

The religious Sect in Jesus' Day called the Sadducees

August 2, 2015

Last week we focused on the religious leaders of the Jews called the Pharisees. Both the Pharisees and the Sadducees criticized and tried to trap Jesus so they could accuse him of being a false Messiah. However, they were not able to do it because Jesus was God manifested in the flesh.

The Sadducees thought of themselves as “conservatives” as the Old Believers. They only accepted the written Law of Moses as authoritative and rejected subsequent revelation. As a result, they denied many of the doctrines held by the Pharisees and Jesus which included the resurrection of the dead, the existence of angels and spirits and the meting out of rewards and punishment after death. These beliefs were labeled “corrupt” and not included in the authentic faith of Israel.

Although the Sadducees were a religious group, they were more important as a political force. They represented the aristocrats of the priesthood of Israel and the power structure of Israel. The duties of religion centered chiefly on the temple. The Sadducees saw worship at the Temple as the main focus of the law. It was over the interpretation of the law and how it applied to the traditions of Israel that Jesus and these religious groups disagreed.

The Sadducees disappeared after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD and the Jewish Pharisees became dominant and is still prevalent in the modern day Jewish culture.

I would like to speak to you this morning from the book of Matthew chapter 22 verse 25.

The Pharisees had just tried to trap Jesus by asking Jesus if it was proper to pay taxes to Caesar or not. They knew that there was much anger among the people because of unfair taxes. They started out in their conversation by flattering him with these words. “Teacher,” they said, “we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren’t swayed by men because you pay no attention to who they are. Tell us then what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”

Jesus knew their evil intent and responded with “You hypocrites. Why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the taxes.” They brought him a denarius and he asked them “Whose image is this and whose inscription?” They replied, “Caesar’s”. Then he said to them “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what belongs to God.”

They were amazed at his answer and they left him and went away.

The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus and asked him questions concerning marriage. Moses gave a command that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry his widow and have children for him. Now suppose there are seven brothers among us and the first one marries a woman and he died leaving no children. His brother married her and the same thing happened until all seven of the

brothers had this one woman as a wife due to the death of her husband. Finally the woman died. Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be since all seven of the brothers had her for a wife?

Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage. They will be like the angels in heaven. But about the resurrection of the dead- have you not read what God said to you. I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

If you look in the book of Acts chapter 5:17, there are some verses concerning the Sadducees. The Apostles were preaching the good news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the power of God to heal and deliver people from their sins and from their diseases. Crowds gathered around them and the miracles that God performed through the Apostles convinced people that what the preachers were saying was true and many people accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. When the high priest and all of his associates, members of the Sadducees, realized what was taking place, they were filled with jealousy. They took the Apostles and put them in a public jail but during the night an angel of the Lord delivered them by opening the door of the jail and brought them out. The angel told the men to go into the temple courts and spread the good news of the message of the new life. At daybreak they entered the temple courts as they had been told and began to teach the people.

When the high priest and his associates arrived at the temple, they sent for the Apostles. When the associates went to get the Apostles, they found the jail locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when they opened the doors, the Apostles were not in the jail. The high priest and his associates were puzzled and wondered what they should do. Someone came with the news that the men were in the temple court preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. They were brought before the chief priest. He told them, "We gave you strict orders not to teach in that name, yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood. The Apostles responded with this statement, "We must obey God rather than man." They went on to speak about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and pointed out that the high priest had killed the Son of God by having him crucified, but death could not hold him. They declared that they were witnesses of those things and that salvation had come to Israel through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit had been given to those who obey Him. When the high priest and the Sadducees heard this they were furious and wanted to put the Apostles to death. A Pharisee named Gamaliel stood up and reasoned with them. He spoke about people who had claimed to be deity and had a following. When the leader died the

groups dispersed and the popularity fizzled out. He named several people who had their day of fame, yet once the leader died, the followers no longer claimed loyalty to them. If it is not of God, it will fade and if it is of God, you won't be able to stop these men, for you will find yourselves fighting against God. The Apostles were flogged and were released and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus and then let them go. The Apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

Paul also addressed the false teaching that there would be no resurrection of the dead. He proclaimed that if there is no resurrection, then our faith is in vain. He declared that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was buried and he arose on the third day triumphant over death, hell and the grave. See 1 Corinthians 15: 13-20,35-58