

43. Jesus Answered the Pharisees and Sadducees

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the parable of the vineyard to others. We saw that Jesus warned the religious leaders of the judgment that would come upon them. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus was questioned by the Herodians and Pharisees.

The religious leaders were eager to trap Jesus by whatever way would work. A group of Pharisees and Herodians came to question Jesus in order to try to trap Him. Mark 12:13-17 says, “Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in *His* words. When they had come, they said to Him, ‘Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?’ But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, ‘Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see *it*.’ So they brought *it*. And He said to them, ‘Whose image and inscription *is* this?’ They said to Him, ‘Caesar’s.’ And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’ And they marveled at Him.” Usually, the Pharisees and Herodians did not work together, but they were ready to try anything to trap Jesus in His words.

The Pharisees and Herodians pretended to really want to know what was true to cover up the fact that they were trying to trap Jesus. As a result, they tried to flatter Jesus with their words. They said they knew that He was a teacher that was fair and honest in His decisions. They said He did not have favor people. They even said that He taught the Word of God correctly. However, these things were all said to cover up the fact that they were really trying to trap Him. Jesus knew that they were being hypocrites and did not believe any of these things they said about Him. Then, they asked their questions, “Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?” Since the Pharisees and Herodians came together, they thought they could accuse Him of wrongdoing regardless of how Jesus answered. The Herodians were a political group that backed Herod and the Roman government. Meanwhile, the Pharisees did not like the fact that their land was controlled by Rome, and they did not like to pay taxes to the Romans.

Jesus asked them why they were testing Him. Then, He asked them to bring Him a denarius (the coin that was paid for a day’s wages and also the coin each person had to pay as a tax to the Romans each year). These men quickly got a coin and gave it to Jesus. He asked them whose picture was on the coin. They replied that it was a picture of the Roman emperor, Caesar. Jesus then said, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” The men that questioned Jesus were amazed at His answer, because they knew they had not trapped Him. By this answer, Jesus pointed out that we have a responsibility to our human governments. Romans 13:5-7 says, “Therefore *you* must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes *are due*, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.” At the same time, we have a responsibility to God. We are to give God the things that belong to God. Suddenly, the Pharisees and Herodians were amazed. Instead of trapping Jesus, they could not disagree with what Jesus

had said.

When the Sadducees saw that Jesus had answered the Herodians and Pharisees, the Sadducees came with their question. Mark 12:18-23 says, “Then *some* Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: ‘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. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.’” The Sadducees thought that Jesus would not be able to answer their question.

The Sadducees actually showed their hypocrisy by their question. Acts 23:8 says, “For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.” The Sadducees only recognized the books written by Moses as having authority, and said that he did not teach the resurrection. All of the chief priests, and a majority of the Sanhedrin, were Sadducees. They were the people who got the fees that were paid by the people changing money and selling animals for sacrifices in the temple courtyard. As a result, they were very upset when Jesus cleansed the temple, because that meant they would lose the profits they made from the fees they charged.

Here, we see that the Sadducees were asking a question about the resurrection, when they did not believe in the resurrection. They thought they could show the impossibility of the resurrection by their question. Deuteronomy 25:5-6 says, “If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not *be married* to a stranger outside *the family*; her husband’s brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her. And it shall be *that* the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.” Moses had given these instructions to Israel so that the inheritance of each tribe and family remained within that tribe and family.

The Sadducees said that seven brothers each married the same woman and each died after they had married the woman. None of them had any children. Finally, the woman died also. Then, the question of the Sadducees was, “Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.” The Sadducees thought they could show the impossibility of the resurrection by showing that, in the resurrection, all seven brothers could not be married to the same woman. Since the Sadducees did not even believe in the resurrection, we see that they were actually trying to trick Jesus in front of the people so the people would not believe Jesus.

We see the answer of Jesus in Mark 12:24-27, where we read: “Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 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’? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.” Instead of being tricked, Jesus explained why the Sadducees were mistaken.

There were three things that the Sadducees did not know. First, they did not know the Scriptures. God performed the first marriage when He created Eve and brought her to the man. Genesis 2:21-22 says, “And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.” Since the angels were already in existence, this meant there is no marriage among the angels. Our eternal bodies are described in 1 Corinthians 15:44, which says: “It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” In our spiritual body, we will not marry or have children. Instead, we will have a new type of life and will never experience death. We will have perfect spiritual relationships with everyone.

Second, they did not know the power of God. In 1 Kings 17:22 we read, “Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived.” 2 Kings 4:35 says, “He returned and walked back and forth in the house, and again went up and stretched himself out on him; then the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.” Then, 2 Kings 13:21 says, “So it was, as they were burying a man, that suddenly they spied a band of raiders; and they put the man in the tomb of Elisha; and when the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet.” In all three of these verses, from the Old Testament, God showed His power to raise the dead. The Sadducees did not want to accept this fact.

Third, the Sadducees did not even accept what Moses wrote about the resurrection. In Exodus 3:6 Moses wrote about the burning bush experience. “Moreover He said, ‘I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.” The word translated “I AM” is a strong present tense word that shows that God is still the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob because “I AM” has no beginning and no end. The Sadducees suddenly had to realize the Moses also spoke of the resurrection, and they claimed to believe the writings of Moses.

In the book of John, we see that Jesus used this same word many times to show His eternal existence. Christ spoke of Himself when He said, “I am the Bread of Life”, “I am the Resurrection and the Life” and many other titles using “I am”. These titles point to the eternal existence of Jesus. Then, Jesus said to the Jews, in John 8:58-59, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to clearly explain the eternal existence of Jesus. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain this fact to others.