

The Mind of Christ The Enemies of Jesus – Part 2

INTRODUCTION:

- I. As Jesus reached the mid-point in His earthly ministry, opposition to Him and to His teaching had already intensified to a fever pitch.
 - A. This bitter opposition was coming from four different religious and political groups that exercised extensive control over the people of Israel.
 1. These four groups include:
 - a. The scribes and Pharisees as one group.
 - b. The Sadducees as another group.
 - c. The Herodians as another group.
 - d. And finally the priests, or Chief Priests as the fourth group.
 - B. At first, each group had their OWN DISTINCT reasons for opposing Jesus, but as time went on, they would find common ground.
 1. They would all come to the same conclusion – if this Jesus from Nazareth was allowed to continue, the end result could spell disaster for them all.
 2. Therefore, they were determined to silence Jesus at all cost. As far as they were concerned, Jesus was a SERIOUS threat.

- C. But what WERE the specific issues that each of these groups had with Jesus? Why were they SO OPPOSED to Him, and SO DETERMINED to see Him die on a Roman cross?
1. If you remember from our lesson last time, the scribes and Pharisees saw Jesus as a lawbreaker and, therefore, a blasphemer.
 - a. The scribes and the Pharisees treasured the Law of Moses AND the traditions of the elders.
 - b. But in reality, they had little regard for the Law of Moses. And Jesus was quick to point out that they were actually SETTING ASIDE the fundamental teachings of the Law in order to keep their man-made traditions and scribal laws.
 - c. He also clashed with the scribes and Pharisees over the pious hypocrisy. Jesus called them “whitewashed tombs” that appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are filled with rotting corpses. In the same manner, Jesus said the scribes and Pharisees put on this public show of piety and devotion to Jehovah, while on the inside they were among the most vile of sinners. By doing this, Jesus was DELIBERATELY UNDERMINING the credibility of the scribes and Pharisees in the eyes of the common people.

- d. But the BIGGEST clash between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees came over the fact that THEY thought THEY were the ONLY ones who truly KNEW and UNDERSTOOD the Law, and therefore were the ONLY ones who had a right to TEACH the Law. But Jesus not only taught the people in public – including in the Temple – Jesus also enraged the scribes and Pharisees by saying HIS teaching came from God whereas THEIR came nothing more than the teachings of men handed down from one generation to the next – teachings that did NOT come from God.
 - e. Therefore, the scribes and Pharisees saw Jesus as a threat to the Law and the traditions of the elders, AND to their own prestige and credibility among the people as the FINAL authority on the Law. And because Jesus said His teaching came from HIS Father in heaven, and NOT from men, the scribes and the Pharisees saw Jesus as a BLASPHEMER and a LIAR.
2. However, when we take a closer look at the three REMAINING groups we find that they ALSO had reasons for THEIR bitter opposition to Jesus.

- a. But THEIR reasons for opposing Jesus were entirely different from the scribes and Pharisees.
 - b. THEIR opposition was prompted more out of A FEAR of what Jesus COULD do if the masses of people believed His claims to be the Messiah.
3. Therefore, let's turn our attention to the Sadducees and see why they hated and feared Jesus so.

BODY:

- I. If you remember from our previous lesson, during the four centuries before Christ – the period of time that occurs between the last book of the Old Testament (the book of Malachi) and the birth of Jesus Christ – many Jews had adopted the PHILOSOPHIES, the CULTURE and even the LANGUAGE of the Greeks.
 - A. As a result of this, there were MARKED differences between the scribes and Pharisees and the Sadducees.
 1. For example, the scribes and the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees, on the other hand, REJECTED the concept of a resurrection, and believed that death was the final end of man.

2. BECAUSE the scribes and the Pharisees believed in the resurrection, they ALSO believed in a final judgment. But because the Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection of the dead, they CERTAINLY didn't believe in some kind of FINAL judgment.
3. The scribes and the Pharisees accepted the ENTIRE Old Testament scriptures, where as the Sadducees accepted only the first FIVE books of the Law – the PENTATEUCH (the five books of Moses – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). The Sadducees on the other hand, did NOT believe in the inspiration of the prophets or the books of history and poetry that make up the Old Testament scriptures.
4. The scribes and Pharisees also believed in the traditional SCRIBAL law – or the ORAL INTERPRETATIONS of the Law – known as “The traditions of the elders.” The Sadducees REJECTED scribal laws altogether, and REFUSED to believe in, or follow, the rigid and strict rules imposed by the scribes and Pharisees.
5. The scribes and Pharisees also believed in heavenly beings such as angels, and they also believed in the existence of evil spirits and the devil. The Sadducees rejected ALL those beliefs. To

THEM there WERE NO angels, and there WERE NO evil spirits and CERTAINLY no DEVIL – this is because they believed there was no afterlife.

6. The scribes and Pharisees also believed in the concept of FREE WILL – meaning that we have the INNATE FREEDOM or the INBORN ABILITY to make INDIVIDUAL choices for OURSELVES in life – in other words, we have the INNATE ability to choose either RIGHT or WRONG. BUT in doing so, we ALSO must be willing to accept the CONSEQUENCES for WRONG choices. The Sadducees, on the other hand, REJECTED the concept of free will and believed that we are ALL the product of our culture and heritage, and that we cannot be held accountable for the way we are. In other words, if you turned out to be a thief, it was the breakdown of society and social order that caused you to turn out that way – not some choice YOU made.
 - a. I think you can see how SOME of these same philosophies have carried over into OUR society today. We've gotten into the habit of blaming society and a breakdown of the social order as the reason people do the evil and bad things they do.
 - b. We blame everything and everyone EXCEPT the criminal.

7. But one of the MAJOR differences between these two groups is that the scribes and Pharisees BELIEVED IN and LOOKED FOR a MESSIAH, whereas the Sadducees REJECTED the idea of a Messiah coming to rule over the people of Israel.
 - a. In fact, the VERY IDEA of a Messiah was a THREAT to the Sadducees and the other groups – the Herodians and the priests and chief priests.
 - b. And the reason WHY these last three groups saw a Messiah as a threat will become abundantly clear as we look further into some of the Jewish teachings and beliefs during the days of Jesus.

- II. When we compare the scribes and Pharisees with the Sadducees, we find that the scribes and Pharisees were held in high esteem among the common people, whereas the Sadducees were seen as “the rich and famous” – they were the (AIR-ris-TOC-cra-cy) aristocracy (the UPPER CLASS) among their Jewish brethren because they were both WEALTHY and POLITICALLY INFLUENTIAL.
 - A. Because of this, the Sadducees were not a large group, but they were VERY POWERFUL politically.

1. To maintain their wealth the status quo – to maintain their political power – the Sadducees were willing to compromise their religious convictions (such as they were) to establish and maintain a working friendship with the Romans.
 - a. This was certainly NOT a warm, fuzzy relationship. But one born out of necessity – the need for the Sadducees to hold on to their power base and protect their OWN financial interests.
 - b. Therefore, the Sadducees became COLLABORATORS with the ruling Roman officials.
 - c. Of course, the scribes and Pharisees viewed this “friendship” and collaboration with HORROR. They viewed the Sadducees with CONTEMPT and often considered them as “UNCLEAN!”
- B. But why did the Sadducees become so eager to see Jesus die?
 1. The Sadducees saw Jesus as a POLITICAL and ECONOMIC THREAT.
 2. In the early days of His ministry, Jesus had warned His disciples from telling others that He was truly the Son of God – the promised Messiah.

- a. Even through the mid-point of His earthly ministry, Jesus was still warning His disciples against telling ANY man that He was the Son of God.
 - b. But as Jesus drew closer to the cross, He began to OPENLY make claim of being God's Son, the Christ, the Hope of Israel, the Messiah who had come to usher in the kingdom spoken about by ALL the Old Testament prophets.
3. So why did the Sadducees oppose Jesus so much – they didn't believe there WOULD be a Messiah because the REJECTED the teachings of the PROPHETS?
4. The answer is simply this – the common people were not only LOOKING for a Messiah (one Who would be the DELIVERER and SAVIOR of Israel) they LONGED for a Messiah.
- a. The common Jew in the days of Jesus was tired of being in subjection to every heathen nation that had come to power since the days of Saul, David and Solomon – Israel's GOLDEN years.
 - b. On a number of occasions, false Messiahs would rise up, claim to be the DELIVERER of Israel, RAISE a following, REVOLT against the ruling government – which just

happened to be the Romans – and eventually be slaughtered along with all their followers.

- c. This would ALSO cause problems for the ruling Jews of the day – those Jews who were the POLITICAL and RELIGIOUS leaders of the people of Israel – namely the Sadducees, the priests and the chief priests.
- d. Rome would not tolerate insurrection, and expected the Jewish political and religious leaders to maintain control over their own people – OR those Jewish leaders would be removed from their positions of power by ROME and replaced by those who WOULD maintain control.
- e. So, it was a because of their fear that Jesus would lead an insurrection against Rome that the Sadducees and the other groups (the Herodians and the priests and chief priests) became convinced that this Jesus of Nazareth had to be silenced at all cost.

C. When we look at the trials of Jesus we begin to understand the motive behind the Sadducees opposition to Jesus.

- 1. In the private trial before the Sanhedrin (which was made up of both Sadducees as well as Pharisees, but dominated by the

Sadducees) we see they charged Jesus with BLASPHEMY for claiming to be the Son of God.

- a. **Matthew 26:59-66** – *Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.'" And the high priest arose and said to Him, "Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?" But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!" Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, "He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! What do you think?" They answered and said, "He is deserving of death."*

2. But when Jesus was taken to Pilate – the ruling Roman official – the charges against Jesus changed.
 - a. **Luke 23:1-3** – *Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King." Then Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" He answered him and said, "It is as you say."*
3. In the PRIVATE TRIAL the High Priest, who was a Sadducee, charged Jesus with blasphemy – NOT because He believed in the coming Messiah or that someone could be the Son of God, but because He knew this was the ONLY charge that the Sadducees and the Pharisees could BOTH agree on.
4. But when they brought Jesus to Pilate, the charge of blasphemy against Jesus was changed to TREASON – calling Himself a KING, perverting the NATION, and saying NO ONE should pay taxes to Caesar.
5. The Sadducees knew Pilate would NEVER listen to a charge of blasphemy – that was merely a RELIGIOUS matter.
6. But Pilate was OBLIGATED as the Roman Governor of Judea to hear a charge of TREASON and POLITICAL INSURRECTION!

D. Therefore, the bitter hatred and opposition of the Sadducees against Jesus was ENTIRELY based on SELFISH interests.

1. They saw Jesus as a threat to their POLITICAL POWER and to their ECONOMIC SECURITY.
2. So, for NO OTHER REASON, other than to preserve their OWN selfish interests, the Sadducees would go to ANY length to see Jesus die.

E. In the New Testament, the Sadducees surface time and time again.

1. During the ministry of John the Baptist, the Sadducees come along with the Pharisees to investigate John – who promptly call them both a “Brood of vipers.”
 - a. **Matt 3:7-10** – *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, 9 and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 10 And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*

2. The Sadducees are found once again with the Pharisees in an attempt to tempt Jesus by demanding that He show some sign from heaven validating His of being the Christ.
 - a. **Matt 16:1-4** – *Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. 2 He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; 3 and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. 4 A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." And He left them and departed.*
3. The Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, attempted to trap Jesus with what they believed was an unanswerable question about the resurrection. Jesus said the Sadducees were ignorant of the scriptures that spoke of life after death, and were ignorant of the power of God. His answer literally silenced the Sadducees.
 - a. **Mark 12:18-27, 34** – *Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying:*

19 "Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. 20 Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. 21 And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. 22 So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. 23 Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife." 24 Jesus answered and said to them, "Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? 25 For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 26 But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? 27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken." . . .

4. After the establishment of the Lord's church, the Sadducees become upset when they hear Peter and John preaching in the

temple about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and have the two men arrested so they could be brought before the Sanhedrin.

(Acts 4:1-4)

5. A short time later, the high priest and those who were with them (which were the other Sadducean members of the Sanhedrin) had all the apostles arrested and brought before the council where they were commanded not to preach or teach a resurrected Jesus ever again **(Acts 5:17-42)**
6. When the apostle Paul was arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin, Paul claimed that he was being judged for his beliefs about in the resurrection of the dead, which immediately drove a wedge between the Pharisee and Sadducean members of the Council. The debate that erupted became so violent and heated that they almost forgot about Paul.
 - a. **Acts 23:6-10** – *But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!" 7 And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. 8 For Sadducees say that*

there is no resurrection — and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. 9 Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees' party arose and protested, saying, "We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God." 10 Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks.

- F. The Sadducees remained bitter enemies of Jesus and His disciples through most of the first century – until, that is, 70 AD when their political and economic power collapsed with the fall of Jerusalem.
 - 1. Following the destruction of Jerusalem, the Pharisees grew even stronger and more determined to protect the remnants of Judaism, while the Sadducees simply faded into history.

CONCLUSION:

- I. When we look at these first two groups of those who became the enemies of Jesus we are naturally angered over the fact that these men would hate the Savior so.

- A. We find it hard to understand why they would go to such EXTREME LENGTHS to see Jesus die.
1. But when we look at their motives we see that their motives were based on a complete misunderstanding of the Messiahship and kingdom of Jesus Christ.
 - a. Those who believed in a coming Messiah (namely the scribes and Pharisees) thought the Messiah would come as a conquering ruler and king, and would drive out the Romans from Israel, cleanse Jerusalem of a corrupt priesthood, and restore the nation of Israel to the glory she once had in the days of Saul, David and Solomon. That was THEIR concept of the Messiah and the kingdom.
 - b. The Sadducees, who DIDN'T look for a Messiah, feared that Jesus would come to power and lead an insurrection against Rome. If He were successful, these men would be ousted and lose their religious, political and economic power. And if He were UNSUCCESSFUL, the WHOLE NATION would suffer when Rome sent in massive armies to CRUSH a national rebellion. In fact, that's EXACTLY what happened in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

- B. But the irony of all this is that people are STILL rejecting Jesus for ESSENTIALLY the same reasons today.
1. Like the scribes and Pharisees, there are those today that refuse to accept the TRUTH about Jesus and His church, because they have become blinded by their OWN LOGIC and TRADITION.
 - a. These people refuse to accept Christ because it would mean they would have to give up their religious heritage – the religion they inherited from their forefathers, or...
 - b. They would have to give up the traditional practices that are part of their religious service that have NO Biblical authority whatsoever. In other words, they would need to give up practices and doctrinal beliefs that are nothing more than the teachings of men, and are NOT found in Scripture.
 2. And like the Sadducees, there are those today who refuse to come to Jesus because they love the world more than they love the Lord.
 - a. They refuse to come to Christ because it would mean they would have to give up the influence of worldliness that has permeated their lives, and they would also have to give up their desire for wealth, power and prestige.

- b. They would rather enjoy the riches of this world for a SEASON than inherit the riches of heaven for an ETERNITY.
 - c. To put it simply, becoming a TRUE disciple of Jesus Christ would require them to put the Lord FIRST in their lives, and place everything else second. They're simply not willing to do that.
- II. Sadly, YOU could be heading for the SAME FATE that the religious leaders who rejected Jesus experienced.
- A. The day finally came when God brought judgment against the nation of Israel:
 - 1. Those who had placed their faith in following HUMAN traditions and HUMAN religious ordinances saw their whole religious world collapse under the judgment of God.
 - a. In the same manner, God will someday bring about the FINAL judgment against ALL mankind. And He will separate the chaff from the wheat – He will separate those who follow man-made religious from those who are TRUE disciples of Christ, those who are TRULY New Testament Christians.
 - b. Which side do you want to be on when that day comes?

2. And those who placed their faith in their wealth, power and prestige saw all that disappear almost over night as God brought judgment against Israel in AD 70.
 - a. In the same manner, all the WEALTH, all the POWER, and all the PRESTIGE you may have in THIS life will mean ABSOLUTELY NOTHING when you stand before the judgment seat of Christ – the VERY ONE you REJECTED so that you could have your wealth, power and prestige.
 - b. Where will your SECURITY be on that final day of judgment? What will you trust in on THAT day?
- B. If you're here this morning and NOT a true disciple of Christ, then I can pretty well guarantee that it's because of ONE of these two reasons.
 1. You're either unwilling to set aside your traditional religious views and follow what the BIBLE teaches about the Lord and His church, or...
 2. You're unwilling to give up your love of the world – you're love of doing YOUR OWN THING rather than SUBMITTING yourself to Jesus Christ in complete obedience.
 3. Why not take advantage of this opportunity to change all that?

4. Why not place all your security and hope in the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ that is able at this moment to cleanse you of every sin and bring you into a special relationship with God as His child.