

ANOTHER ENEMY RISES AND FALLS

Mark 12:18-27

Intro: While we all know, or should know, that the hearts of all people everywhere are spiritually blinded to the truth, and hardened against the truth, yet it remains that one of the most astounding facts of history, of all history, is the hatred that was directed toward the Lord Jesus Christ while He was here on earth. And that hatred follows Him down to the present hour. And it will follow Him to the end of time. He came as an expression of God's love for sinful human beings. He came proclaiming the eternal truth of God. He came doing nothing but good. His teaching astonished the multitudes, and He was followed by all classes of society. And yet no one was ever hated like He was, and still is. Our own University of Oregon student leaders are being recognized all over the world for the blasphemous way in which the Lord Jesus Christ has been presented in the student newspaper on campus. And those who have done it are not in the least sorry for what they have done. One of their students who has something to do with the paper actually said that the President of the University, President Frohmeier, has no right to interfere with them.

The Lord spoke about this hatred shortly before He was crucified, and I want to read to you from John's Gospel what He said. Here are His words which are probably familiar to most of us:

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me (John 15:18-21).

And then two verses later our Lord continued:

23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

25 But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is

written in their law, They hated me without a cause (John 15:23-25).

But there is another factor about the way that the Lord was hated which I want to point out to you. Who were the men that we have been talking about for the last few Sundays, who were leaders in this opposition and hatred of our Lord? They were scribes, chief priests, elders, Pharisees, and this morning we come to a group called Sadducees. Who were these men? Well, to varying degrees they were the religious leaders of the nation Israel. They were what we would men of God. At least that is what they professed to be. But the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, said in the verses which I have just read to you, “He that hateth me hateth my Father also.” So a person cannot hate Christ and yet love God, or serve Him. And the people, like the scribes and Pharisees, who claimed to be servants of God and devoted to Him, were just a bunch of liars. I have known of preachers during my lifetime who claimed to be men of God, but who wanted nothing to do with Christ. Such a man even though he is a pastor of a church is an impostor, a false prophet.

When the Jews, the Jewish leaders, sought witnesses who would testify against the Lord Jesus Christ in the Roman courts where He was tried, they could only produce false witnesses. Even Pilate said more than once that He found nothing worthy of death in anything that the Lord had ever done, or in anything that He had ever taught. And yet He was the most hated of all men. It’s amazing, isn’t it? People will let you talk about God all that you want to, because “God” can mean anything that people want it to mean, but the moment you start to talk about Jesus Christ, all of the bars go up. That is why there is a natural hesitation on our part to speak to others about Christ. We know that it is going to produce an argument, and maybe more than that.

This section that we are going through now in the Gospel of Mark, and the verses in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke which report the same events, seem to give us the picture that the Lord’s enemies were lined up to get Him to say something that would get Him into trouble either with the Jewish people or with the Roman government. The chief priests and elders and scribes came first. The Pharisees followed them. And now in our text for today we are told about the coming of the Sadducees. And Matthew said that they came “the same day” (Matt. 22:23) that the Pharisees had sought to get the Lord into trouble about paying taxes to Caesar. And after the Pharisees failed, the Sadducees came right behind them –

“the same day”! They were like a pack of wolves ready to pounce on their prey.

So let us ask ourselves:

I. WHO WERE THE SADDUCEES?

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all describe them for that which they were the most famous: They taught that “there is no resurrection.” They denied the existence of angels. The only part of the Bible they accepted, was the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. They seem to have been a smaller group than the Pharisees, but they were very wealthy and very powerful. Moses was their hero, and they denied that Moses ever spoke of a future life. The reason that they were after the Lord on this occasion was because the Lord had driven the money changers out of the Temple, and that was a major source of their income. They were rationalists, and held out no hope to the Jewish people beyond this life because they believed that the present is all that there is. They seem to have disappeared after the first century. But when the Lord was here on earth the Sadducees were a force to be contended with.

Now let us notice:

II. THEIR PLAN (Mark 12:18-24).

They, like the Pharisees before them, felt that they had a situation in mind for which the Lord would have no answer. And they felt that they had a Scriptural basis for their question. The passage which was the basis upon which the Sadducees based the problem which they presented to the Lord is Deuteronomy 25, beginning with verse 5. I won't read the whole passage that applies, but the first two verses will tell us what the Sadducees had in mind. Listen as I read Deuteronomy 25, verses 5 and 6:

5 If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her.

6 And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel.

This was very important in OT times, and a man in such a situation who refused to have a child for his brother, was really disgraced for life.

Now as you can see, the situation that the Sadducees had cooked up, was that their were seven brothers in one family. The first one married, but died before he had a son. So the second one married the first brother's wife, but he also died before they could have a son. This happened seven times. Each time the next brother would die before the first brother's wife could have a son. And last of all the wife died.

Now I am sure that the Sadducees felt that they had a problem which would confound the Lord as far as His teaching about heaven was concerned, and would give support to them and their teaching that there will not be a resurrection.

Let me digress for just a moment to remind you that there were people in Paul's day, and particularly in the city of Corinth, who were teaching that there is no resurrection. And Paul reminded the Corinthian believers that the resurrection is a most essential part of our faith as Christians. Of course I am referring to 1 Corinthians 15. I want to read to you what Paul said so that we can all be reminded of how vital belief in life after death really is. Listen to Paul's words:

12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable (1 Cor. 15:12-19).

How terrible it would be if we had no hope for the future! The disappearance of the Sadducees shows that such teaching cannot survive. Everything we believe is based upon the fact that there is such a thing as resurrection, and the certainty that our best days are yet to come. The person who does not believe in resurrection is the one who deserves all of the pity that we could possibly pour out on him. Such teaching is insane! No rational person will deny that there is a future life, and if there is a

future life, there has to be resurrection.

Well, how did the Lord handle these stupid men?

III. THE LORD'S RESPONSE (Mark 12:24-27).

They had asked the Lord a question, and so He responded with a question to them. And as you think about the Lord's question, you will see how He packed it with the truth.

Have you noticed that in these four verses the Lord began and ended with the same word, the word "err"? It is one of the NT words verbs for *sin*. The Lord evidently wanted to emphasize with these Sadducees that they had gone astray, and that they were leading others astray. What they were teaching was sinful, and anybody who believed what they were teaching was sinning as well. It is no wonder that James said in his epistle that those who teach are going to face the stricter judgment. What a tragedy it would be for me, *and for you*, if I were to stand before you and try to get you to believe something that isn't true. If you tell people that there is no resurrection, no accountability to God, then they begin to live the way many Americans are living today. There are no bars, no restraints. Eat, drink, and be merry, because tomorrow you may die, and when you die it's all over! Is that the truth? If you don't believe the truth about the present, then you can't possibly be right about the future.

Why were these supposedly religious men living a life of sin, and getting others to sin? Two reasons. One, they didn't know the Scriptures. And two, they didn't know the power of God.

They didn't know the Scriptures. You know, there are a lot of people who treat the Bible the way the Sadducees did. They take what they want to believe, and they ignore what they don't want to believe. God has given us in the Scriptures what is essential for all of us to know. And if we neglect the Scriptures, or any part of it, our neglect is going to have a disastrous effect upon our lives. The Sadducees were saying in their day, "We'll take the books of Moses, but the rest is not important." Such an attitude is sinful in God's sight. The Gospel is in the first books of the Bible, but they were too blind to be able to see it. And that is what they needed. Sin will keep you from the Bible, or the Bible will keep you from sin. What did the Psalmist say about the Bible and sin? He said, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Psa.

119:11). The big problem in America today is that most of our leaders and most of our people don't know the Bible. Many have never read it. Most don't believe it.

What about the power of God? What did the Lord mean by that? He meant that if they did not know the power of God, it was because they did not know God Himself! You can't read the first chapter of Genesis without being confronted with the truth that there is a God, and that He is a God of power. He just spoke the words, and this universe came into existence. But people are too smart to believe that, and so they are left with the craziest ideas as to how this world came into being. The Lord knew that those Sadducees didn't have a case. They were deceived and they were deceiving others. They wanted people to think that they were very religious and very wise, but they were actually very despicable! And yet how gracious the Lord was with them. He was talking to a bunch of religious sinners who didn't know the Bible and they didn't know the God of the Bible.

So He told them that there is not going to be any marriage in heaven. We are not going to be husbands and wives. Child birth will be a thing of the past. We are not really capable of understanding now how wonderful it will be to be in heaven with the Lord and all of the glorified saints. It is going to be perfect, the place that the Lord has prepared for the people He is now preparing for glory! We are going to be like the Lord. And like the angels. What would it be like if we held to the doctrine of the Sadducees? All we would think about would be this life, with no anticipation or expectation of glory to come.

But the Lord gave them a final word. I wonder if any of those Sadducees got what He was saying, and went home to study all of the Scriptures, and learn to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior.

The Lord said, in effect, "You want to talk about Moses and the books of Moses. All right," said the Lord, "let me point out a truth that God revealed to Moses which indicates that there is life after death." When the Lord spoke to Moses out of the burning bush which you read about in Exodus chapter 3, how did He make Himself known to Moses? The Lord was quoting from Exodus 3:6. This is what the Lord said to Moses. Let me read what He said from Exodus. I hope you remember the story of how Moses saw the bush burning in the desert, but the bush was not consumed by the fire, and so he went over to check on it. And when he

did, this is what happened:

4 And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses.

And he said, Here am I.

5 And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

6 Moreover he said, I am the God of thy 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 (Exodus 3:4-6).

The Lord said to them, “Have you not read in the book of Moses, how God spake unto him, saying, “I am . . .” And then the Lord explained what God meant by those words. He meant that “He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.” At that very moment Abraham and Isaac and Jacob were alive! And, my dear fellow believers, *they are still alive!*

I think it was Dwight L. Moody who once said, “Some day you will read in your newspaper that Dwight L. Moody is dead. When you do, don’t believe a word of it because at that moment I will be more alive than I ever have been here on earth.”

When we die, we don’t cease to exist. We just change our dwelling place because to be “absent from the body” is to be “present with the Lord.”

Concl: Aren’t you glad that the Sadducees were wrong, and that the Lord Jesus is right? Thank God there is resurrection. Thank God death does not end it all. We are going to see all of the saints we have read about in our Bibles, and we are going to see all of the saints we have known here on earth. But what will be best of all, we will see our heavenly Father, and our living Savior, and the Holy Spirit – and we will be like our Lord, and with Him forever.

But let me add that these great prospects for the future are only for those who know Jesus Christ as Savior. Thank God I know Him. And I know that most of you know Him. It is my prayer that we will all know Him. If the Lord is not your Savior, perhaps He has been speaking to you as we have looked into His Word this morning. Open your heart. Believe in Him Who died to save sinners like we are, and He will save you now.