

Matthew 22:23-33

The Principles of Error

We are in a new study guide. We are in a new section of Scripture. If you have not picked yours up, you can do that now as we turn to Matthew 22:33-33.

Beginning back in chapter 21 verse 1, we entered into the final week of the Lord's earthly ministry. This is during Passover, the one week of Passover when Jesus rode into Jerusalem. He went to the Temple and cleared the Temple of all the merchants who were buying and selling. And so the leaders challenged Jesus and said, "Who gave this authority to You that You could do this?" And since then Jesus gave three parables. Beginning in chapter 21 verse 28 through chapter 22 verse 14, there were three parables that Jesus gave in response to their question.

And it is all centered around the vineyard, these parables. Israel is represented as the vineyard, the religious leaders of Israel as being the caretakers of the vineyard, and God is the one that owns the vineyard. God sent His servants to collect the fruits of the vineyard, but they took the servants and killed them. So then God says, "I am going to send My Son, certainly they will respect Him." But they were seeking to kill His Son. And so in the parables, it is a parable of how Israel killed the prophets that God sent, and how they were about to kill the Son of God here in their midst. And that they would not be sitting at the banqueting table with God's people, but they would rather be cast into outward darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. So judgment against the religious leaders.

These three parables, ending off at chapter 22 verse 14, are followed by three questions. We took the first question last time. In chapter 22 verses 15 to 22 is the first question and this was asked by the Pharisees. The Pharisees were one of the factions of the Jews in the Jewish religion. The three major factions are the: Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes.

The Essenes were a group that lived out in the wilderness, and they ate the wild locusts and honey of the wilderness. John the Baptist is thought to have been an Essene. They copied the Old Testament and lived out in the wilderness. And some of you might be familiar with the term The Qumran Caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, which were scrolls of the Old Testament that were written by the Essenes and kept in caves; and that is a recent discovery within the last several years.

But the two major factions having to do with Jesus in the town of Jerusalem were the Pharisees and the Sadducees. And last time in verses 15 to 22 the Pharisees sent their disciples to try to trap Jesus, and they tried to do it politically. Today we will deal with the Sadducees. They are going to try to trap Jesus theologically.

But the Pharisees tried to trap him politically. They asked Jesus the question, "Is it lawful to give taxes to Caesar or not?" Jesus said, "Who has a tax coin? Show it to me." They showed Him a coin. He said, "Whose image and whose inscription is on this coin?" They said, "Caesar's." He said, "Then give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and give unto God the things that are God's." So if Caesar's image is on the coin, then it is his coin, give it to him if he wants it. Pay your taxes. But also, whose image are you?

We saw from Genesis 1:26-27 that man was made in the image of God. So Jesus is saying, if the world has its stamp and image on the coin and they want it, give it to them. But whose image are you? Stamped on you is the image of God, so give to God the things that are God's. You surrender to God.

So today we are in the second question, the second of three questions in verses 23-33. In verse 23 it says, **In that day, Sadducees came to Him, the ones saying there is no resurrection, and they asked Him** something. So right away we are told about these Sadducees.

And I think it is fascinating to understand the history of who these groups are because it helps us understand really what is going on in the text. Again the Pharisees, we saw last time they are the legalists. Pharisee means *a separatist*. And they adhered to the law. In fact, not just the law but the oral tradition of the Jews in their commentary of how to keep the law.

And so this week we have the Sadducees, and they are just the opposite of the Pharisees. The Sadducees were in charge of the operation of the Temple. They were put there by the Roman government even though they are Jews. And so the Sadducees were pro-Rome. They were in favor of Rome because Rome gave them this authority to be in charge of the Temple and all the things that went on in the Temple. The Sadducees made up most of the high priests, most of the chief priests, and most of the Sanhedrin, which is the religious counsel of the Jews that ruled over the Jews. The Sadducees did not believe in the immortality of the soul or afterlife. They believed once you died that is it. There is no more existence. They did not believe in the supernatural beings like angels or spirits, and they did not believe in the resurrection as we are told in verse one of our text here. They did not believe in the resurrection, that is very important to understand where their question is coming from. All of these three things: not believing in immortality of the soul, did not believe in supernatural beings, and they did not believe in the resurrection, is told to us in Acts 23:8. So they were just the opposite of the Pharisees.

They were in charge of the interpretation of the law. Whatever they said the law said is what it said. That is official according to them. And they gave primacy to the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis through Deuteronomy, the books of Moses. By primacy I mean they said the first five books of Moses are the Holy Scriptures, that everything else is just commentary. So they did not hold much value to the rest of the Old Testament unless Moses taught it. So if Moses did not teach it in Genesis through Deuteronomy, then it was not Holy Scripture. They refused any worthiness of written interpretation of the Scriptures and rabbinical tradition. They said it has no worth whatsoever. Again the opposite of the Pharisees.

So here we have the Sadducees, they are coming now to trap Jesus after the Pharisees. And again the Sadducees they say there is no resurrection. That is key to their question. Look at verse 24 for their question, **Saying, "Teacher, Moses said, 'If anyone should die not having children, his brother shall marry his wife, and shall raise up seed to his brother.'" This is a reference to Deuteronomy 25:5, it is called the Levirate Law. It comes from the Latin *levir*, which means *husband's brother*. The Levirate law has to do with husband's brother. It means to not leave the family - if the brother should die, then the next brother in line would then take his**

wife to be wife if there is no seed, if there are no children that have been born to him. So they said, "Moses commanded us." Do you see how they are making reference to Moses in Deuteronomy, because that is their man. There are other references in the Old Testament dealing with the resurrection, but they do not consider those the Scripture, they consider it as commentary and people's opinion.

So verse 25 says they continue the challenge to Jesus. **"Now there were with us seven brothers; and the first having married died, and not having seed he left his wife to his brother. Likewise also the second, and the third, until the seventh."** Right away you have got to say, "The poor woman, married seven times to seven brothers, until the seventh brother." **And last of all, the woman died.** Some people have said, "You wonder about her to begin with because everybody that she married died," you know. But now she dies. Verse 28, **"Therefore in the resurrection, of which of the seven will she be wife? For all had her as a wife."** So this is their proof that there is no resurrection, because we have a woman with seven husbands. All eight of them would stand before the Lord in the same condition, they are all married. So they are showing that if they believed in the resurrection, it would violate God's Word because you would have adultery in heaven if you consider the marriages once they get to heaven. So they said, "This is proof there is no resurrection. Because they are in the grave because if there was a resurrection and they all stood before God then we have a problem because she has been married to each one of them. So whose wife would she be?" Well, she would not be anybody's, it would be an adulterous situation that God would have to judge.

Verse 29, The Condition of the Sadducees, **And when Jesus answered He said to them, "You err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God."** One of the most powerful verses in the Scriptures. You should know where this verse is, if not, memorize it. The condition is described as being in error. *You are in error about what the Scripture is saying.* The Greek word for *error* is the word **πλανάω** (planaō), which means *to wander* or *to be led astray*. We get our word *planet* from it, wandering planets. So here it is a wandering, a being led astray from the truth, and it is listed as being wandering and led astray from the truth in two ways:

- 1) by not knowing the Scriptures. This has always been the problem, just like it is the problem today. They knew the Scripture because they made reference to it; they did not know the Scripture accurately. Many know the Scriptures, know where to find it, know how to quote it, but they don't know the accuracy of the teaching of the text.
- 2) And secondly, not knowing the power of God. Another big problem. Two of the biggest problems that people wrestle with. Not knowing the power of God. The word *power* is **δύναμις** (dunamis) where we get our word *dynamite* from. And that comes from the word **δύναμαι** (dunamai) which means *ability and capacity*, which really, specifically, brings out the meaning of the word. God's ability and His capacity they do not know. God's ability and capacity.

And that's something we just had during the testimonies in the prayer time. Of not knowing the Scriptures and not knowing the power of God. It is coming to realize the power of

God, coming to realize and understand His ability, His capacity. We grow into that phase of knowing. But they did not know the Scriptures, nor did they know the power of God.

So in two ways they did not know the power of God or the ability of God. They are wrong about the Scriptures and rejected God's ability to raise the dead. There said, "There is no resurrection it would violate Scripture," in their interpretation. The Sadducees denied God's creative power even though Paul said in I Corinthians 6:14 that God has both raised up the Lord and will also raise up us by His own power. God has the power and the ability to raise the dead. Therefore they are in error in their belief that God's power does not raise the dead, and they are wrong about the Scriptures because of their own personal beliefs.

And secondly, there have rejected God's power and ability by rejecting the respect for His ability to do God's work His own way. God has the ability and the capacity to do His work. He has the ability and the capacity to do what His will is.

In fact, Paul told Timothy in II Timothy 3:1 and 5, **"This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come."** Dangerous, difficult times will come. We are in some of those today and getting worse. And he lists, there in second Timothy 3 a whole list of things that people will be lovers of themselves, and selfish, and prideful. But in verse 5 of II Timothy 3 he says, **"They have the form of godliness, but deny the power of it."** Religious. People will be religious in their practice, but they will deny the power of it. They will be doing God's work for Him and will be rejecting God's ability to do His own work. Paul says, "From such turn away." Turn away from those people who teach you that God has, as we said over the years, they believe that there is a philosophy out there that says that Jesus ascended up into heaven and left us behind to do His work for Him until He comes back. That is not true. Jesus ascended into heaven and sent His Holy Spirit to do His work in us and through us. And we are not to reject His ability, His power, His capacity to do His work. The Psalms. In Psalm 127:1 the Psalms tells us, **"Except the Lord build the house they labor in vain the build it."** If God does not do it, it is not of God.

So two ways in which they reject power of God: (1) by rejecting His ability to do something, (2) and rejecting His ability to do something Himself, instead of relying on people and their human efforts. So, **When Jesus answered them, He said to them, "You err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God."** You do not know how many times that we have had to use this scripture for people who even question what the Bible says.

One of the most notable questions down through the years, in fact we heard it just the other day, I have yet to answer it, but it is going to get answered with this text right here. When somebody says, "Can God create a rock that is too heavy for Him to lift?" So if you say, "Yes, of course, He is God, He can create anything."

"Well, if it is too heavy for Him to lift, He cannot be God. And if he cannot create a rock that is too heavy for Him to lift, then He cannot be God because He cannot create a rock that is too heavy for Him to lift." And so they have these little puzzles made up in order to make God not be God, Him not having the ability to be God. You say, "Well, what is the answer to the question?" The answer to the question is, **You do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the**

power of God. God cannot be asked that question because the weight of objects change depending upon whether or not you are in our atmosphere. If you leave our atmosphere and go into outer space weight changes. You cannot ask God that question, it does not apply.

So verse 30, The Correction of their Error, Jesus said - and by the way He is going to answer it reverse order, He is going to talk about the power of God first. **"For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are they being given in marriage."** There is no marriage in heaven. **"But they are as the angels of God in Heaven,"** spirit beings, not physical bodies. We are told in I Corinthians 15:44 that we will be in spiritual bodies, and we have no reason for procreation. That we are in a natural body now and the spiritual body will be what we will be raised in. There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body. So it will be sexless beings like the angels. There will be no marriage in heaven. So this is His correction to them. And He says, **"For in the resurrection..."** Well they do not believe in the resurrection. He says, "Well, see, that is where you are wrong. God will raise the dead."

"But concerning the resurrection of the dead, did you not read that which had been spoken to you by God?" He is making a quote now from Exodus 3:6 where God says, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." He is not the God of the dead, but He is the God of the living. The key here in the quote from Exodus - and He is quoting from Moses so that they would see that in their own Scriptures they have the proof of the resurrection. Even though it is in the rest of the Old Testament, they did not receive what the Old Testament said because it is not the first five books. So in Exodus 3:6 Jesus said, "I am the God," not *I was the God*. "I am right now the God of Abraham, I am the God of Isaac, and I am the God of Jacob." He is not the God of the dead but of the living. So way back then, starting with Exodus chapter 3 though Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died, God was their God. So therefore, I am their God, they are not dead, but they are living. They are still in existence. They are still alive in another realm. So verse 33 says, **And when the crowds heard, they were astonished over His teaching.**

So He told them, "You are in error about the Scriptures, and you are in error about the power and ability of God." Always our two biggest problems.

So we have a tendency to accept and reject certain Scriptures and things about God based on our beliefs and opinions. We put God in a box rather than spend our time studying the Scriptures and let God's Spirit take the Scriptures and form within us that knowledge of God's ability and capacity. That is where the growth takes place. It is important to understand the Scriptures accurately and to trust in the Lord's ability and power. Therefore we must come to know them. Study His Word. Get to know who God is and trust Him.

It is a very dangerous thing to believe in God according to one's own beliefs and opinions. So we spend time in the Word, we spend time studying about God. The two go together, the Scriptures and the power of God, you cannot separate them. God's Spirit manifests His Truth through His Word. But that truth that is manifested will be God's ability, and His capacity, and God's Spirit will be to encourage us to trust the Lord that has been revealed to us.

Let's close with prayer.