an object lesson. And so, He asked for someone to bring Him such a coin. Apparently, Jesus didn't have one in His pocket.

This coin wasn't a very big coin. It was about the size of our penny, but made of silver. We can only assume that there was some searching in the crowd for such a coin. To get the effect of what took place in that day, let's consider our current quarter.

And so, we come to verse 16, ...

Mark 12:16
They brought one.

As Jesus handled it and looked at it, the suspense was surely building. And then He answered their question with a question, ...

Mark 12:16
... And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" And they said to Him, "Caesar's."

Indeed, from archeological evidence, we know that Caesar's picture is on the front of the coin. Around His picture were written the words, "TIBERIUS CAESAR AUGUSTUS SON OF THE DIVINE AUGUSTUS." On the back of the coin is a picture of Caesar seated on a throne, wearing a diadem and clothed as a high priest. Around His picture were written the words, "PONTIF MAXIM", which translated means, "HIGHEST PRIEST."

To get the effect of what took place in that day, let me ask you. "Whose likeness and inscription is on the quarter?" We know it is that of George Washington.

Mark 12:17
And Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were amazed at Him

To get the effect, let me say, "Render to Washington the things that are Washington's, and to God the things that are God's."

Mark 12:17
... And they were amazed at Him.

We have heard this so many times, that we so easily lose the effect of how masterful this response was! Consider what Jesus did in this response. He gave sufficient detail to answer the question. His answer was vague enough to avoid their traps. He averted the wrath of the Herodians, because He didn't denounce the tax. He averted the wrath of the Pharisees, because He put the tax in perspective. He affirmed

the payment of taxes. He took Caesar out of the divine realm by distinguishing Caesar's rule and God's rule. He affirmed the role of government in our lives. He affirmed the proper honor that we ought to give to our governmental leaders. He pressed a far greater application into our lives than merely paying a tax to the government -- giving God what is due to Him.

I believe that Jesus' short statement here was foundational for Paul and Peter's teaching on the role of government in our lives. Paul said it this way, "Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor" (Romans 13:7). Peter said it this way, ...

1 Peter 2:13-17

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

And from this text come forth two huge applications: First, render to Washington the things that are Washington's. Second, Render to God the things that are God's. How are you doing?

1. Are you giving to Washington the things that are Washington's?

The obvious application here is this: "Do you pay your taxes?" Or, do you cheat on your taxes? Do you take cash for jobs, and fail to report it? How about the Use Tax? Do you pay it?

The Use Tax is the part about preparing our taxes that I hate the most. Do you even know what the Use Tax is? In 1955, the General Assembly passed the Use Tax Act in Illinois.

Use Tax is a sales tax that you, as the purchaser, owe on items that you buy for use in Illinois. If the seller does not collect at least 6.25 percent sales tax, you must pay the difference to the Illinois Department of Revenue. The most common purchases on which the seller does not collect Illinois Use Tax are those made via the internet, from a mail order catalog, or made when traveling outside Illinois. You must keep your receipts when you make these types of purchases. [\[4\]](#)

The idea of this tax is to level the playing field for businesses in Illinois. So, instead of crossing the border and paying less than 6.25 in taxes for products used here in Illinois, by law we are to pay the difference in sales tax to minimize a competitive advantage.

I hate tracking all of our tax-free internet purchases. It takes a lot of time, only to pay 6.25 sales tax on them. But, it's the law. And it's a tax we are required to pay.

So many people in Illinois don't pay this tax that in 2010, "The General Assembly passed a law making it easier for individuals to pay their Use Tax by putting a line on Form IL-1040. It also created an Illinois Use Tax Amnesty which means individuals can pay Use Tax owed for prior years without penalty and interest on Form ST-44." [\[5\]](#)

Taxes. Do you pay your taxes?

Also, do you give to Washington in other ways? We have the election coming up. Are you going to vote? Where you can, do you help the government to accomplish its job? Or, are you constant pain in their neck to the government? Do you "give honor" to those in authority (1 Peter. 2:17).

Thankfully in our country, we have means to protest and air our complaints. But, in doing this, we must do so with honor. You may not agree with our president. But, do you honor him? Peter told those in Rome, under the rule of Nero, who was torching Christians, to "honor the emperor." Do you submit to government officials? (1 Peter 2:13).

How do you treat policemen? Do you obey the laws? Or, are you always stretching the law? These are some of the ways that we can give to Washington the things that are Washington's.

How about the second point of application?

2. Are you giving to God the things that are God's?

What is God's? Everything. Psalm 24:1 says, "The earth is the LORD's and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it." God calls us to give everything to Him.

Now, this is especially true of believers. By faith in Christ, we have been forgiven of our sin. We are like prisoners-set-free. And God is the one who has set us free! We owe our lives to Him. "We have been bought with a price: therefore [God calls us to] glorify God in our bodies" (1 Cor. 6:20). Where once we were slaves of sin, we are now slaves to righteousness (Romans 6:18). We have been freed from sin and are now enslaved to God (Romans 6:22).

2 Corinthians 5:15 says it as well as anything else: "He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who dies and rose again on their behalf." That's why Jesus calls us to lose our lives. We read previously in Mark 8, ...

Mark 8:34-37

If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

We are reading the book "Radical" in our small groups right now. It is a great call to us as Christians to contemplate what we are giving to God, keeping in mind that He owns it all.

God is our creator. He has redeemed us so that we might live entirely for Him. We must render to God the things that are God's.

Well, let's move on to my second point. We have seen the religious leaders try to trap Jesus regarding Taxes (12:13-17). The idea there was that they wanted Jesus to indict Himself -- either stir the government to have reason to destroy Him or stir the people to revolt against Him.

That didn't work So, in verses 18-27, we see the religious leaders attempting to trap Jesus regarding, ...
2. Theology (12:18-27)

The idea here is that they wanted to make Jesus look silly and stupid and ignorant, thereby giving the people reason to abandon Jesus and His teaching. Let's pick it up in verse 18, ...

Mark 12:18

Some Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection) came to Jesus, and began questioning Him, saying,

Here we are introduced to a group called the Sadducees. These were the theological liberals of the day. They were rationalists. They were deists. They were the skeptics. Mark points out for us one of the distinctive characteristics of the Sadducees. They, "say that there is no resurrection" (verse 18). Do you know an easy way to remember this? If you didn't believe in the resurrection, how would you feel? You would be "Sad, ... you see."

They didn't believe in the resurrection. They didn't believe in the eternity of the soul. They didn't believe in a final judgment.

The resurrection wasn't the only thing that they didn't believe. They denied the supernatural; they denied angels (Acts 23:8), Satan and demons. They denied the oral tradition, which the Pharisees were so fond of. And most important of all, they denied most of the Old Testament, with the exception of Moses. So, their Bible consisted only of the first five books of the Bible. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

There are plenty of Sadducees around today who don't accept the supernatural, who will only believe what they can see and touch, who will go soft on the Bible and hard on their own intellectual capacities. Such people love unanswerable questions. How did Cain get his wife? How many angels can dance on the head of a pin? If God is really all powerful, can He create a stone so heavy that He cannot lift it?

Here's their question that they asked of Jesus.

Mark 12:19

"Teacher, ..."

Like the Herodians, they come with flattery. They made out like they were genuine about asking a question. Instead, they give a riddle that couldn't be answered. It was probably a question that was often asked in their circles. Nobody was able to answer it. So, let's see how Jesus does.

Mark 12:19-23

"Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves behind a wife and leaves no child, his brother should marry the wife and raise up children to his brother. There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died leaving no children. The second one married her, and died leaving behind no children; and the third likewise; and so all seven left no children. Last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had married her."

Behind their question is the teaching of Deuteronomy 25:5-10, which commands a man to marry his brother's widow, so that the name of the dead brother might not be blotted out from Israel. For him who refuses such a duty, it won't go well with him. "Then his brother's wife shall come to him in the sight of the elders and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face; and she shall declare, 'Thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house. In Israel his name shall be called, 'The house of him whose sandal is removed.'" (Deut. 25:9-10).

So, in the case set before Jesus, there was a woman who was married to a man with seven brothers. When the first one died without children, the second one took her for a wife. When the second one died without children, the third one took her for a wife. When the third one died without children, the fourth one took her for a wife. And so on right down to the seventh brother.

You have to question the wisdom of these brothers. I can understand the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd. But not the 4th, 5th, 6th, or 7th! Sure, this woman had a love for her husbands. She was loving her husbands to death. She was quite a cook. She made a killer casserole!

It is right to joke about these things, because the story is absurd and surely fictional. And yet, their fiction was established to bring things to an absurd ending.

Mark 12:23

In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had married her."

I'm sure at this point that the Sadducees thought that they had Jesus right where they wanted Him. "Is there polyandry in heaven?" You could equally add the question of divorce and remarriage? How can you possibly sort all of these things out in eternity?

The response that Jesus gives is so masterful. He puts the Sadducees in their place. Let's look at what He said, ...

Mark 12:24

Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures or the power of God?"

Before He even begins to answer the question, he puts His finger on the exact issue of the Sadducees. They have a problem of understanding. These rationalists aren't thinking correctly about the issue. First of all, they don't understand the Scriptures.

Surely, the resurrection question had been discussed many times between the Pharisees and Sadducees. Surely, the Pharisees pointed out some of the Old Testament Scriptures that speak of the resurrection. Maybe Psalm 16:10, "You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay." Or Job 19:26, "Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God." Or Isaiah 26:19, "Your dead will live; their corpses will rise." Or Daniel 12:2, "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt." But, none of these quotes come from the Pentateuch. And the Sadducees denied every one of these Scriptures. Jesus said, "You do not understand the Scriptures."

Second, they don't understand the power of God. Fundamentally, the problem of the Sadducees was one of belief. The Sadducees were materialists. They believed in what they saw. They discarded the supernatural. They believed that the resurrection made some insurmountable problems for God to solve. But, God can solve many problems that we can't solve. Listen to the response of Jesus.

Mark 12:25

For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

Once you realize this, the whole question of marriage in heaven brought up by the Sadducees appears to be trivial. Question: "Which one's wife will she be?" Answer: Bad question. There isn't marriage in heaven!

That's not to say that there won't be male and female in heaven. That's not to say that there won't be relationships in heaven. That's not to say that you won't know your spouse in heaven. It's that we won't be paired up with each other in marriage. Genesis 2:18 says that here on earth, it is not good for man to be alone. But in heaven, we have no need for the marriage relationship. The relationship that we will enjoy with the Lord Jesus will far exceed any need for another companion in heaven. And without death in heaven, there will be no need to reproduce. And so, there is no need for marriage in heaven.

As a side note, you have to love the subtlety of Jesus. Remember, Jesus was talking with the Sadducees, those who deny the supernatural. And so, Jesus brings up the reality of angels, who the Sadducees even deny existed.

And then, Jesus proves the resurrection from the Pentateuch -- from the very books that the Sadducees accept. Listen carefully to His argument:

Mark 12:26-27

But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, 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, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; you are greatly mistaken."

Jesus takes them back to Exodus, chapter 3, when the Lord appeared to Moses. Moses was in Midian, having fled Egypt. While in the wilderness, "the LORD appeared to Moses in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush" (Exodus 3:2). As Moses examined the bush, he noticed that it "was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed" (Exodus 3:2). As Moses drew near to investigate this "marvelous sight," (Exodus 3:3), "God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, 'Moses, Moses!'" (Exodus 3:4). Moses replied, "Here I am" (Exodus 3:4).

Then God said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5) He also said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6). Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

And Jesus was saying, "Did you notice the tense of the verb that God uses?" He uses the present tense. He doesn't use the past tense. He doesn't say, "I was the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." No, God said, "I am!" "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"

In other words, God is still the God of Abraham. God is still the God of Isaac. God is still the God of Jacob. They are still alive and well, even though they died hundreds of years before Moses was born! Even the books of Moses teach the resurrection! "You, Sadducees, are greatly mistaken" (Mark 12:27).

You who pride yourself of your intellectual abilities. You who only believe what you can reason through in your mind. You are wrong! Thus, Jesus silences the Sadducees.

Two points of application come flying out at us. First, do you understand the Scriptures? Second, do you understand the power of God?

1. Do you understand the Scriptures?

Do you understand that every word in this book is inspired by God, Himself? Do you understand that even the tenses of words are important? As it comes to the resurrection, do you understand what the Scriptures teach?

The Scriptures teach that we will rise from the dead. And after the resurrection comes judgment. Hebrews 9:27 says it well, "It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment."

At the great white throne judgment, you see the entire world standing before the throne in judgment.

Revelation 20:11-15

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

We see two camps of people: those whose names are in the book of life. And those whose names are not in the book of life. Elsewhere, Jesus calls these the sheep and the goats. Both will be at the final judgment, resurrected to life. There will be His sheep, whom he will place on His right. There will be the goats, whom He will place on His left. Those on His right will enter into the joy of Jesus and eternal life in heaven with Him. Those on His left will enter into eternal punishment, apart from Jesus, where they will face an eternity of weeping and gnashing of teeth.

And the dividing line comes down to this: have you trusted in Jesus? Or have you trusted in yourself? Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies" (John 11:25).

To escape the terrors of hell, we must believe in Jesus. How wonderful it is that God merely calls us to believe. Jesus said, "Everyone ... who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33). So, confess Him today!

The second point of application was this:

2. Do you understand the power of God?

Just as sure as God has given life to all of us, He will surely raise all of us from the dead. Why do we think it to be remarkable that God raises people from the dead? God gives us life in the first place. Don't you think that He can do it again?

As Jeremiah 32:16 says, "Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You!" (Jer. 32:16). And "nothing" includes the resurrection from the dead.

To create from nothing is incredible. When you think about it for any time, you know that this world must have been created by a divine being, who is outside of our creation. It must have been created by One who is so unlike us! To create the vastness of the universe is unbelievable. It testifies to the power of God. In the grand scheme of things, we are puny.

We live but 70-80 years (Psalm 90:10). There are billions of us who live upon this earth. And our earth is but one small planet in our solar system. Our solar system is one of 200 billion solar systems in our galaxy. Our galaxy is one of trillions of galaxies in the visible universe. And God created it all in six days by speaking it into existence.

The power needed to resurrect a body from the grave is nothing compared to this. Perhaps we need to hear afresh the question that Paul put forth to these Sadducees in Acts 26:8, "Why is it considered incredible among you people if God does raise the dead?"

The fact of the resurrection ought not to be a difficulty with you. Exactly what is going to happen might be fuzzy in your mind. But, that God is able to resurrect a body from the dead ought not to be a question for you. Especially if you understand the power of God.

Oh, church family, let us believe the Scriptures. Let us believe the power of God!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 14, 2012 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Expositor's Bible Commentary, volume 8, p. 734

[2] Hendriksen, p. 482

[3] Ibid, p. 482

[4] <http://tax.illinois.gov/Individuals/Illinois-Use-Tax.htm>

[5] Ibid.