



# CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: Mark

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## **The Danger of Bad Theology**

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Good morning, everyone. My name is Koby. I'm one of the worship pastors here. I just always love the opportunity to spend the first part of the morning worshipping with all of you. That is good for my soul. I hope and pray that you've been ministered to in that as well. I'm going to ask you to get your Bibles open now to Mark, chapter 12. As you do, by show of hands, I'd love to know how many of you in the room right now consider yourselves to be a theologian. Put your hand up in the air if you would give yourself that label.

Most of the time, when we hear the term *theologian*, we think of an old dead guy in a weird robe and a weird hat. Maybe you have a more modern context of that and you see Pastor Mark Barrett, who used to be on staff here. He had kind of the thick brown sweater, Tommy Bahama shirt, jeans, and sandals. It was its own kind of unique look.

Let me ask you this. Raise your hand if you believe there either is or is not a God. One of those two options. Put your hands up. Okay, now raise your hand if you believe this supposed God, if he exists, interacts with his people in some way, shape, or form. See, I would contend that a theologian is anyone who has made any sort of opinion about whether or not there is a God and whether or not he interacts with his people. If we use that as our definition, that would include everyone from the atheist to the scholar. It would certainly include everyone in this room.

Matt Chandler said, "...everybody is a theologian; some of us have just unwittingly become heretics." Think about that. See, the question isn't really, "Are you a theologian?" The question is, "Are you a good theologian?" We're going to see in our passage today that theology matters. What we think about God and how he relates to us today matters.

Today's message is titled, *The Danger of Bad Theology*. In our passage today, we are going to see Jesus confronted by a group of men who claimed to know the one true God, but because of their bad theology, because they were bad theologians, a relationship that was supposed to bring them life and freedom had turned into a religion that was sucking the life and hope out of their lives.

We are going to see Jesus respond to them, addressing their bad theology. My hope is that as we look at this we will see what we need to avoid the same dangers and live in the hope and the joy in which God has intended for us to live. With that, turn to Mark, chapter 12. I'm going to ask you all to get to your feet as we read the Word of God together, beginning in verse 18.

**"And Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection. And they asked him a question, saying, 'Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.**

**There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no offspring. And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. And the seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died. In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife.'**

**Jesus said to them, 'Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor 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. And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the 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 God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong.'**" Let's pray.

Father, we are thankful for this time. We are thankful for your Word. Lord, I pray that you'd prepare all of our hearts for what you would do in us today. God, I pray that we would not be a people that just hears your word and is content to go on living the way we've always lived, but that today would be a turning point, that we would begin to live more like your Son, Jesus, as a result of what we see and hear in your Word. We give you this time. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Before we jump into our main points together, I want to just kind of briefly summarize what we just read, because we're dealing with a lot of narrative here. This is the only place in the book of Mark where we find the Sadducees. These men led the first-century Jewish faith. They were supposedly experts in the Scriptures. They believed the Scriptures were the inerrant Word of God.

However, they held it was only really the first five books of the Bible, the books of Moses, that were truly inspired. They rejected the idea of the resurrection or any sort of life after death. They rejected the notion of eternal punishment or reward for actions committed on earth. They rejected the existence of spiritual beings like angels or demons. They rejected the possibility of miracles, and they certainly rejected Jesus as any kind of Messiah. These guys, while leading the early Jewish faith, had bad theology.

They come to Jesus with the ridiculously unrealistic scenario in which a woman is lawfully married seven different times before she passes away. Believing there was really no good answer

for their question, they were hoping to prove, when Jesus answered, that the resurrection was really a ridiculous idea. It couldn't possibly be a real thing.

Yet Jesus sees right through them. He knows they aren't being sincere, and yet he chooses to engage them and answer their questions anyway, and he actually answers two questions. He answers one that they asked explicitly and one that was implied.

The first question is the one of marriage. *In the resurrection, is marriage a thing?* Jesus says no. If you read ahead and that was the question you had coming in today, I'm sorry this is kind of anticlimactic. That's it. In the resurrection, we are like the angels. Marriage is no longer a thing. Some of you are sitting here next to your spouse and that devastates you. Some of you are here sitting next to your spouse and it also devastates you, because there's no other response to that reality. That is the answer to the first question.

The second question, which was implied, is one of the reality of the resurrection. *Is the resurrection real?* Jesus points them to Exodus, chapter 3, a passage of Scripture in which they should have been experts. He points to God in the burning bush, speaking to Abraham.

God says, "**I am the God of Abraham...**" and in a blazing testament to the inerrancy in every word of Scripture, Jesus hangs his entire argument for the resurrection on one word: *am*. "**I am the God of Abraham...**" not, "I *was* the God of Abraham." "**I am the God of Abraham...**" Our God is the God, not of the dead, but of the living.

I get all of that out there off the top here, because while these questions were important to the Sadducees, I think they are secondary to what we should be seeing in this passage today. See, we are going to focus all of our attention and the rest of the time we have together on verse 24. In this short verse, Jesus points to two areas that have led the Sadducees into their bad theology. I believe if we address those two areas positively today we will also be guarded from the dangers of bad theology and we'll walk in the life and freedom to which we have been called.

1. *Know the Scriptures*. Jesus answered, "**Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?**" See, this was a bigger deal than it may have looked like it was on the surface. Because they did not know the Scriptures, because they had bad theology, they were living a life of ultimate hopelessness.

This is what I mean. They were living with all of the rules, regulations, and directives of the Mosaic law, but they were living with none of the hope and freedom to which that law was meant to point them toward. Remember, in their minds, there was nothing coming after death. There was no soul. There was no afterlife. There was no resurrection. There was no judgment. There was no condemnation for living faithlessly and there was no reward for living faithfully.

Paul addressed this very issue in 1 Corinthians 15:17-20. He says, "**And if Christ has not been raised...**" Essentially, if there is no resurrection, "**...your faith is futile and you are still in your sins... If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.**" Yet this is how the Sadducees were living. They had everything they needed right there

in front of them, and they refused to see it, so Jesus condemns the Sadducees for not knowing the Scriptures.

My question for all of us today is...*Do we know the Scriptures?* See, I would step out on a limb and say most of what is plaguing the modern American church stems from our failure as a church to know the Scriptures. We are seeing the teeth ripped out of the gospel as the ecumenical movement seeks to include everyone who considers themselves remotely spiritual into the family we call Christianity.

We are seeing secular carnality rip through the church as things like divorce, adultery, sexual immorality, and abuse in relationships are now commonplace, where at one time they were a heartbreaking rarity. We are seeing people who call themselves Christians and who are considered Christians, and they deny the existence of hell, the heinousness of sin, and the justice of God.

So, my question for us as we all sit here on March 11, 2018, is...*Are we, as a congregation and as a people, part of the problem, or are we part of the solution?* Do we meditate on the Word of God? Do we know the Scriptures, do we earnestly seek God, does our soul thirst for him, does our flesh faint for him, as David describes for us in Psalm 63, or are we content to just acknowledge the importance of and our dependence on Scripture with our mouths while living as if it has no bearing on our lives?

Could we just have an honest moment, just pastor to friend? One of the things that breaks my heart the most as a pastor is when I sit down with one of you... Maybe it's over coffee. Maybe it's in the counseling office. You begin to tell me and relate to me how, because of your sin, your life is starting to unravel. Maybe it's not starting to unravel. Maybe it is completely blown apart at the seams.

Now, that part doesn't break my heart, because I believe God is good and in control and he loves all of us too much to leave us in our sin, but he will draw us out of that in whatever way he needs to do it to make us the people he has called us to be. Even in the tragedy and heartbreak, God is still at work.

That part doesn't break my heart. What breaks my heart is at the beginning of our time together, when someone says something like, "Koby, I've always appreciated your teaching, and I've always loved it when you've spoken." I don't say that to sound arrogant, and I know it's meant to be a compliment. I know not everybody appreciates my preaching.

Yet in that moment, the first thought that goes through my mind is, "Then why didn't you listen?" Anyone who occupies this pulpit, whether it's Steve, Jeff, Mark, Dustin, Dave, or Ben... Whoever it is, we are not up here to entertain you. We are up here to open up the Word of God, the Scriptures, which are meant to bring you life and hope.

So many of the issues we deal with in our day-to-day life, the hardships and the sorrows, come directly from our refusal to apply the truths of Scriptures to our lives. We read the Bible like a

comic book. We read it and we leave it and we go on living the way we've always lived, but that's not what it's there for. Scripture is there to lead us and guide us. It is God's living and active Word that is meant to point us toward a hope and a freedom that can only be found in Christ.

I'm begging you today, as you sit here in this room. Do not be that person. Do not be the one who hears the Word of God and assumes this message is for someone else. God has you in this room at this time for this purpose, that you and I would start to take our charge to know the Scriptures more seriously. I promise we will look more fully at what this practically looks like at the end of our time, but for now, I am going to breathe and chill out a little bit because that's something I've been told I should do more often, and we need to move on.

2. *Know the power of God.* Verse 24: "**Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?**" See, the Sadducees, along with not knowing the Scriptures, were living in a gross underestimation of the power of God. In their ignorance of Scripture, they totally missed the miraculous power of God put on full display in the Old Testament.

If they had understood and recognized the miracles for what they were, they would have understood and believed in God's power to raise the dead. The resurrection would not have been an issue for them. They did not know the power of God, which cost them greatly. Again, I would ask you, do you know the power of God?

Let me clarify the question. I'm not asking if you know *about* the power of God. Do you know the power of God at a core level? In case you've forgotten, this is God. He's the God who breathed everything we see into existence: the sun, moon, stars, earth, heaven, sky, mountains, every human who has ever walked the planet... First, there was nothing, and then God spoke, and there was everything.

This is God, who orchestrated our universe in such a way that the earth stays the perfect distance from the sun and the moon so we don't burn to death, freeze to death, or drown in cataclysmic flooding. This is God, who took a pile of dust, breathed life into that dust, and from that dust came the father of humanity, Adam.

This is God. Colossians 1:17 says he holds and sustains all things together at all times, so that means for you and I sitting in this room, the only thing standing between us and spontaneously combusting into nothingness is not the command of God; it's him ceasing to hold us together. That's incredible.

This is God, the one who heals the sick. Some of you need to hear that today, that our God heals the sick. Our God raises the dead to life. Our God commands and controls the very laws of nature. These things still happen. The question is, do we believe the God of the Scriptures is still the same God today?

Just last year, a woman came up to me after a night of worship and she told me about her sister-in-law, Marilyn, who was in the hospital. She had just gotten out of the hospital. She had an aortic dissection. That means the large blood vessel branching off her heart tore, so she immediately got taken into surgery. She spent 10 hours in surgery, only to find out three days later that her heart, lungs, kidneys, and liver all failed on her. Immediately, they had to put her on machinery just to keep her alive.

Just to give you perspective, when someone goes on that machine, they are given a 5 percent chance of survival, and that's not even counting the aortic dissection that had just happened. Yet Marilyn had people praying for her. Not only that, Marilyn believed the Lord was not done with her and that he could still heal her.

Now, flash-forward to the end of the story. I wish I could give you so many more of the details. The Lord did miraculously heal her. All of it was summed up best by the doctor who was just discharging her, who said something like, "Someday, I'm going to put stained glass in this room because you should not be alive. You are a walking miracle." This is the power of our God.

So, my question for you is...*Do you know the power of God?* We can't miss this. The Sadducees missed it. Again, we're going to look more fully at what this practically looks like at the end of our time, but now, as we look to avoid the dangers of bad theology, we are to know Scriptures, we are to know the power of God, and...

3. *We will live in the hope in which God has designed us to live.* See, the Sadducees missed this completely. They were hopeless. This life was all they had to live for. The god they served was not the God of the Bible; it was a god of their own invention. They had the Scriptures, which were meant to offer them life and hope, but instead, they were settling for a life of hopelessness and misery.

I pray we would never be content to do the same. So, I would ask all of us to consider this as we consider Jesus' rebuke to the Sadducees: are we missing it? Could Jesus say the same thing to us today as he said to them?

Could he look you in the eyes and say, "Is this not the reason you are wrong? Is this not the reason why your marriage is a train wreck? Is this not the reason why you're plagued by depression, sadness, anxiety, and fear? Is this not the reason why you're addicted to painkillers, alcohol, drugs, cutting, or whatever it may end up being? Is this not the reason you are wrong: because you do not know the Scriptures, nor do you know the power of God?"

I think there are three questions we can ask that will help us determine whether or not we are missing it. Here's the first of those questions.

First...*Do I pray?* I think one of the biggest habits we can examine that will expose our understanding of the Scriptures and the power of God will be in the way we pray. Is prayer a vibrant and necessary part of our lives or is it just that thing we do while we're driving occasionally, throwing up the equivalent of a Hail Mary whenever we feel like it's needed?

See, Scripture commands that we pray. Jesus modeled for us that we should pray, and when we pray, we are admitting there is something we need that we are unable to attain, and we need God Almighty to step in and move. Prayer admits desperation. It admits dependence. If we truly believed prayer made a difference, it would be our first line of defense, not our last-ditch effort.

If we know the Scriptures and if we know the power of God, we will understand that God desires our prayers. We're not bothering him. More than that, he's a good God who gives good gifts because he's a good Father. So, our expectations as we come to God in prayer should be that he wants to move and that he's going to move. Our expectations in prayer will directly reflect our understanding of Scripture and the power of God.

I was having this conversation with Pastor Steve probably a year ago now. We were just talking about prayer, specifically praying for the sick. I was just laughing, saying something like, "On the day I am on my deathbed... Maybe that will be a week from now. Maybe that'll be 80 years from now. I don't know what it's going to be, but when I'm on my deathbed, I don't want some fatalistic, conservative pastor praying for me. I want Keith Batchelor."

Do you guys remember Keith? He was one of the founding pastors here at Canyon Hills Community Church. When that man prayed, I half-expected God himself, or at least a legion or two of his angels, to show up in the room and do whatever Keith asked him to do. Keith knew the Scriptures. He knew the power of God and he prayed as if he actually expected that God wanted to answer prayer. That's the kind of man I want praying for me on my deathbed. If we know the Scriptures, if we know the power of God, we will be a people of prayer.

Secondly...*Do I have peace?* This is a big one. See, peace is something you can fake on the outside, but no amount of positive thinking or medication can produce it on the inside. Numbness is a cheap substitute for peace. They're not the same thing. Is your life marked by peace or by habitual fear, worry, or anxiety? See, if we knew the Scriptures, we would know that 2 Timothy 1:7 says, "**...God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.**"

If we knew the Scriptures, we would know that Philippians 4:6-7 says, "**...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.**" This is what I love. "**And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding...**" The peace of God that makes no sense to the rest of the world. "**...will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**"

For those who know the Scriptures and know the power of God, there's no room for habitual or enslaving fear, worry, or anxiety. Now, that's not to say you're never going to experience those things. We are sinners. We live in a fallen world. However, we won't stay there. Because we know the Scriptures and we know the power of God, we will be a people of prayer and of peace.

Thirdly...*Do I have joy?* Now, as you're asking yourself that question, don't make the mistake of equating joy and happiness. Those are two very different things. Happiness is completely

dependent on outside circumstances. Happiness, at any moment, can be taken from you. Joy has nothing to do with outside circumstances and has everything to do with the reality of the gospel.

Philippians 4:4 says, "**Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.**" For the Christian, we can always be a people of joy because we always have a salvation to find joy in. Jesus already went to the cross. Jesus already paid the penalty and now we have a life, a hope, and a future with him. That is the source of our joy, so if we know the Scriptures and if we know the power of God, we will be a people of unshakeable joy.

Do we pray? Do we have peace? Do we have joy? These are not the only questions we can ask, but they are certainly a good place to start. Now, what are we going to do with this? As you're sitting here today, if you're thinking to yourself, "Koby, I do not know the Scriptures. I do not know the power of God, so what do I do now?" it does me no good and it does you no good if I stand up here and just say, "Know the Scriptures. Know the power of God. Now, peace be with you."

Each and every week, as we open up the Scriptures, we are to be driven toward what we need to do to pursue these things. We should be living differently tomorrow than we did yesterday, so here are a few ideas of ways you can practically grow in these areas. This list is not exhaustive. Nothing on this list is going to shock you. They aren't complicated, but they will require discipline.

1. *Read your Bible.* I laughed when I wrote that down because I think that has been an application point of every message I've ever preached, but it's so important. You cannot know the Scriptures if you never read the Scriptures. You don't have to be a theologian to understand God's Word. The role and joy of the Holy Spirit is to illuminate the truth of Scriptures for the followers of Jesus, so it's our job to just open them, pray that the Lord would help us understand, and read.

2. *Memorize Scripture.* In Psalm 1:1-2, I love what the psalmist writes. He says, "**Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers...**" This is what I love. He says, "**...but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.**" You cannot meditate in the middle of the night, in the time of your need, on something you don't know.

I have a vivid memory. About two years ago, there was some stuff going on in my life. I don't remember a time when my heart was at such unrest. I was anxious. I couldn't relax. It was a Saturday night and I was staring at the ceiling. It was 3:11 in the morning, knowing I was going to be up in like an hour and a half to come here.

I could not get my mind to shut down. I just kept turning over and over in my bed. Then, the Holy Spirit reminded me of Isaiah 26:3. I say the Holy Spirit reminded me, because I know myself well enough to know that in those moments, nothing good comes from my mind.



In Isaiah 26:3-4, Isaiah is speaking about the Lord. He says, "**You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock.**" I knew in that moment I did not have peace and I needed that encouragement desperately, because the truth was that my mind was not stayed on the Lord. My mind was solidly stayed on the circumstances of my life.

I remember just going to that passage and praying that passage, and that's the last thing I remember that night. I fell asleep, I woke up, and we started a new day. Do you know what? The circumstances hadn't changed, but I was at peace.

There's an awesome app for your phone called Fighter Verses. It's by Desiring God, that company. It's an amazing tool to help you memorize Scripture, if that's something at which you don't think you're naturally gifted. We have to know the Word and memorize the Word.

3. *Pray.* We already talked about this a little bit earlier, but we have to be intentional about our time with the Lord. This is more than just commuter prayers. This is setting at least 10 minutes aside. Just 10 minutes! Sit down. Tell the Lord what's going on, the things you're excited about and the things you're stressed out about. Bring those things to him and exchange them for the peace he promises. Pray expecting that God is listening and that God will move.

4. *Sign up for classes here at the church.* How practical is that? Pastor Mark Wilson heads up the School of Ministry here, and I'm not kidding when I say the man is going to one day forget more about Scripture than I'm ever going to learn. He's a theological beast, so sign up for it. Take advantage of the resources that are available to you here at the church.

5. *Take notes in church.* I should have said this at the beginning of our time together. There was no way to work it in. Take notes! When we gather on Sundays, it is too easy to sit, hear, and then leave and forget everything. There should always be something, as we open up Scripture, that the Lord is calling you to change, so engage. Engage your mind. Take notes. Ask yourself, "What difference should this make in my life today?"

6. *Listen to podcasts.* We live in the digital age. Almost every pastor in America broadcasts his messages and makes them available to anyone, so if you're a commuter or if you're just in the house, whatever it ends up being... If you have more than five minutes, throw on a podcast. Guys like John Piper, John MacArthur, and Matt Chandler... These guys are awesome and they will grow you in the Scriptures and grow you in the knowledge of the power of God. Don't waste that resource.

7. *Come to the Night of Worship on Friday night.* I know that sounds super self-serving, but here's the deal. That's what those nights are all about. It's about focusing our hearts and our minds on the character of God, being reminded of his power, goodness, and care for us in our lives. So, come out Friday night at 7:00. We'd love to have you there. If you've never been to a Night of Worship, risk it. It's not that weird.

This is not a complete list, but these ideas are a great place to start. Do not live in the dangers that come with being a bad theologian. Don't be content to willingly sacrifice the freedom and the truth the gospel is meant to provide. This is just a word. The only thing standing between you and growing in these areas...

The only thing standing between you and leaving a life of fear of anxiety and stepping into a life of peace that makes no sense is you. It's you, so don't make the mistake of thinking you can go on living the way you've always lived and expect a different kind of result. Know the Scriptures and know the power of God and you will live in the hope in which God has designed you to live. Let's pray.

Father, I'm thankful for your Word. I'm thankful for your truth. I pray, Lord, as we leave this place, that you would not let us forget this call, but we would begin to live differently, to make those baby steps we need to make to look more and more like your Son, Jesus, tomorrow. I thank you for these people, God. I pray that you would bless us, keep us, and bring us back here safely next Sunday. In Christ's name we pray, amen.

If you're here today and you don't have a relationship with Jesus, there are people down front here who would love to talk with you about that. If you don't know Jesus, you can't have the peace we're talking about, but you can if you come and talk to them, so I pray that you would do that today. Also, if you're here and you just need someone to pray for you, they would love the opportunity to do that as well.

Have a great week. See you next Sunday.