

THE RATIONALISM OF THE SADDUCEES

TEXT: LUKE 20:27-38

INTRODUCTION:

1. The Pharisees tried to trick our Lord but they were unsuccessful (Luke 20:19-26).
2. Next came the Sadducees (20:27). The Sadducees are mentioned 14 times in the New Testament. Whereas the Pharisees were traditionalists, the Sadducees were rationalists. Matthew Henry says they were “the scornful infidels of that time.”
3. Acts 23:8 says, “For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.”
4. Luke 20:27 says, “Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection...” Rationalists, like the Sadducees, do not believe that God can gather the scattered dust of the dead and remold it into a brand-new resurrection body.
5. On this basis the Sadducees affirmed that the doctrine of the resurrection could not be true. They put human reasoning above divine revelation.
6. The apostle Paul wrote, “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (I Cor. 15:51, 52).
7. Rationalism is the theory that human reasoning, and not the Bible, is the ultimate authority in religion. Like the Sadducees of our Lord’s day, rationalists today do not believe in a bodily resurrection.
8. Rationalists reject the deity of Christ, His virgin birth, the Bible as the inerrant Word of God, a literal heaven and hell, salvation by faith in Christ alone, etc.
9. Rationalists do not take the early chapters of Genesis literally. They do not believe in Adam and Eve as literal people, nor do they believe in a universal flood.
10. Instead, they believe in evolution. Rationalism and liberal theology rest upon self-deception. Like religious rationalists today, the Sadducees were leading people astray. John the Baptist called them a “generation (offspring or brood) of vipers” (Matthew 3:7).
11. In Matthew 16:6, our Lord warned, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.” Matthew 16:12 says, “Then

understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.”

I. THE RATIONALISM OF THE SADDUCEES

1. In our text tonight, we see that the Sadducees came to our Lord with a hypothetical question regarding the Jewish law of “levirate marriage” (20:27-33).
2. This was the custom among the Jews that when an Israelite man died childless, his nearest relative (usually a brother) should marry the widow in order to continue the family (“raise up seed”) of the deceased brother.
3. The firstborn son born to the widow would then take the name of the deceased husband, and become the heir of her deceased husband. If the brother chose not to marry his sister-in-law, she was allowed to shame him publicly (cf. Deut. 25:5-10).
4. The first record of this is found in Genesis 38. Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him. Judah told his second son, Onan, to go in unto his brother's wife and marry her, and “raise up seed” for his brother. But since Onan knew that the seed should not be his, “he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother” (Gen. 38:9).
5. This displeased the LORD, and the LORD slew him also.
6. Ruth 4:5 also refers to this custom – “Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.”
7. Because they were rationalists, the Sadducees denied the spiritual realm. They only understood the physical realm. They were carnal and sensual – “for seven had her to wife” (Luke 20:33).
8. Matthew 22:28 says, “for they all had her.”
9. And because they were rationalists, and denied the spiritual realm, the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. Acts 23:8 says, “For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit.”
10. So, the Sadducees came up with a question they thought unanswerable. They were unable to see how one woman could be the wife of seven men, so they wanted to know which one of the seven husbands would be with this woman up in heaven (20:29-33)?

11. In Matthew's account, our Lord told them their question was wrong. Matthew 22:29 says, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God."
12. "Not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" is a characteristic of rationalism.

II. THE TRICKERY OF THE SADDUCEES

1. Just like the Pharisees, the Sadducees tried to trick our Lord. That they were insincere and dishonest is obvious because they asked about the resurrection, but they themselves did not believe in the resurrection (20:27-33).
2. Furthermore, their question was rather ridiculous. They had very carnal thoughts and imaginations – the idea of seven brothers marrying the same woman appealed to their depraved minds.
3. Earthly relationships will not be continued in heaven. Religions such as Mormonism and Islam, which teach marriage in heaven, attract worldly, carnal men.
4. Many suicide bombers have confessed that it was the promise of 72 virgins in paradise that motivated them to be terrorists. The Muslim "Hadith" (a collection of statements attributed to Muhammad) says, "None is made to enter Paradise by Allah Most High except Allah Most High shall marry him to seventy-two wives, two of them from the wide-eyed maidens of Paradise and seventy of them his inheritance from the people of Hellfire." What a strange doctrine!
5. Muslims hope to spend eternity fulfilling their lustful desires.
6. A Muslim suicide bomber was caught in Pakistan. He was asked, "Are you married?" He answered, "No."
7. He was asked, "Do you wish to marry?" He answered, No, 72 virgins are waiting for me in heaven – so why I should prefer only one here?"
8. We can see how Satan, the god of this world, has blinded their minds. They kill innocent people, and they commit other terrible crimes, thinking this will give them 72 beautiful virgins in heaven.
9. But in reality, they will spend eternity being tormented in hell.

III. OUR LORD'S ANSWER TO THE SADDUCEES (20:34-38)

1. Our Lord was not teaching that men become angels in heaven. Some people believe this but it is not Biblical. Our Lord said that we will be elevated above the circumstances of this mortal life.
2. These circumstances include marriage and procreation. In heaven, there will be no need to reproduce.
3. Our Lord was saying that that we will be like angels in that we will not be married in heaven. Earthly, physical conditions of this world do not obtain up in heaven.
4. In fact, our place in heaven will be even better than that of the angels. First Corinthians 6:3 says, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?"
5. First John 3:2 says, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."
6. Regarding our Lord's words in Luke 20:35 and 36, J. Vernon McGee said, "This does not mean that a husband wife who were very close down here cannot be together in heaven. If they want to be together, of course they can be together. But, my friend, think of the ones who wouldn't want to be together. They won't have to be together. However, they both will have new dispositions, and probably they will get along lots better up there than they did down here!"
7. In His answer to the Sadducees, our Lord referred to the story of Moses at the burning bush (20:37, 38). It is likely that our Lord referred to Moses because they first had appealed to Moses (20:28; cf. Deuteronomy 25:5, 6).
8. Our Lord could have referred to the book of Job or the Psalms or the prophets, but He deliberately referred to Moses so He could meet His adversaries on their own ground.
9. The LORD said to Moses, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Ex.3:6; Luke 20:37).
10. "For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him" (Luke 20:38). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been dead for a long time when Moses spoke these words – Abraham for 329 years, Isaac for 224 years, and Jacob for 198 years.
11. Yet God said that He was still "their God." Therefore, they must still be somewhere living, for God is not the God of the dead.
12. Luke 20:38b says, "for all live unto him." "That is, all the righteous dead, all of whom he can be properly called their God, live unto his glory" (*Barnes' Notes*).

13. This passage proves that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had an existence after the grave – their souls were alive. This doctrine the Sadducees denied.
"I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"
Not "I was the God..." but "I am the God."
14. Therefore, Abraham is still alive.
15. Remember our Lord said Lazarus went to Abraham's bosom. Therefore, Abraham is alive.
16. And so is Isaac. And so is Jacob. "For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living" (20:38).
17. Matthew tells us that "when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at His doctrine" (Matthew 22:33).
18. Luke 22:39 and 40 says, "Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said. And after that they durst not ask him any question at all."

CONCLUSION:

1. The Sadducees did not believe in the spiritual realm. To them, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob were dead and buried, and that was it.
2. Many people (even many religious people) think the same way today.
3. But God "is not a God of the dead, but of the living" (20:38).
4. Thank God, unlike the rationalists and the atheists and the cultists, we have the blessed assurance of spending eternity in heaven!
5. The British philosopher Thomas Hobbes was a rationalist. He was a materialist. He did not believe in the immortality of the soul. He said, "All that is real is material, and what is not material is not real" (*Leviathan*).
6. When facing death, Thomas Hobbes said, "I am taking a fearful leap into the dark." How sad!
7. There is a true story about the Civil War that I shall never forget. On a battlefield, a nurse was binding up a soldier's wounds, and a short distance away she heard another soldier crying out, "Here, Here!"
8. Thinking that perhaps he was in desperate need, she left the soldier she was attending and ran over to him. "What can I do for you?" she asked the dying soldier, lying on his back on the battlefield.
9. "Nothing, kind nurse," replied the dying soldier. "Nothing, thank you."
10. She went back to binding the wounds of the other soldier, when again she heard, "Hear, Hear!" She ran back and again asked, "What can I do for you?" And once again the dying soldier said: "Nothing, kind nurse."

11. She again ran back to the soldier to complete the binding up of his wounds, when for the third time she heard, "Here, Here!" And for the third time, she dropped what she was doing and ran over to the dying soldier and asked what she could do for him.
12. "Nothing, kind nurse," replied the dying soldier.
13. "Then why do you keep on saying, 'Here! Here!'" she asked. "Oh, nurse," said the dying soldier, with a smile on his face, "they are calling the roll of Heaven and I am answering my name."
14. Just then with a far-away look in his eyes and that smile of Heaven on his face, he looked up to heaven and said: "Here! Here!" and raised his hand to heaven and died.
15. It is my earnest and fervent prayer that everyone assembled here tonight will answer "Here! Here!" when the roll is called up yonder in heaven.