

I. Introduction

Good morning! In the gospels, we often see references to two Jewish sects, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. There were also other sects, but these two were the most prominent in Jesus' time. There were many differences in doctrine between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, but the biggest difference of all was that the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead and the Sadducees did not. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, and that was why they were sad, you see (Sadd-u-cee). Yes, it is a terrible joke, but it helps us remember the difference between the Pharisees and the Sadducees.



These groups disagreed about many things, but they were in agreement about one thing. They both saw that Jesus was a threat to their position and authority, and so both groups wanted to eliminate Jesus. As we saw last week, the Pharisees had tried to trap Jesus with clever questions, but they failed. Next, the Sadducees gave it a try. And their chosen topic was the resurrection of the dead. Let's read Luke 20:27-44 and see what they asked and how Jesus responded.

II. Scripture: Luke 20:27-44 (NIV)

[27] Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. [28] "Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother. [29] Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. [30] The second [31] and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. [32] Finally, the woman died too. [33] Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?" [34] Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. [35] But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, [36] and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection. [37] But in the account of the bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' [38] He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive." [39] Some of the teachers of the law responded, "Well said, teacher!" [40] And no one dared to ask him any more questions. [41] Then Jesus said to them, "How is it that they say the Christ is the Son of David? [42] David himself declares in the Book of Psalms: 'The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand [43] until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" [44] David calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?"

III. Teaching #1

This passage is a continuation from last week and the location is the same. Jesus is teaching in the temple courts and the disciples and the crowds are gathered around listening. Once again, a photo of Alec Gerrard's model of the temple can help us to envision the scene. We can imagine Jesus teaching the people and then the Sadducees coming up in a group and asking their question. Let's look at some background for a moment.



In **Deuteronomy 25:5**, Moses had given this command, **"If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her."** The command may seem strange to us, but it was very practical. It gave the widow security, and it ensured that a branch of the family tree would not be lost, since her children would be seen as preserving the family line of her first husband. It also ensured that the property of the first husband who had died would stay in his family and be passed on to the remarried widow's children.

The Sadducees' question also draws on a strange story that appears in the Book of Tobit, one of the books of the Old Testament Apocrypha. You won't find Tobit in your Bible unless you have a Catholic or Orthodox Bible, since Protestant churches have all rejected the Apocrypha as not meeting the standards for being accepted as Scripture. However, the Apocrypha is still useful sometimes for background studies. In today's passage in Luke, the Sadducees adapt a story from Tobit 3 as the basis for their question. In Tobit, there is a woman who marries seven husbands, but each time her bridegroom is killed by a demon on the wedding night, so there are no children. In Jesus' time, nearly everyone would have been familiar with this story, so it is a convenient background that the Sadducees can use for their question.

Let's look at their question, **Luke 20:29-33**. **"Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. The second and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. Finally, the woman died too. Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"**

The Sadducees ask, **"whose wife will she be?"** but it is not an honest question. The Sadducees are actually making fun of the doctrine of the resurrection by asking an absurd question. They are arguing that the doctrine of the resurrection cannot be true, because they think it results in too many difficult problems. However, Jesus soon shows that all of the problems they have imagined come from their incorrect assumptions. The Sadducees assumed that if there was a resurrection, then life after the resurrection would be like the life they knew. But Jesus says the resurrection life will be very different than the life they know.



Luke 20:34-36, **"Jesus replied, 'The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection.'**" The woman had seven husbands, but in the resurrection she won't be married at all, because there is no marriage in the resurrection life. Therefore there is no problem at all; the Sadducees only thought there was a problem because of their wrong assumptions.

Jesus' answer showed that the Sadducees were wrong in their assumptions. Jesus followed this up by showing that they were also wrong in their doctrine. The Sadducees did not recognize the inspiration of the Old Testament prophetic and historical books. They accepted only the Law of Moses, in other words, the first five books of the Bible. They did not believe in the resurrection because they could not see the doctrine of the resurrection in the Law of Moses. But Jesus showed that they were spiritually blind by pointing out that the doctrine of resurrection to eternal life does appear in the Law of Moses.

Luke 20:37, **"But in the account of the bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'"** Jesus points to **Exodus 3:6** where God spoke directly to Moses from the burning bush saying, **"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."** Here is Jesus' point. When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had already been dead for over 400 years. But God speaks of them in the present tense, indicating that at that very moment, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were alive and they were still worshipping God. And we also know that they are all still alive today and worshipping God even now.



The lesson is clear, **Luke 20:38**, **"He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."** We serve a living God who is alive forevermore, and He promises eternal life in heaven with Him to all who believe and call on His Name. When we go home to heaven, we will get to meet Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and talk with them. And, if these Sadducees paid attention to Jesus' warning and repented and believed in Him, then we will get to them also. We will meet and know all of the great heroes of the faith and all of those who have gone on before us trusting in Jesus. For to God, all are alive.

Revelation 7:9-10 gives us a prophetic glimpse of that great day when people from around the world

come together to worship the Lord. **“After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."”**

The Sadducees came to Jesus with a riddle, a question that they thought pointed out an unsolvable problem. But Jesus showed that their thinking was wrong and pointed the way to the truth. And, Jesus did not stop there, He went on to ask His own question, a question which must have seemed like a new riddle to most of those who were listening. **Luke 20:41-44, “Then Jesus said to them, "How is it that they say the Christ is the Son of David? David himself declares in the Book of Psalms: 'The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.' ' David calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?"”**

The quote comes from the beginning of Psalm 110 and Jesus also refers to the prophecy that the Messiah would be a descendent of King David, a prophecy that appears in Psalm 89 and other Scriptures. King David was the author of the Psalm, and yet he says, **“The Lord said to my Lord.”** The first Lord is clearly the Lord God Almighty and the second Lord is the Messiah. But in the Jewish culture it was unimaginable that King David would call one of his own descendents, “Lord.” So Jesus asks, **“David calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?”** Normally, such a thing would be impossible. But God did an amazing thing; in the person of the Messiah, God Himself came in the flesh.

And Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus clearly revealed that He was God come in the flesh. For example, in **John 14:8-9**, we read, **“Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"** Anyone who sees Jesus, sees God. God had revealed this to King David hundreds of years earlier, and so King David wrote, **“The Lord said to my Lord,”** showing that the Messiah to come was Lord and God.

Let's go on a little further today. Let's read Luke 20:45-21:4.

IV. Scripture: Luke 20:45-21:4 (NIV)

[45] While all the people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples, [46] "Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. [47] They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely." [21:1] As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. [2] He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. [3] "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. [4] All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

V. Teaching #2

In Luke 20:39, some of the teachers of law had praised Jesus when Jesus showed that the Sadducees were mistaken. But Jesus knew that their hearts were still hard, and now He warns the disciples about the hypocrisy of those teachers who cared more for their image than for what was right. Many of them were wealthy men who loved their fine clothing and the honor they received. They prayed long prayers and were probably big givers at the temple as well. But the money they gave was ill-gotten. Jesus said (Luke 20:47), **“They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely.”**

Jesus was still in the temple courtyard, apparently close to where the offerings were given. The rich were probably bringing in sacks of gold coins and pouring them out into the offering boxes. But Jesus was not impressed with their offerings, because they gave out of their excess and still had plenty of money left over to live in luxury. Jesus watches the offerings, but He is not looking at the amount of the offering. Jesus is looking at the heart; He watches and waits to see a heart which is generous and devoted to God.

And then Jesus saw what He was looking for. **Luke 21:2-3, “He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. “I tell you the truth,” he said, “this poor widow has put in more than all the others.”** It was all the money the widow had and she gave it all freely as an offering to God.



We can learn from this widow. Sometimes people have the wrong idea about offerings. For example, some people probably check our Family Network newsletter to see how the church budget is doing before they decide how much to give in the offering. But the two small coins the widow gave would not have made any difference at all in the budget of the temple in Jerusalem. The offering isn't about meeting the budget or covering expenses. The offerings are used to pay church expenses, but that is not their primary purpose.

The purpose of the offering is to honor God and to strengthen our faith by giving thanks to Him and acknowledging that all things come from His hand. Giving an offering is a form of worship. Our tithes and offerings reveal the condition of our hearts. The widow gave all she had; her offering demonstrated that she trusted the Lord 100% for all of her needs. Now, I am not suggesting that you should follow her example literally by putting all of your money in the offering. In fact, unless the Lord has specifically told you to do that, I think it would be unwise for most people. Most of us have responsibilities and we need to fulfill our responsibilities. And that means we need to budget wisely and handle our money carefully.

However, for the majority of people, excessive, over-enthusiastic giving is not a problem. For most of us, the temptation to love our money is the struggle. We face the temptation to cling to our money. We struggle against the temptation to trust in our money and to build our lives around money. But if you love money, you will never be free. The love of money is idol worship that chains our heart. And one of the most effective ways to free your heart from the love of money is generous giving.



Do you want to be free? Do you want to grow close to the Lord? Then make money your servant and use it according to godly priorities. Too many people, even in the church, are slaves to their money. Some people would do anything for money, because they are prisoners of money. And if we are prisoners, then we cannot experience the freedom and abundant life that the Lord offers to those who trust in Him. In **2 Corinthians 9:6-7** we read, **“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”** As we see here, the main issue is the condition of the heart. Those who freely and cheerfully give are special to God. And, there is also a principle that God is generous in blessing those who give generously. Of course, the blessing God gives you may not be financial. It may be new freedom and joy, or the salvation of others around you, or something you have not even thought of. Whatever it may be, there is an abundant harvest for those who sow generously.

VI. Conclusion

As we prepare to close for today, I want to go back to **Luke 20:35-36** for a moment, **“But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection.”** We are made worthy to receive eternal life by faith in Jesus and in His death on the cross and resurrection. Jesus rose from the grave and He is alive forevermore. Do you believe in Jesus? If you do, then you are a child of the resurrection. That means that you have eternal life and can never die. In the Christian church, we believe in eternal life. And we believe that eternal life is a very good thing. Life in heaven with Jesus will be free of the sorrows and pains that make life difficult in this world. It will be a new kind of life, an abundant life of unending joy and fellowship. A life filled with praise and thanksgiving and celebration. It is my prayer that each and everyone here today, and also our families, friends, and neighbors, would believe in Jesus and receive this eternal life. Let's pray.

VII. Closing Prayer