

The attack on the resurrection

Luke 20:27-33

December 2, 2023

Turning your Bibles to Luke, Chapter 20 as we consider Jesus' confrontation with the Sadducees and we continue in our study of the Gospel of Luke. I've got one sermon, three points, but there is so much in this text and so for mercy's sake we are going to cover the three points over this weekend next. Still, I, in looking at the calendar. I do think it'll work out better as we head into the Christmas season and we ponder the question that comes after the text we're looking at this morning and next week. As we ponder the question that our Lord asked the scribes in verse 41, he says, how is the Christ, David's son? And that is a perfect question that will prepare us very well to celebrate Christmas Eve, which falls on the Lord's day this year. And, and yet to get there, we need to come through this challenge of the Sadducees, the Synoptic Gospel writers Matthew, Mark, and Luke, they record the challenges against Jesus in exactly the same order as we have seen them in Luke. First, we see the delegation that comes from the Sanhedrin in the earlier

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part of chapter 20. Then the after Jesus tells the parable and kind of confronts them and tells the parable before all the people reciting Israel's history of rejecting the prophets. Then we see the coalition of these opposing political parties, the Herodians and the Pharisees, coming together to oppose Jesus. What do we do with the Caesar's tribute? So we covered that last week. And then as we see in the text, we're gonna look at today and next week, and we see the members of another party, the Sadducee party, one of the three parties in Jewish religion in the 1st century, the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes.

But these challenges, as we see them coming out in Chapter 21 after the other, they're like you might picture in your mind, like waves of a turbulent storm at sea. All these waves coming from the power of the ocean, driven to the beach and smashing onto the beach. Wave after wave is crashing against the shore. And though these waves come with power and with great force, with a deafening roar, ultimately all of their energies are drained when they hit the land, aren't they? The land is a barrier. It's fixed. The shore is immovable. It is permanent, no matter how large, how angry, how noisy these waves are. Once the

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waves smash against the land, they are cast down and flattened. Their energy is dissipated and the water is sent back to sea.

Like the land, Jesus stands firm. Like the shore that is unchanging, he is fixed and immovable, and we have watched him already, deftly answering his challengers almost effortlessly. You get no sense as he speaks to those who oppose him, and he's there in the heart of the temple, in the heart of Jewish religion. You get no sense at all that he has. There's any stress or anxiety in his voice. There's no tension. I mean, put yourself into the situations that he's been in. How would you do as you're standing in the middle of a hostile environment.

Take yourself with your views of the Bible, your views of just something simple like there is maleness and there is femaleness and there's just a gender binary, and that's how God created it. Take that into the university down the street and go into the philosophy classroom. Just stand there and articulate your views of what the Bible teaches about human sexuality, or any subject for that matter. Just imagining yourself in that environment. Can you see how your anxiety levels start to rise A

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little bit? Maybe get a little bit of butterflies in your stomach that you would have to face that kind of opposition and hostility from a very unsympathetic and hostile world? You get none of that when you examine the Lord. He is as comfortable there as he is by himself in the presence of his father. Why wouldn't he be? It's his father's temple. He is completely in command in the temple, isn't he? He is comfortable. You get no sense of tension in his voice when he speaks to his opponents. There's no sense of scorn. There's not even a hint of sarcasm, really, as he speaks to them. He has no contempt for his enemies. In fact, he actually seems to love them, and that's because he is fixed in the truth.

He is committed to the fear of the Lord, he's committed to do the will of his father, and so he is calm. And so he is kind even to those who oppose him. He's patient, even as he sees through the cunning of spies who are coming to entrap him and trip him up in his language. You and I can't do that; we're not him. But we sure can't admire and worship when we see him doing it, can't we? So Jesus addresses challenges. He answers questions because he knows his God. He knows the truth of his God. He knows his mission. He fears God, and he obeys him. He's

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doing God's business, and he's doing God's business in God's way. And he is always and ever under the perfect control of the Holy Spirit.

If you want to know how to answer any of the challenges from this world, if you want to know how to face your fears, face your anxieties, face relational difficulties, face confrontation, face anything that you would deal with in life, whether it's human problems or financial problems or work related, whatever the problems are, take a page out of Jesus playbook and know your God as he knows God.

Study is truth. Become confident in what you know and believe and have conviction about, and always, ever be under the perfect control of the Holy Spirit, that the fruit of the Spirit would govern your life and your actions and your speech, your thinking. And you too will learn the kind of calm tension, free patience and kindness and love for your enemies that he practiced. This is, this is who we worship and this is who we want to be like.

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Well, this delegation from the Sanhedrin, that we see in the beginning of the chapter, the chief priests, the scribes, the elders, they represent the Sanhedrin. They're coming and they represent the first challenge we see in the chapter, and it's articulated there in Luke 20, verse 2. And we can thank them for their candor and their plain speaking because we kind of get, because of this, the nature of the concern that they had, all of them had, "tell us," they demanded to know, "by what authority you do these things, or who is it that gave you this authority." There's an authority issue at stake here. The chief concern that they have is this matter of authority. And in one sense, we need to see these men as doing their job. This is really what they are to do. It's the role of the Sanhedrin to oversee and judge Israel, especially in religious matters, especially in matters related to judging Israel and overseeing the Temple. Civil matters too, because they're all wed together in Israel.

But in particular, the Sanhedrin had oversight of Temple operations. Remember that after Jesus had arranged and then planned and executed his own coronation procession, he presented himself to Israel, to his people as God's Messiah, and as their

arriving king. We remember we studied this the end of Luke 19, his first stop as the chief administrator of a theocratic nation, his first stop was the Temple of God, the religious heart of the nation, and he arrived at the temple to find it, as he knew he'd find it, in total disorder, inhabited by thieves who had turned the temple into their own personal den, their lair. And so to restore the temple and return it to its original purpose, he cast out the buyers, the sellers, all the money changers. He told everyone why. In Luke 19:46, he's quoting from Isaiah 56:7, "He said, my house shall be a house of prayer for all the nations, not a den of thieves and robbers."

So after he reclaimed the temple, restored it to its original purpose, Jesus started doing what the temple was for. He started teaching the people, in verse 48, it says, and in chapter 20 of verse 1, he's teaching the people. He's proclaiming the good news. He's preaching the gospel. And it says in chapter 19, verse 48, "all the people were captivated by his teaching." They're hanging, literally hanging on every word. And so God, we know, sent John to prepare their hearts by means of his prophetic ministry.

But God sent Jesus to restore the people for worship, to prepare their hearts, to bring the sacrifices to come and worship before him. Jesus was teaching to strengthen the people, and inform them, and direct and inform their prayers that they he wanted to bring the people to God. The ultimate ministry that he would perform, the ultimate sacrifice was yet to be fulfilled in his crucifixion on the cross, his perfect atoning sacrifice for sins as he's the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

But as the narrative rolls forward here, we're seeing the means that God is going to use to accomplish his will in these undercurrents of rejection that are flowing through the people. These challenges that keep coming wave after wave from the religious establishment. So the Sanhedrin came first after Jesus cleared the temple, after he disrupted their business enterprise, and they challenged his authority. "By what authority do you do these things or who is it that gave you this authority?"



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Jesus, not only, as we saw, answered the challenge, but in the answer he gave a challenge of his own. John's baptism from heaven or from men? You tell me. And in that answer, you're going to have your answer, the answer you're looking for. In other words, if John's baptism is from heaven, well as my authority also is, then why don't you submit to divine authority? Why don't you bow? Why are you challenging me? Why are you? Why are you coming and opposing me? If John's prophetic ministries from heaven and my ministry is tied to his, it's from heaven as well.

So the first challenge answered and returned. And to make his point inescapably plain to them, Jesus delivered a stunning parable to the people, one that implicated the religious leaders in the rejection of God's servants, the prophets, their historical rejection of God's servants, the prophets. And they were on the verge of doing it yet again in rejecting God's Son, the Messiah. So the scribes, the chief priests, they're not so dull as to miss the point. They get the point. According to verse 19, they got it, they looked for a way to get their hands on him on that very hour, at that very hour, because they knew he had told this parable against them.

And Jesus, after telling the parable after delivering the parable, he warned him to take caution in verse 18. They ignored the warning though, and they proceeded to do exactly as he predicted they would do in the parable. "This is the heir, let us kill him so that the inheritance will be ours." We noted last week the only way the religious leaders could accomplish their goal was to involve the Roman government in getting rid of Jesus. The Jews had no power in capital cases.

The Sanhedrin could not execute a sentence of death and put anyone to death. That power and authority was in the hands of the governor alone, which is why the next wave of opposition came from a group of cunning spies sent by a coalition of Pharisees and Herodians. The two parties, Herodians, and Herodians isn't one of the three religious parties in Israel, but more of a political, socio-political party.

But the Herodians and the Pharisees are enemies against each other. They have different ends, different goals, different ways they see the country going, and yet they come together in

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the united in their opposition of Christ. And they talk to these young, no doubt theological students underneath the Pharisees. And they send them as spies, wearing the mask of friendship, speaking friendly, flattering words to Christ. All this flattery is a trap. They are like the enemies of David in Psalm 56:21, their speech smooth as butter, yet war was in their hearts. Their words are softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords, the Daggers ready to be stuck into the back of Christ.

They intended to get Jesus to side with the people, to oppose paying Roman tribute. They wanted to trap him in his words, hand him over to the governor who's gonna try and sentence Jesus for sedition. Well, as we saw last week, that didn't work either. In fact, it backfired pretty spectacularly, and even some of the spies were bewildered and humbled by Jesus' answer. They were stunned into silent reflection on the implications of what Jesus said. "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar and to God what is God's."

So now that Jesus has silenced the Pharisees from the Sanhedrin, now the Sadducees step up to have a crack at him. Now

it's their turn. And the Sadducees, though they are a minority of the religious parties in the land, in fact they, they're really not loved or favored by the people at all. But the Sadducees are a minority party in Israel, but in the Sanhedrin, they are the majority. They are the ones who run the temple. They're the party of the high priestly family. These guys have a lot of power, a lot of authority, a lot of wealth, a lot of influence. They are the majority party in the Sanhedrin and their intention in verses 28 to 33, though it's not immediately clear how they're doing this, but we'll get to that. Their intention and their object is to undermine Christ, just like the rest of these challengers.

Let's read the text now, starting with that little introduction, let's read the text starting in verse 27. "There came to him some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection, and they asked him a question, saying, Teacher Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies having a wife but no children, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers, the first took a wife and died without children, and the second and

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the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. And afterward the woman also died.

“In the resurrection, therefore whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife, and Jesus said to them the sons of this age, marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. For they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection, but that the dead are raised. Even Moses showed in the passage about the Bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him. And some of the scribes answered, Teacher, you have spoken well, but they no longer dared to ask him any question.”

As we think about the Sadducees and their challenge to Jesus in this moment, I want to start by making just a kind of more of a general observation. The previous two challenges we saw: One was a straightforward protest against Jesus, authority

to operate as he did in the Temple, and the other was a challenge that was conducted by subterfuge, and it was a, a challenge or an attempt, I should say, to discredit Jesus and to undermine his authority.

The Sadducees challenge is kind of, of a different sort. It's not intuitively obvious from reading the text what this question about Leverett marriage is, and the seemingly insurmountable problem it raises for the doctrine of resurrection. It's not immediately clear to us how this serves their interests, how this serves the purposes of the Sadducees to undermine him. As one of the three main religious parties of the Jews, along with the Pharisees and the Essenes, the, the Sadducees, as I said, they were the, they were the party who were the, the wealthy, the in power. They had the hold of the seats of power in Israel, both religious power and political power. They were from the aristocracy. They were the landed gentlemen. They were the, the ones with titles and old money, lots of old money.

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High priestly family, as I said, they were Sadducees and due to the influence of their wealth, the Sadducees held the majority of the 70 seats on the Sanhedrin. So we could argue that the Sadducees positionally and financially speaking, these men had the most to lose in view of Jesus ascendancy in view of his popularity among the common people, it would seem getting rid of Jesus had to be priority number one. And yet they asked this question of Mosaic law. They pose a scenario about seven brothers and a wife and the problem this must create for the doctrine of resurrection.

And you ask yourself, maybe scratching your head as, as, I did all week, this is the dilemma. This is the challenge they want to bring to Jesus. This is how they want to try to stump him. This is what they want him to untangle in public. We'll come to that. But whatever is going on in this account, you have to stop and appreciate what God has done here, because in his good Providence he has planned to put this interchange between the Sadducees in Christ into the record of the Gospels. Prompted by this oblique, tack from, attack from the Sadducees just a few days before Jesus is going to be crucified, we have this unique privilege of hearing the Lord Jesus himself, the one who is to

be crucified in just a few days, his body buried in a tomb, and then raised to life. The new life on the third day we get to hear this pre-resurrected Christ teach on the subject of resurrection.

There's nothing between this account and the end of the book where he teaches like this on the doctrine of resurrection. I'm thankful that Sadducees raise this challenge. In fact, we can see all through church history. The Church has never been actually weakened by any challenge that it's faced. Every challenge brought to the Church has been answered through Scripture and through its theology, through its doctrines to strengthen our understanding of the truth. That's certainly the privilege that we get in listening in to this challenge coming from the Sadducees against Christ and against this doctrine of resurrection, no matter what their motives are.

This is God's Providence and he's inserted it in Scripture. All three Synoptic authors record this challenge coming just exactly in the order it's come and exactly in the way it's come. So for all who read this gospel as believers in Jesus Christ,



and for all of whom the Spirit will draw and regenerate and grant faith to believe in Jesus words, verse 35 those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead, listen this is about resurrection hope. That's what this passage is about.

Whatever the challenge is, this is about our hope. This is about our future. This is about what, this is really you could call this eschatological anthropology. That's what we're going to learn next week, especially in really emphasizing Jesus' answer is what is anthropology? We understand anthropology now underneath sin, in a cur, on a cursed earth. All the effects of sin and the noetic effects of sin on the mind and the effects of sin and sin, nature and all the things that we have to understand in order to understand not only the doctrine of salvation, soteriology, but the doctrine of sanctification.

It's as well, here we get to see what we will become. This is resurrection hope, and it's preached underneath the dark shadow of the cross. I love this; absolutely love this. So three points for this sermon. We're going to see the condescension,

the correction, and the confirmation. You can write those down, but two of them are going to be covered next week. So  
condescension, correction, and confirmation.

We'll only have time this morning for the condescension. And number one, you could write down, extend this out to the condescension of the scoffers. The condescension of the scoffers. By scoffers I mean the Sadducees, and by condescension I'm referring to those of the aristocratic class who are coming down from their lofty perch to speak to this Galilean peasant and popular teacher. He comes from, where is it again? Nazareth. Do we even have a place like that? He's son of a what? A, a blue-collar worker; a Carpenter is it? Get a business card, I, I, may have some work for him to do over the palace.

Keep these social class dynamics in mind as we move through the text in verses 27 to 33. But let me give you a few sub points. For this first point the condescension of the scoffers breaks down into three sub points and these are all "A" words, so agents, authority, and absurdity. First, we see letter A, the agents of the challenge, letter B the authority for the

challenge, and letter C, the absurdity of the challenge or the absurdity in the challenge.

So letter A, the agents of the challenge, the agents of the challenge, we see clearly. They're called Sadducees. Verse 27 There came to him some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection. And that's not all they denied either, Luke tells us in Acts 23, verse 8, the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor Angel, nor spirit. So materialists you could say. According to Josephus, the Sadducees believed in human autonomy, they believed in free choice, freedom of the will, personal self-determination. You could say they were; they were the original Armenians. It means they rejected God's foreordination. They rejected God's predestination.

Josephus tells us further that, and he writes this quote, "They say that to act what is good or what is evil, it is it men's own choice and that the one or the other belongs to everyone, that they may act as they please." And also this, "They suppose that all our actions are in our own power, and so we are ourselves the cause of what is good and receive what is

evil from our own folly." So this is very typical stuff for most people who think like fleshly carnal human beings. You get what you deserve. If you get good and you get blessing and you get riches and wealth, well, that's because of your great intelligence, your great ingenuity, because of your great power, your great intellect, all your hard work. But if you get folly, that's on you too. It's by your own folly that you get your, so you've got.

These are, and I'm telling you, these are merciless people, harsh in their judgments, harsh in their legal judgments and legal pronouncements, harsh toward the poor. Even the Pharisees by comparison to these guys, the Pharisees look like merciful, wonderful people, even with all their rules and, and little niggling little requirements of, of ceremonial purity and ritual purity and all the things that the Pharisees practice.

Next to the Sadducees, these Pharisees are soft, the Sadducees are hard, hard men. You might think that this idea of you get what you deserve, that would make the Sadducees quite conscientious observers of justice and mercy before God, knowing

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that they're going to give an account to God one day. But Josephus writes quote, "They also take away the belief in the immortal duration of the soul, that souls die with the bodies, and thus they deny the punishments and rewards in Hades." They don't have to worry about what's going to happen in the afterlife, because there is no afterlife. We're all going to be snuffed out. Everything fades to black when the body dies.

There's a whole lot more I could cite in describing the Sadducees to you. I just want to give you a taste of how they think, and perhaps maybe the most expedient way to understand the, the Sadducees and I'm going to oversimplify this and use some modern categories, but we could say the Sadducees are materialists. They deny a, a continuing immaterial nature of man. They believe in an immaterial nature of man, but in the, in life, not in death, not a continuing immaterial part of man. So they insist that now, this life, this is all that matters. They're sounding, sounding pretty much like your neighbors, aren't they? They are also rationalists, rather strict, you can say. Even severe interpreters of Moses and all Scripture. They prided themselves as holding on to common sense, and they laughed at the fanciful speculations of the Pharisees.

Sadducees prided themselves as strict, literalist, faithful interpreters of Moses. They love their interpretations of Moses, and they, they didn't necessarily reject the Prophets and the writings as some people think, but by elevating the Law of Moses so highly they held it as over and against, the Pentateuch was over and against the rest of Scripture. It was the gold standard in Scripture. You might say the Pentateuch was the red letter version. It was a Canon within the Canon. It was a standard against which they measured everything else.

So since they didn't find resurrection in Moses, they rejected it, evidence from any other part of Scripture and what we refer to as the Old Testament, like the prophets, the writings. So take Elisha raising the son of the Shunamite woman or, or Elijah raising the son of the widow of Zarephath. Those accounts they would say, strictly speaking, and, and they're right about this, those are instances of resuscitation, not pure resurrection, right? They say that doesn't prove anything.

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Those, those people who were raised, those sons who were raised, they're not still living, are they? Well, they're not wrong. To be fair, it wasn't until Jesus rose from the dead, he being the first fruits of the resurrection, right? 1 Corinthians 15, first fruits means he's the first one. His resurrection from the dead is the greatest, indisputable fact of all history, incontrovertible resurrection of Christ. It's not until then that anyone really did understand what resurrection really is, what it truly means. And that's why this teaching prior to the cross, prior to his resurrection, is so seminal, so vital. It lays the foundation for the rest of the New Testament's teaching on the resurrection.

Everything that Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 15, the resurrection chapter, is grounded in what Jesus teaches right here. It also helps us understand and interpret what happens when Jesus rises from the dead. So this, this singularly important event for us as Christians, the historical fact of Jesus resurrection from the dead, the empty tomb, his, his rising and being with the father even now at his right hand, it's all based in this text. Everything, how we need to

understand this when we get to Luke 24 has to be understood in light of what he teaches right here.

Nevertheless, the Sadducees rejection of the concept of bodily resurrection, it puts him on a collision course with the Pharisees and this is a source of constant conflict. Their, their ways of viewing the Old Testament, their ways of interpreting things, puts him on in, in, in, in a collision course of conflict all the time between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees correctly considered the Prophets and the Writings on par with Moses, and so they felt, rightly so, they felt the freedom to learn doctrine from the Law and the Prophets and the writings.

However, what the Pharisees did, we see people do all the time as they went even further than the Scripture, didn't they? We see in the gospels that the Pharisees were guilty of layering over scripture with man, made traditions, oral tradition, teaching from the fathers, teaching from the rabbis. They were guilty of creating subcategories of laws and, and, restrictions and rules that kept people further and further distant from



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breaking the actual law. So if you obey this law on, on, the periphery, you'll never get close to breaking this law.

It's the old kind of moralistic illustration of, you know, the, the, old Indian chief who lives around the turn of the century and automobiles are coming out and he lives in a mountainous, mountainous area. He's trying to hire a driver to drive his Model T around and drive him through the mountains safely. And so he has several brave warriors come forward and say, you know, tell me why you're qualified to drive me around to be my driver. And he said, the first warrior says, well, you know, Chief, I can get right up to the edge with my tires and not go over the Cliff. I'm very skilled in driving. And he says, Okay, thank you. Second one come in. Second one comes in and says, listen, I can get so close to the edge that not only do I come in close to the edge, but my tire is half on the edge and half off of the edge. That's how skilled I can carry that all the way up the mountain. He says, Okay, thank you very much, your skill is noted.

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He brings in the third young brave and the brave. He asked him the same question. How you know, how far can you get to the edge of the Cliff? And the young brave says, I don't know, he says, what do you mean you don't know? He says, Well, chief, I make it a habit of trying to keep my tires as far away from the edge as possible and trying to hug the inside of the mountain all the way up. And so I've never had a concern about going over. He says, you're hired. The older I get, the more I'm like that old ageing chief. I don't want any excitement in my life.

But that's the Pharisees. Let me create laws and rules and restrictions that keep you away from the edge people, and I'm going to keep you from committing sin. It's moralism, isn't it? So that's the, that's the Pharisees. They're guilty of these man made traditions, guilty of creating additional laws for ceremonial washings and purification rituals to keep everyone separate and, and pure. In fact, that's where the name Pharisee comes from, Parushim; literally, the separated ones. It's not a compliment, by the way. It was how their critics characterized their movement as the separated ones. But in pride, the Pharisees thought, hey, that's a pretty good application, we are the separated ones. We'll, we'll take that name, Pharisee.

So since the Sadducees rejected support for any doctrine outside of Moses, and since they rejected adding traditions to the Law of Moses, they were really irritating to the Pharisees. In fact, they seemed to relish at tweaking the Pharisees, rejecting any appeal to the prophets, always demanding proof from Moses. When the Pharisees were unable to find justification from Moses, the Sadducees delighted in scorning them for being non scriptural. That had to get under their skin.

The origin of the Sadducees, and that name is a bit murky. Here's what we know, though most believe the name Sadducees comes from the name *Zadok*. The, the Greek for Sadducees is actually pronounced *saddoukaios*. *Saddoukaios*, it's a matter of speculation as to which *Zadok*, if any, from history this name comes from. But the original *Zadok* was one of two priests, along with *Abiathar*, who served *David* and faithfully during *Absalom's* rebellion. You may remember the two of them, they stayed in *Jerusalem* with *Absalom* and kind of reported the news from *Jerusalem* as *David* got out of town.

That same Zadok helped Solomon ascend to the throne according to David's wishes, officiated at Solomon's coronation ceremony. The Zadokites get their name from that Zadok, but it is very unlikely that the Sadducees derive their name from that Zadok. Not going to bore you with all the other theories, but I'll just relay this little bit from Alfred Edersheim, who took up the tedious task of trying to trace down the name.

Just as the name Pharisees, as they derive their name from their critics, Edersheim believes that the Sadducees also got their name from their critics and in particular in their opposition to the Pharisees. The Pharisee, as I said, is from the word *Parushim* separated. Early critics of the Pharisees, used to, used to retort that they had no need of being *Parushim* separated ones, but they were content and satisfied to be *tsadikim, tsadikim*, which means righteous ones from the word for righteousness in Hebrew.

So this is how the, the Sadducees, the *tsadikim* distinguish, distinguish themselves from the Pharisees and their party was defined in opposition to them. Those are the separated

ones were content to be the righteous ones. There's actually a linguistic difficulty in changing the 'I' sound into the 'U' sound from tsadikim to tsadukim, like it comes across in Sadducees. There's, a direct derivation from tsadikim would mean that instead of calling them Sadducees or the Greek saddoukaios, it would be pronounced instead, Saddicees, in the Greek saddikaios.

So Edersheim suggests that to change from the 'I' sound to the 'u' sound probably came from a witty play on words from one of the Pharisees, who, answering back to their jab, he said, "Don't call them tsadikim, the righteous ones, but rather call them, in light of all their doctrines, in light of all their, their materialism, call them tsadukim, the desolate ones." So the Sadducee, in rejection of the doctrine of resurrection, their rejection of the continuation of the human soul, from a Pharisee perspective, tsadukim, desolation, destruction. That's a very apt designation of their entire movement. It's a fitting description of where Sadduceean teaching leads them.

I remember this little quip from when I was growing up in church. They, they taught us as kids in Sunday school how to remember the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the Pharisees being legalists and all that. They said a Pharisee is very fair. I see. You ever heard of that? Very fair I see. That's a Pharisees. And you remember the Sadducees. They don't believe in the resurrection, so they're very sad, you see. I don't know if that helps you. It's not historical, probably not accurate, but in, in a sense it is accurate because they don't believe in the resurrection.

Now, this investigation into the origin of the party names Pharisee and Sadducee, why have I told you all this? Because what this reveals is a history of rivalry and antig, ant, ah, an, antagonism between these two parties that plays into the context of our text. This morning, these two groups did not like each other at all, and the Sadducees in particular seem to delight in making sport out of ridiculing the Pharisees, lampooning their precious doctrines with sarcasm and barbs.

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According to Edersheim, the Pharisees, when they talked about resurrection, they used to debate such things as whether a person would rise from the dead in his clothes or stark naked. That's the kind of thing that they would occupy themselves with, is talking to them. And that's an unpleasant thought, I'll grant you. So one of the Pharisees said, well, the grain of wheat, which is buried naked, it does yet rise clothed. And so they looked at grains of wheat and said, look, same thing for us, same thing as bodies. Some rabbis taught that a man would rise in exactly the same clothes in which he had been buried, which kind of explains why we bury all our loved ones in their Sunday best, right? Makes sense.

Others would speculate about wa, what, resurrected people would look like when they were raised from the dead. Would we recognize them or not? Would they be something else? Well, from the account of the summoning of Samuel from the dead by the witch of Endor, they said the risen would look exactly like they did in life because everybody recognized, well, there's Samuel, so there you go. Some went so far as to say the risen, when they rose from the dead, they'd even have the same bodily defects. So

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lameness, blindness, deafness. And you say, Oh no, what's the point of that?

Well, they said this. "It was argued," and I'm quoting Edersheim here, "It was argued that they were only afterwards to be healed, lest enemies might say that God had not healed them when they were alive, but that he did so when they were dead, and that they were perhaps not the same persons. So you went up, not only in your Sunday best, but also with the same defects in order that God would then heal you and show yes, this is the same person. Everybody sees that and now boom, he's healed, he's made perfect. All this is speculation, right? It's like the scripture doesn't speak to all this. Can we not just trust that God will get it done in some way? Then when we go up, we don't have to worry about what we're wearing, what we look like. He'll take care of that.

Edersheim tells of another wild speculation of the Pharisees. To ensure that, he quote this, "all the pious of Israel should rise on the sacred soil of Palestine. There were cavities underground in which the body would roll wherever it



was on the earth, roll until it reached the Holy Land and there to arise to newness of life. So all the resurrected, they're going up from Israel." There is a sense in which the development of all these rather silly legends, based as they are in human speculation, and yet they are a testimony, aren't they? To the strength of the Pharisees, belief in the doctrine of resurrection. They believed it so strongly that it was a settled matter for them.

They didn't stay there though. They went on to other speculation and other goofy thoughts. We see this happening today in all kinds of doctrines where people are not content to stay where the Bible stays and just be where the Bible is, but they want to go further and provide more clarity than what God tried to give, I should say than what God gave. He didn't just try.

So there's a sense in which the Pharisees belief in the doctrine of the resurrection. It was a settled fact. We can appreciate that, and this is why they really were the religious party that were embraced by the common people and not the

Sadducees. Common people, those who live in difficult times and live difficult lives, those who endure hardship and suffering, those who eke out a living from the earth. And they're dependent and subject to the weather and weather changes and famine and all those kinds of things, and sickness and disease. They endure all that they endure, really, through the hope of what is to come. They put their hope in a future bodily resurrection.

Common people know that they are not living their best life now, nor do they expect that they ever will on this earth. They've inherited no wealth. They have no privilege. They have no power or status or position or say with anything that goes on in the big machinations of power and all the turning of time and everything else. They're completely out of that. What is their hope? Their hope is in a God that can reach to them and resurrect their dead bodies and give them something that they've never had.

Now, I'm not saying that the motives in their hope of future resurrection are all pure motives. We know that. I mean many people today, Muslims, Mormons, they're hoping the

afterlife is into in to indulge themselves an unhindered carnal pleasure. I think there are many in Israel, and many today as well in evangelical churches who are also driven by covetous desires about the afterlife.

All of its, which is quite at odds with the biblical doctrine of resurrection. Certainly, that was true in Jesus Day, in Israel. Speculations of the Pharisees, though they occupied the common imagination and took great flights of fancy. These men were scorned and despised by the social elites, the aristocratic class, the Sadducees, one of the sarcastic digs at the Pharisees aimed at the phar, or the Sadducees aimed at the Pharisees. The Pharisees being so dedicated to proper ritual and ceremonial purity, they asked the question, well in your doctrine of the resurrection, does the resurrected body have to go through purification after resurrection? After all, it was in contact with a dead body, its sown, right? They used to love, to twist, twist the jabs.

Sadducees saw all this stuff as ridiculous foolishness, fanciful speculation contrary to all common sense and wholly

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unprofitable. None of what the Pharisees debated, debated could be supported or justified by a plain reading and common sense interpretation of Moses. In fact, by sticking with Moses, it's rather plain how they saw immortality is to be found. This brings us to another sub point. Letter B, the authority in the challenge. The authority in the challenge.

The Sadducees came to Jesus, verse 28, citing the Law of Moses. That's their authority. "They asked him a question saying teacher Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies having a wife but no children, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother." They're citing Moses who wrote in Deuteronomy 25:5, in fact, that verse and then the whole section verses 5 to 10 gives the law of what's called Levirate marriage. But here's the verse, "If brothers dwell together, and that is to say they live on the same property, So if brothers dwell together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go into her," that is, to have normal conjugal relations with her, "and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her."

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That's what the word levirate means is from the Latin word *levir*, which means brother-in-law. And that just levirate summarizes the law here. The brother of a married but childless man. If that man died, the brother of that dead man was required to marry his brother's widow, care for her, provide offspring for his brother. And the point of the law? There's mercy in it. You can see that right? It's to perpetuate the dead brother's name through his posterity. It's to secure his family's inheritance of the land. It's to pass on his family's money to the offspring, Deuteronomy 25:6 says, "It's so that his name may not be blotted out of Israel."

So it's to see this man's name continue, and especially in those early days, it protected the rights of the widow. It protected, the, the care for the orphan. Now, another way to see this section on Levirate marriage. This is how the Sadducees saw it. This is how mankind with no hope of an afterlife. This is how a man cheve, achieves his immortality. It's through his progeny. So by keeping the land, and by working hard in developing the land, by growing your businesses, by increasing your profit, increasing your profitability and then handing that off to your offspring.

That is the Sadducees hope of immortality. It's the immortality of their name and their influence that continues from generation to generation. Again, they have no hope of an afterlife. They have no view of final judgement. They have no view of foreordination or predestination of God. All things are subject to man's will, man's effort, man's hard work, the reward of which is wealth and the enjoyment of wealth, right now in this life, and then handing over whatever is left, whatever one has earned to one's posterity in order to perpetuate one's name.

That is their view of immortality, that is why they like this text. Armed with this idea that one's only hope of finding immortality is in seeing his name carried forward by his offspring, his progeny. This idea justified them protecting at all costs their inheritance, protecting their titles, their positions of power and authority, holding on to their, their land, ensuring the money stayed in the family from generation to generation to generation. And that is why the Sadducees were entrenched in the Temple priesthood, where they could oversee and guarantee perpetuating the profitability of the business

enterprises that they had established in the temple. It was a money-making venture for them. It made them a lot of money.

That's why the Sadducees are firmly embedded in the Sanhedrin. They're dug in like ticks, unwilling to cede any power or authority or influence, because the way they understood the pathway to immortality through one's offspring meant they fought to hold on to whatever they had inherited, so they could pass it on to their children and their children's children and on and on. This is also, by the way, how they could justify their very base, very cruel treatment of the common people.

Common people to the Sadducees, are just means to their ends. They're chattel. They're only worth what they can earn for them, what they can bring to them. The fact that none of those common people had inherited wealth from their parents, or inherited land, or position or rank and privilege, well, that's just proof that their forefathers had been asleep at the wheel. They're getting what they deserve. They have no blessing and favor from God because they're peasants. They didn't work hard; should have thought of that before being born a peasant.

We're left to wonder what developed first, the doctrine of the Sadducees or the practice of the Sadducees? Which was it, the chicken or the egg? Right. I tend to think it's the latter. The practice of the Sadducees (Pharisees) came before the doctrine of the Sadducees (Pharisees). That is to say, the, the, Sadducees found an approach to the scripture that justified how they wanted to live their lives. They found an interpretation in the Bible suitable to their own desires that would justify the way they wanted to live

This is exactly what Jesus explained in John 3:19, "The light has come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than the light." What's darkness there? Error. What's light? Truth. And it's not because false doctrine is so compelling, or it's so intellectually convincing and satisfying. No men love error rather than the truth. Why Jesus says, John 3:19, "Because their deeds are evil." In the case of the Sadducees, we'll never be able to trace exactly which came first and answer the, answer the question whether it was doctrine or practice that came first. Because the Sadducees being so closely tied as they were to the Temple. When the Romans destroyed the Temple in AD 70,



all the historical records were lost, along with any clarity about the Sadducees and their origins. All their records gone.

Ironically, with the Temple, which was not only their pride, but also their profit-making venture, as well as their refuge, as well as their storehouse of all their earthly treasure, Just as a den is to thieves. With the Temple's destruction in AD70, well, that Sadducee hope of securing immortality through posterity evaporated like a vapor. Folks, I hope you're getting this for yourself and thinking about some of the implications of this for you, for your family, for your posterity. First, don't be like the Sadducees. Putting your hope in this life, trusting in riches, spending your days amassing wealth to hand over to, your, your posterity.

And by the way, this life is not about you trying to build little experiences into your children and make sure they have all the experiences of travel and pleasures and historical things and museums and everything that you never got when you were a kid. You're not there to live your life vicariously through your kids. You know what they need from you. Lessons in

the fear of God and how to live in the fear of God. That's what they need from you.

So stop trying to run all over the earth, exposing your kids to everything. Try and stop trying to give them money, trying to amass things for them. Don't be like the Sadducees, James 4:14 says, "You're like the smoke that appears for a little while and then vanishes." James 5:2 to 3, "Your riches have rotted you wealthy people." They've rotted. Your garments are moth eaten, your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion is going to be evidence against; will eat your flesh up like fire. Why is that? Because you've laid up your treasure in the last days, and last days are last. They're gone.

Don't be, don't be like the Sadducees in that way. Second, don't be like the Sadducees in this way either, by using your Bible to justify your lifestyle. Don't use Bible verses or your doctrines or your preferred doctrines or whatever to justify your preferences, to justify your leanings, to justify your political positions. Let the Sadducees be a warning to you of how easy it is for us to deceive ourselves with bomb proof

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interpretations and assure ourselves of our rock solid theology that we've become comfortable and complacent, always thinking we're right and everybody else is wrong and everybody else in their opinions and their views are worthy of scorn and worthy of ridicule.

Do not be arrogant; look to yourself and realize you got to have a whole lot of humility when you handle the Word of God. We're not here to master the word, we're here to be mastered by the Word. Have a humble, meek approach. The indwelling sin within you, the sin nature has such power to deceive us, in so many subtle ways, to inflate us in our thinking, and steal us in our pride, so we can justify almost anything.

That has to be a caution to us all as we watch these Sadducees at work. And we need to submit our interpretations to the theology of Orthodoxy, a time-tested Orthodoxy. Subject our views to the examination of the godly. Let them speak into our lives, examine our opinions, look at our lives and our behavior and our speech and how we live and our priorities. We need to examine our lives in light of not our own opinions and our own

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judgment, in light of the Church. People who see you day in day out and know you.

Third, don't be like the Sadducees in this way, seeing yourself as superior to others. Oh, I pray that you don't do that Grace Church, ever. But you never look down on those who you think have less, whether it's like these Sadducees, less money, less privilege, less influence, less of an intellect, less of an educational opportunity or whatever it is. Or maybe you think because you go to Grace Church and we try to handle the word of God faithfully. Maybe you've become proud in doctrine because you think, oh, we've got really good teaching, and doctrine, and look at what we do and don't, man, do not be arrogant in what you have received by God's grace.

Don't engage in this aristocratic thinking of pride and arrogance, of the Sadducees about anything. What do you have that you did not receive? And if you have received it, why do you boast as if you hadn't? Why do you boast like a Sadducee thinking I got this myself? Well, we need to keep moving. We've seen the agents of the challenge, the authority of the

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challenge. Here's where we'll land, unfortunately, this morning. I'd love to preach another hour or two, but you wouldn't love me to do that.

So I will go on to letter C: The absurdity in the Challenge. The absurdity in the challenge. These Sadducees springboard from one of their favorite texts, this text on Levirate marriage from Deuteronomy 25, because it's a text that encapsulates, their, their view of how to attain immortality for themselves and earn it for themselves. And they find within this beloved text of theirs, this challenge to the doctrine of resurrection. They concoct this scenario and it's no doubt, one they've used plenty of times with great effect, to make the Pharisees look foolish.

And they're going to do the same with Jesus and here's their idea. They're going to make Jesus look just like the Pharisees and the way they've made the Pharisees look throughout all the time they've been debating, and cutting, and thrust and back and forth. They've made the Pharisees look foolish because

of their speculative doctrines of the resurrection. So they're going to do the same thing with Jesus.

They're going to see if they can embarrass him publicly. Now verse 29 says, Jesus, here's the deal, we got this command about levirate marriage, brother-in-law raising up children for his offspring. We're just, followers of Moses, just want to do what Moses says. So look, here's seven brothers. "First took a wife, died without children in the second and the third took her, and likewise all seven. They left no children and died. And afterward the woman also died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven all had her."

I gave some thought. It wasn't serious thought, but I gave some thought to choosing a title from this for this sermon, from this challenge posed by Sadducees, here's a few ideas. How about *When the Black Widow Rises*. Right? Black Widow killing off all his husbands when she rises from the dead. I like that title. If you see that on the website, click on it. Click bait, that's or just *Deadly Love*. You know, *Tainted Love*, *Deadly Love* or playing

off the *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* theme. How about *One Bride for Seven Suckers*.

I mean, doesn't it seem like a very farfetched scenario after husband number one dies, followed by husband number two, and even husband number three? I mean, at what point do the other brothers say, hold on, we're going to the police, we're going to start a murder investigation. She's dropping some drops into their drink. I don't know what's going on here. There's another title, *Meet, Marry and Murder*, I discovered sadly, that's already taken. It's a reality TV series. Who knew.

The Sadducees concoct this ridiculous scenario, not, not to pose really an honest, sincere question for Jesus, right? Similar to the radical secularist, materialist spirit of our own age, which tries to concoct a ridiculous scenario that makes resurrection, the idea of a bodily resurrection, look stupid. You've probably heard this, I have, too. I used to work with a, an atheist. I, I truly love this man. I learned so much from him, but with regard to religion, he'd been raised in what was now Zimbabwe. It was Rhodesia, which he was quick to remind me,

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I was raised in Rhodesia. And in Rhodesia, he was raised in an orphanage, and he was beat mercilessly by nuns there. So he had no love of religion and anything that I would say from the Bible, he interpreted through that grid of pretty severe beatings, maltreatment.

But he posed this to me. He said, Travis, you were in the Navy, right? And I said, yeah, I was in the Navy. He said, we'll consider a Christian sailor, a Christian Navy man. And he falls overboard and he dies. And then his body eventually gets saturated and sinks to the bottom. And on the way down to the bottom, the fish are picking at it and eating at it and it falls to the bottom. And then, you know, the, the crustaceans and the crabs and the lobsters, they all start picking and eating in the flesh and feeding off the decaying body of this Christian sailor. Well, Christian fishermen catch those fish and they, they, go and harvest all those crabs and those lobsters and those shrimp, and they bring the fish and the crabs and the shrimp and the lobster to market.



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Well, then the seafood restaurants go and buy all that seafood from the market and, and then they serve that seafood, which is fed on the flesh of dead, of dead Christian Sailors, and other Christians come into the store, into the restaurant and eat the same seafood. Well, since Christians are all the while ingesting other Christians, cells joining other cells woven together to be eternally linked. Well in the resurrection, Travis, it's a conjoined BLOB of bodies of Christians. So when you rise, what are you gonna look like? What a monstrosity. I mean, he thought he had me.

Frank. Frank. Frank. Frank. Frank. Frank, that's these Sadducees. They're like today's atheistic secular materialists who use the weapon of ridicule. They're not looking for an answer, that's not what this is designed to, to draw out, is actual explanation. They're not looking for an answer. They just try to heap scorn on this idea of bodily resurrection, one that they have rejected already. They have no open mind. Their mind is closed and sealed like a tomb. All they do is show their disdain not only for the idea itself, but here the Sadducees are showing their disdain for Jesus, this popular teacher, popular with the commoners; they consider Jesus so far beneath them.

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Frankly, they resent having to come out in public like this, confront the challenge of this Galilean peasant. I mean, who does he think he is anyway?

But since they're committed to nothing else than this, this notion of securing their own immortality, increasing their own wealth, handing it over to their own posterity, holding on to places of religious power in the Temple, political power in the Sanhedrin to guarantee their future wealth generating enterprises, that they can hand it all over to their offspring and maintain their name forever. Respond they must. You can hear it in their final gotcha line, this kind of prurient insinuation. You can detect this little sinful glint in their eye; in the resurrection therefore, whose wife will the woman be for they all had her.

Well, ha ha, right? We're going to come back to this next week. But suffice it to say, the Sadducees, along with all their doctrine, is riddled with false assumptions, and they're blind to them on the assumption that the future is going to be just like the present. They carry that on that presupposition,

something they've already decided on, something they've never tested, and that they can't test it. They carry that same presupposition into their interpretation of Moses. And so when they go in to read Moses, they go in blind, because of their own presuppositions, they reject any evidence that doesn't agree with their own preconceived interpretation, their own, their own presupposition.

Jesus names two false assumptions. Luke records the exposition and we can discern the false assumptions that he's that he's examining here we're going to examine this next week. But Mark, he gets to the heart of it just by quoting Jesus as saying, this is not the reason you're wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. You got a, you got a biblical problem; you don't understand the Scriptures. You got an interpretation issue, and you don't understand the power of God. You got a, you got a theology proper problem and so Jesus comes providing a needful correction for them. First, we see of their eschatology and second of their theology proper, and that's where we're going to have the joy of returning to next time. Will you join me in prayer?

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Our Father, we want to thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, who stood firm and fast in the temple as an unmoving shore being battered by waves and yet it never moves. That shoreline stays the same. And that's what Jesus is, immovable, fixed, perfect. And even though he faces challenge after challenge and wave after wave of opposition, he never falters. He never stumbles, He never loses his cool. He's never out of control, not one bit.

And that's why we look to him for our salvation. That's why we're pleased in seeing examining the opposite in ourselves, how we see ourselves failing all the time. It could be the, the smallest bit of trial or discomfort or lack of ease that, that disrupts our peace and causes us to become snappy or irritated or, or sin in other ways. Father we're so weak and yet he is perfect and strong and he is our savior. So we thank you for revealing him to us. We thank you for teaching us about your Son, Jesus Christ. We rejoice to come back next week and learn all that he has to teach us about the resurrection, resurrection life.

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And we ask for your blessing about what we've learned so far. We ask that you would help us to avoid the errors of the Sadducees. We would examine ourselves and walk in humility before you and before others. But Lord that you would steal within our hearts of resolve to follow Christ, to worship him and worship you in his name. Amen.