



5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Easter 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2021  
Matthew 22:23-33;  
also Deut 25:5-6 & Ex 3:5-6:

### **Reflection 1 of 2: The Sadducees & the Resurrection. What's that about?**

“Sadducees” was the general name at the time for the priests who ran the temple, in all its worship & management aspects. The name is said to be derived from Zadok who was High Priest in the time of King Solomon. Although they were the priests of the nation, who thus represented God to His people & the people to their God, the Sadducees were more secular, pragmatic, and political than religiously zealous. They were the major power within the Sanhedrin. Their main interest was survival. Of the Temple as an institution and of themselves as the Temple's keepers.

What they didn't see was that their very approach to the priesthood, while considered most agreeable and appropriate to them was anathema to God. The destruction of the temple and their own doom in Israel's revolt against Rome was sealed by their rejection of Jesus.

Although they were God's priests they took a very narrow view of Israel's scriptures, recognising only the first 5 books, which after the Greek for 5 were called the Pentateuch: being Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Something of a self-serving selection as these established the priesthood in Aaron, the sacrifice system and the idea of setting up only one true worship place in Israel, which they saw as the Temple.

In that limitation they rejected physical resurrection, any vital life after life existence & the reality of spirits & angels. Sadly when the living tabernacle of the Lord God stood before them in Jesus, they did not recognise Him either. Rejecting Him as too disturbing to the life they knew and too zealous in repentance. So now these heads of God's people come to Jesus with a question. It's that sort of question that Satan asked Eve in Eden, the sort that Scam artists contrive today: are you really sure God said this? Are you really sure your savings are safe because .... A question designed to undo you & take from you what is yours & all that you would seek to pass on to those who belong to you.

Moses told us, they said. Moses, the man through whom God gave the Law, which says Deut' 25:5-6: If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfil the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his

name will not be blotted out from Israel. By referring to Moses they set the framework for the discussion. And having done that they give a hypothetical, concocted example of the unfortunate woman who married and lost 7 brothers. They only imagine the resurrection in physical flesh and blood terms. So when the resurrection comes whose wife will she be, for – not bothering to say this – she can't be the wife of them all. This is game playing. They don't believe in the conversation, they're only in it to win it. Their question is to them like a tennis court lob intended to leave Jesus stranded at the net with no chance of a return.

How does Jesus respond? Firstly He tells them they are in error, for they don't know the Scripture and the power of God. Their lob drops out of court. 15 Love Jesus. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage. They will be like angels. A cross court volley Sadducees can't return for while they deny angels, angels are mentioned in the Pentateuch. In Gen 3:24 God placed Cherubim to guard the entrance to the Eden, and in Ex 25:22 He told Moses that 2 figures of Cherubim should be crafted to sit above the Ark of the Covenant, an anticipation of the temple, for the ark was where God promised to dwell among his people. 30 Love to Jesus.

Then Jesus said to them, “but about the resurrection of the dead – have you not read what God said to you.” Not Moses. God. 40 Love to Jesus. And what did God say: “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.” Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had died long before God met Moses at the burning bush. But God, Jesus said, is not the God the dead but of the living. The Patriarchs are alive with God. Game to Jesus.

### **A brief thought on resurrection and marriage. Why is there no marriage in the resurrection? Here are 2 points:**

[1] Like the angels when we are resurrected we will have solid spiritual bodies, not flesh and blood bodies. Babies will not be born into the resurrection life for the new creation is populated by those who are saved in this life. So the procreation purpose of marriage is no longer needed.

[2] More than that marriage is a covenant of love between a man and a woman. A love relationship which Paul recognises in Ephesians 5 as an image of the relationship between Christ and His Church. In Rev 21:1-2 John tells us he saw “saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”

What need is there for an imitation of marriage when we have become wedded to God in the ultimate reality of love?