

## The Attack on the Resurrection, Part 2

Luke 20:27-33

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, into indulge themselves in 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 it, 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 Phari, 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, it's 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 holy unprofitable.

None of what the Pharisees debate, 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 subpoint, 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 5-10 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."

That's what the word, levirate, means; it's 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 lev, levirate marriage, this is how the Sadducees saw it, this is how mankind

with no hope of an afterlife, this is how a man chieve, 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 judgment. 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 Pharisees came before the doctrine of the 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, 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 A.D. 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, as well as their storehouse of all their earthly treasure, just as a den is to thieves. But with the temple's destruction in A.D. 70, 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, 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 5:2-3, "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 you. It "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 interpretations and assure ourselves of our rock-solid theology, that we'd 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've 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 steel 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 judgment, but 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, that 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 challenge. We'll 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, 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. And 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 her 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, it, doesn't it seem like a very far-fetched 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 loved this man. I learned so much from him, but with regard to religion, he'd been raised in what is now Zimbabwe. It was Rhodesia, which he was quick to remind me: 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, Well, 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 at 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. Well, then the seafood restaurants go and buy all that seafood from the market, and, and then they serve that seafood, which has fed on the flesh of dead, of a dead, Christian sailor. 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 going to look like?

What a monstrosity! I mean, he thought he had me. Frank, Frank, Frank, Frank, Frank.

That's like 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. And 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. 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?

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. 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?

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 learn all that he has to teach us about the resurrection, resurrection life. 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, that we would examine ourselves and walk in humility before you and before others, that, Lord, that you would steel within our hearts a resolve to follow Christ, to worship him and worship you in his name. Amen.