

Exalting Jesus Christ

The Enemies of Jesus – Part 2 *"The Sadducees"*

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.
 - b. The Sadducees.
 - c. The Herodians.
 - d. And finally the Priests, or Chief Priests.
 - 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. Last week we took a close look at the first group – the scribes and the Pharisees – and saw their reasons for opposing Jesus.
1. But as we turn our attention to the three remaining groups, we find their reasons for opposing Jesus were completely different.
 2. The Sadducees, the Herodians and the Priests and Chief Priest all feared what Jesus could do if the masses of people believed His claim to be the Messiah.
 3. Their opposition to Jesus was prompted more by fear – fear that they would lose their prestige, their positions of authority, and their religious and political power.
- II. Therefore, as we continue our series of studies entitled "Exalting Jesus Christ" we are taking a brief pause in our studies of the gospel of John to examine what some of the other gospel accounts tell us about the remaining groups who were the enemies of Jesus.
- A. This morning let's turn our attention to the group known as the Sadducees – a word which means "the righteous ones."
1. And as we do, we'll see that these religious leaders were anything but righteous.

2. In fact, they were among the most powerful as well as the most morally corrupt religious leaders in Israel.

BODY:

- I. If you remember from our previous lesson, during the four centuries before 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.
 - a. The Sadducees, on the other hand, rejected the concept of a resurrection, and believed that death was the final end of man.
 - b. You can imagine how outraged they were when they learned that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the death – they wanted to put Lazarus and Jesus to death.
 2. Therefore, because scribes and the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead, they also believed in a final judgment.
 - a. But because the Sadducees did not believe in some kind of final judgment after death.

3. Also, the scribes and the Pharisees accepted the entire Old Testament as being inspired by God – including the Law (the first five books of the Old Testament), the Psalms and the Prophets.
 - a. The Sadducees, on the other hand, accepted only the first five books of the Law – the Pentateuch (the five books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy).
 - b. Therefore, the Sadducees 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.*"
 - a. 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.
 - a. The Sadducees rejected all those beliefs. To them there were no angels, no evil spirits and certainly no devil.

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 choose right or wrong – and that we must accept the consequences for wrong choices.
 - a. 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.
 - b. Therefore, since we're the product of our culture, we can't be held accountable if we turned out to be a thief – a thief is merely the product of a broken society and social order that caused them to turn out that way.
7. I think you can see how some of these same philosophies have carried over into our society today.
 - a. 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.
- B. 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.

1. 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.
 2. 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. While the scribes and Pharisees were held in high esteem among the common people, the Sadducees were seen as "the rich and famous" – they were the (air-is-TOC-cra-cy) aristocracy (the ruling 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 and 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 answer is simple – the Sadducees saw Jesus as a political and economic threat.
 2. You see, 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.
 - b. Therefore, on several 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. Unfortunately, this 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 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 a Messiah, but because He knew this was the only charge the Sadducees and the Pharisees could both agree on.
 4. But when they brought Jesus to Pilate, the Sanhedrin changed the charge against Jesus to treason – calling Himself a King, perverting the nation, and saying no one should pay taxes to Caesar (which, of course, was a lie).
 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.

- III. In the New Testament, the Sadducees surface time and time again.
- A. During the ministry of John the Baptist, the Sadducees came with the Pharisees to investigate John – who promptly call them both a "Brood of vipers."

1. **Matthew 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.*

- B. The Sadducees are found once again with the Pharisees when they tried to tempt Jesus by demanding that He show some sign from heaven validating His of claim of being the Christ.

1. **Matthew 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.

C. The Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, attempted to trap Jesus with what they believed was an unanswerable question about the resurrection.

1. **Mark 12:18-27** – *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." . . .

2. 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.
- D. After the establishment of the Lord's church, the Sadducees continue to be a threat.
1. They became 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)
 2. 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)**

3. 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.
 - 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.

- b. The debate that erupted became so violent and heated that they almost forgot about Paul.
- 4. The Sadducees remained bitter enemies of Jesus and His disciples through most of the first century – until 70 AD when their political and economic power collapsed with the fall of Jerusalem.

CONCLUSION:

- I. When we look at these first two groups of those who became the enemies of Jesus we're naturally angered that they would hate the Savior so much.
 - A. It's hard to understand why they would go to such extreme lengths to see Jesus die.
 - 1. But the irony is that people are still rejecting Jesus for essentially the same reasons today. Could you be one of them?
 - a. Could it be that you really don't believe in the resurrection, or that you'll someday stand before the judgment seat of Christ?
 - (1). Denying the resurrection and the final judgment doesn't change the reality of both – they are both real and inescapable – whether we believe it or not.

- b. And could it be that you're placing your confidence in the accumulation of wealth, power and prestige?
 - (1). Don't you realize that 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 – especially if you rejected Christ to gain all those things?
 - (2). You will be standing before the very One you rejected so that you could have your wealth, power and prestige.
 - (3). Where will your security be on that final Day? Where will you place your trust and confidence then?

- B. If you're not a true disciple of Christ, why not take advantage of this opportunity to change that?
 - 1. 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.
 - 2. The blood of Christ can either bring you into a special relationship with God as His child, or it can return you to that special relationship if you've fallen away.
 - 3. Why not do what you need to do right now?