

# Masterwork of the Messiah

## Expositional Study Of Matthew's Gospel

### *Tricky Questions & Timely Answers: Part 2*

Written By

©Pastor Marty Baker

May 18, 2014



In the movie *Snow White And The Huntsman*, Snow White is the only person in the land fairer than the wicked queen. Unable to tolerate this insult to her ultimate vanity, the evil queen pulls out all the stops to rid the earth of the fair and innocent young woman. At one point, she, along with a huntsman, encounter a massive, muscular, menacing troll. His goal is simple: Take them both out. It won't go as he expected.

With the huntsman dispensed in a few powerful thrusts of his hands, the troll turns on Snow White. At first, he knocks her down with a loud, bone-rattling roar; however, she stands bravely to her feet and stares him down eye to eye. Within a few moments, pure innocence defeats pure evil, as evil turned and walked away.

Such is a perfect picture of Christ's verbal battle with the trolls called the Sanhedrin on the temple mount the last week of His life. Matthew chapter 21 through 22, which recounts the spiritual combat, resembles the tenacious troll coming after an innocent person. Beginning in chapter 22 verse 15, we have the first of three menacing questions these particular trolls, composed of Pharisees and Sadducees, will fire at Jesus in hopes of driving Him permanently to the ground. Their first question about whether Jews should pay taxes to Caesar or not met with a deflection from Christ's shield they couldn't handle (Matthew 22:15-22), leaving them with no option but embrace silence and retreat. While these particular troll-Pharisees bandaged their intellectual wounds, the other group of trolls called the Sadducees, stepped into the foray with their own carefully worded scenario designed to take the spiritually white and holy Jesus out permanently. It won't go as they expected.

Ostensibly, all of this is so instructional for Christians who face their own godless, tough, and testy trolls as we serve as Christ's ambassadors on enemy terrain (2 Corinthians 5:20). I'm sure you've encountered a few of them in your Christian walk, you know, they are the people who are consumed with sidelining and silencing you and your faith. This reality, as we see from the life of Christ, leads to a significant question we need the answer to so we are effective warriors on the spiritual plane (Ephesians 6:10ff).

## How Should We Respond To Opposition Against The Faith? (Matthew 22:15-22)

By way of contextual review, in this first verbal engagement with the enemy, Jesus' model introduced us to three concepts for open field contact:

- *Secure The Fact of Opposition* (Matthew 22:15-17). The fury of the godless world is coming your way so anticipate it.
- *State The Foundation Of The Opposition* (Matthew 18). Depending on whom you are dealing with and the level of their angst against Christ and Christianity, you just might have to point out how their typically self-defeating arguments betray an evil motive.
- *Sharpen The Focus of The Opposition* (Matthew 22:19-22). Translated, we need to show those who fight against the faith how their arguments chafe against divine truth and reasoning. Put differently, we need to make sure the opponents of the faith understand what God does and does not require from His people in order to destroy straw men they will frequently erect to demolish the validity of belief in the messiahship and savior-hood of Jesus.

In this next round of spiritual combat, Jesus's example will give us two additional methods we would all do well to cognitively understand and pragmatically apply so we, too, can cause the trolls we face to have no option but to retreat and embrace silence.

A fourth method for effective spiritual engagement is written upon the military manual of Matthew 22, verses 23-28.

### Sense The Flanking Of The Opposition (Matthew 22:23-28)

When the Pharisees could not get Christ in trouble with a loaded question about taxation, the Sadducees arrogantly and deviously devised their own. Military people call this flanking, a maneuver designed to attack your enemy from another, hopefully weaker angle or approach:

<sup>23</sup> On that day some Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) came to Jesus and questioned Him,

Who were the Sadducees? Good question. We need to entertain this query so we can better appreciate Christ's focused response to them.

William Barclay defines them in this fashion:

The Sadducees were not many in number; but they were the wealthy, the aristocratic, and the governing class. The chief priests, for instance, were Sadducees. In politics they were collaborationist; quite ready to co-operate with the Roman government, if co-operation was the price of the retention of their own privileges.<sup>1</sup>

John Grassmick, one of my former New Testament teachers at Dallas Seminary, adds in his class notes from *New Testament Introduction 205* these words about their doctrinal stance:

- They were basically anti-supernaturalistic, formal in their religion and materialistic in viewpoint. They emphasized the sacrificial cultus of the Temple. They rejected the following:
  - Predestination of denying that history is divinely controlled; human free will determines history and destiny.
  - The existence of angels and demons
  - The resurrection of the body (cf. Mark 12:18-27)
  - The coming of a final judgment with rewards and punishments
  - Oral tradition of the Pharisees; they accepted only the beliefs and practices taught in the Old Testament ---in this sense they were 'conservative'
  - The expectation of the Messiah.
  - [to Dr. Grassmick's notes I would add ...] The binding nature of the entire Old Testament, choosing to embrace and elevate only the Pentateuch.

They disliked Christ's bold criticism of their beliefs (Matthew 3:7; 16:1-12). How dare He question *them* ... was their motto. They sided with the Pharisees against Jesus for they were outnumbered by them and didn't want to do anything which might disrupt or interrupt their hold on societal power. They also intensely hated Christ because He, on two occasions, cut into their religious profit making machine by driving the money changers from the temple precincts. Like hungry wolves they waited to trap Him with some bait that would allow them to settle their score with His courageous foray into their well-ordered, highly lucrative turf.

So, on this particular Tuesday afternoon, the sinister Sadducees felt they finally had a prime opportunity to efface Christ publically while elevating themselves as the premier, in-the-know spiritual leaders of Israel. As Matthew recounts, they approached Him with a conundrum of a question:

<sup>24</sup> asking, "Teacher, Moses said, IF A MAN DIES HAVING NO CHILDREN, HIS BROTHER AS NEXT OF KIN SHALL MARRY HIS WIFE, AND RAISE UP CHILDREN FOR HIS BROTHER. <sup>25</sup> Now there were seven brothers with us; and the first married and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother; <sup>26</sup> so also the second, and the third, down to the seventh. <sup>27</sup> Last of all, the woman died. <sup>28</sup> In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had married her."

---

<sup>1</sup> William Barclay, *Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975): 275.

We in the West have a hard time wrapping our minds around this type of questioning; however, in this Eastern culture everyone was used to the religious scholars devising complicated scenarios, either real or imagined, in order to ascertain how the Torah should be applied. The parenthetical statement Matthew throws in alerts us to the fact that this question had no honesty about it whatsoever. They, who denied the concept of resurrection outright, arrogantly (and ignorantly) posed a question about the resurrection. How misleading. How devious. They had absolutely no intention on gaining truth insight on this religious question, but were focused on gaining ground against Jesus by making Him look inferior in His reasoning abilities.

Their hypothetical question concerned levirate marriage as commanded by God in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. According to this divine mandate, if a brother died, leaving no children to carry on his name, his brother was called to take his place and produce offspring in his place. We do not have too many instances of this occurring in the Old Testament (or New Testament) either because the writers did not choose to mention it, or because brothers typically did not want to produce children through the wives their deceased brothers married. You can imagine how this law would play out in our culture, right? Boaz marrying Ruth is an exceptional case in point (Ruth 3-4). Judah commanding his son Onan to produce offspring through his dead brother's wife in Genesis 38 shows us the practice predated Moses. Moses merely codified it in behalf of God. And now in light of this law the Sadducees want to know who is married to who in the next life if a woman, according to levirate law, had seven brothers as her husbands.

As I said, this question was dishonest and insincere from the beginning. Leon Morris astutely states, “[the Sadducees had ...] reduced the doctrine of resurrection to an absurdity. No brother could claim an exclusive right to her, and it was evidently preposterous to think that she could have seven husbands in heaven.”<sup>2</sup> Stated in another way, they were not interested in benefitting from the teaching of Jesus but in discrediting His teaching and trashing it before the people in order to build them up. Don't think this is not still a tactic of those who oppose the Christ.

I have fielded my share of valid and invalid questions in my Christian walk, especially as a pastor. Valid questions come from non-Christians who are in pursuit of truth, who realize the limitations and logical incongruities in their epistemological positions. Sure, they might be testy at times; however, the person in question is really posing tough questions you sense they want viable, logical answers to as they try and figure out why there are here and what their life purpose is.

Invalid questions can serve as a trip wire for someone who is attempting to outflank you, to come at you from another direction. Invalid questions typically come from those who are bathed in a condescending, nauseating arrogance, and they are all about making Christ and Christians look foolish, illogical, stupid, lame, mean-spirited, counter-culture, and ... well ... I'm sure you can fill in the proverbial blank. If you ask these kinds of questions, you know which ones are in your arsenal. You might have picked them up in college from a godless professor, and you've honed them over the years and they appear quite effective in leaving believers with not much to say once you throw it out there. Yeah, you have watched Christians squirm with questions like ...

- “Can God make a stone so heavy He can't pick it up?”

---

<sup>2</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According To Matthew* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992): 559.

- “Can God make square circles?” To answer to some of the queries is simple: God cannot and will not do that which is mutually exclusive and logically impossible.
- Other questions are more complicated: “What do you think about the presence of moral codes around the world. Does not this reality, by definition, point to the fact that all religions are basically the same?”

Shrewd opponents of the faith like to follow up this last question, which presupposes there is no such thing as one, true religion, with the presentation of the story about the six blind men examining an elephant and coming to six different conclusions about what they are feeling. Usually, they cannot wait to drive home the point: These blind men represent the differing world religions and illustrate just how subjective religion is. What the objector fails to state is someone objectively knows there is actually an elephant to be felt by the six blind men. And if someone knows the truth about the elephant, despite the subjective beliefs of the blind men, then it is possible for absolute, objective truth regarding religion to exist. Translated, if the person telling the riddle/story can have an objective position, why couldn't this be truth of one of the blind men?

Aside from these observations, I'm sure we can all agree we face a wide array of dishonest, sometimes illogical questions which have only one intention: Make Christ and Christians look foolish, uneducated, and illogical so they can be sidelined in our culture and ultimately silenced. Wake up and be wise! When the ol' Devil cannot penetrate your defenses with one technique brought by one type of person, anticipate the arrival of someone else with a different question designed to outflank you and destroy your fortress of faith. Additionally, when, not if, this happens to you, remember and employ Christ's next technique:

### Stabilize Your Footing Against The Opposition (Matthew 22:29-33)

When I wrestled as a Freshman I learned the art of knocking your opponent off balance so you could exploit the situation to your advantage. This is what the Pharisees and Sadducees attempted to do to Jesus, but He, ironically and easily, caused them to lose their footing, leaving Him as the victor of the verbal exchange. Study His technique carefully and prayerfully:

<sup>29</sup> But Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God. <sup>30</sup> For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

Let's break this masterful reply down and see what we can glean from it for our own encountered with testy trolls.

First, Christ was militant insofar as He dared to call the highly educated, ruling powers of the Temple *deceived*. This is, indeed, a lexical range for this word *πλαναο*, *πλανάω* ( 1 Corinthians 6:9; Galatians 6:7; James 1:16).<sup>3</sup> In light of this, I personally think the NAS and NIV

<sup>3</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament And Other Early Christian Literature*: *πλανάω* fut. *πλανήσω*; 1 aor. *ἐπλάνησα*. Pass.: 1 aor. *ἐπλανήθην*; perf. *πεπλάνημαι* (s. four next entries; Hom., Aeschyl., Hdt.+; gener. notion: without fixed goal or apparent rationale).

①to cause to go astray from a specific way, act.

translations are not exact enough when they read “mistaken.” The Sadducees were mistaken, but more importantly, they were deceived by their own pride and prejudice against Jesus, thinking they knew better than He how to interpret and apply the Torah.

But apart from this, let us not lose sight of Christ’s bold, gusty, rough words toward these false teachers, who wrapped themselves up in the Torah. He let them know they were deceived and ignorant of the very Scriptures they touted they knew so well. He extended no academic niceties to them. He did not tone His words down so they would not lose face with the people. He did not care if people whispered, “He is so mean-spirited, so, well, intolerant.” When a certain class of misdirected, malicious religious leaders sought to undermine and trifle with a core biblical doctrine like the resurrection, Jesus minced no words and gave no ground by employing true but tough language.

Yes, there were moments of softness with a truth-seeker like the Pharisee called Nicodemus (John 3); however, when tenacious spiritual trolls sought to take Him down by

ⓐ **lead astray, cause to wander** τινά *someone* (Aeschyl., Prom. 573; Hdt. 4, 128 et al.) in imagery πλ. τινὰ ἀπὸ τῆς ὁδοῦ *cause someone to wander from the right way* D 6:1 (for πλ. ἀπὸ τ. ὁδοῦ cp. Dt 11:28; Wsd 5:6).

ⓑ **mislead, deceive** τινά *someone* trans. sense of 1a without imagistic detail (Pla., Prot 356d, Leg. 655d al.; pap, LXX; TestAbr A 20 p. 103, 17 [Stone p. 54, 17] death deceived Abraham; TestLevi 10:2; TestJud 15:5; GrBar 4:8; Just., D. 103, 6; Orig., C. Cels. 5, 5, 29; Hippol., Ref. 6, 20, 2) **Mt 24:4f, 11, 24; Mk 13:5f; J 7:12; 1J 2:26; 3:7; Rv 2:20; 12:9; 13:14; 19:20; 20:3, 8, 10; IMg 3:2; IPhld 7:1a.** πλ. ἐαυτόν *deceive oneself* **1J 1:8.** Abs. **2 Ti 3:13a.**—S. 2cδ below.

ⓒ **to proceed without a sense of proper direction, go astray, be misled, wander about aimlessly**, pass. freq. in act. sense

ⓓ lit. (since Il. 23, 321; Gen 37:15; PsSol 17:17; ParJer 5:9; ApcrEzk P 1 verso 12; Jos., Bell. 7, 160; Iren. 1, 8, 4 [Harv. I 73, 3]) ἐπὶ (v.l. ἐν) ἐρημίαις πλανώμενοι **Hb 11:38.** Of sheep who have become lost (Ps 118:176) **Mt 18:12ab, 13.** ὡς πρόβατα πλανώμενα **1 Pt 2:25** v.l.

ⓔ in imagery of people who strayed fr. the right way (cp. 1a), ὡς πρόβατα πλανώμενοι **1 Pt 2:25.** ὡς πρόβατα **p 822** ἐπλανήθημεν **1 Cl 16:6a** (Is 53:6a; cp. also Ps 118:176). καταλείποντες εὐθείαν ὁδὸν ἐπλανήθησαν **2 Pt 2:15.** ἄνθρωπος ... ἐπλανήθη *everyone ... went astray* **1 Cl 16:6b** (Is 53:6b). πλανῶνται καὶ ταλαιπωροῦσιν περιπατοῦντες ἐν ταῖς ἀνοδίαις *they wander about and are miserable as they go through trackless country* Hv 3, 7, 1 (ἐν as Lucian, Calumn. 1 ἐν σκότῳ; **Hb 11:38** v.l.).

ⓖ fig. without the imagistic detail of 2b (cp. 1b)

α. *go astray, be deluded* (Cebes 6, 3; 24, 2; Orig., C. Cels. 6, 79, 41) **Tit 3:3** (Dio Chrys. 4, 115 πλανῶνται ... δεδουλωμένοι ἡδοναῖς); **Hb 5:2;** **1 Cl 39:7** (Job 5:2); 59:4; **2 Cl 15:1** (of the ψυχή as Pr 13:9a; Wsd 17:1); **B 2:9; B 16:1.** πλανῶνται τῇ καρδίᾳ *their minds are going astray* **Hb 3:10** (Ps 94:10). τινὲς δὲ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπλανήθησαν ... μὴ εἰδότες *but some people went astray ... because they did not know* Ox 1081, 21 (as restored).

β. *wander away ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας* (Theoph. Ant. 2, 14 [p. 136, 26]) **Js 5:19** (cp. Wsd 5:6).

γ. *be mistaken in one’s judgment, deceive oneself* (Isocr., Ep. 6, 10 al.; Jos., Bell. 1, 209, Ant. 10, 19; PFlor 61, 16; 2 Macc 7:18; ApcrEsd 2:28 [p. 26, 22 Tdf.]; Ar. 4, 2 al.; Hippol., Ref. 5, 8, 1; Theoph. Ant. 1, 11 [p. 82, 13]) **Mt 22:29; Mk 12:24;** Hv 2, 4, 1. πολὺ πλανᾷσθε *you are very much mistaken* **Mk 12:27.** μὴ πλανᾷσθε *make no mistake* (Epict. 4, 6, 23) **1 Cor 6:9; Gal 6:7; Js 1:16.** ἐν πᾶσιν πεπλανήμεθα *we are wholly mistaken* B 15:6 (cp. Hero Alex. III p. 214, 2 ἐν μηδενὶ πλανᾷσθαι).

δ. *be deceived, be misled* πλανῶντες καὶ πλανώμενοι *deceivers* (of others) and (themselves) *deceived* **2 Ti 3:13** (cp. Herm. Wr. 16, 16 ὁ πλανώμενος κ. πλανῶν).—*Let oneself be misled, deceived* (s. Gildersleeve, Syntax I§167 on the ‘permissive’ pass.; Bel 7 Theod.; JosAs 13:10; Just., D. 118, 3) **Mt 24:24** v.l.; **Lk 21:8; J 7:47; Rv 18:23.** μὴ πλανᾷσθε **1 Cor 15:33;** IEph 16:1; IMg 8:1; IPhld 3:3. μηδεὶς πλανᾷσθω IEph 5:2; ISm 6:1. τὸ πνεῦμα οὐ πλανᾷται *the Spirit is not led into error* IPhld 7:1b. ὑπὸ τοῦ ὄφραος πλανᾷται *he is deceived by the serpent* or *he lets himself be misled by the serpent* Dg 12:6 (UPZ 70, 28 [152/151 B.C.] πλανώμενοι ὑπὸ τ. θεῶν; Alex. Aphr., Fat. 12 p. 180, 25 Br. ὑπὸ τ. φύσεως).—Schmidt, Syn. I 547–62. DELG s.v. πλανᾶμαι. M-M. EDNT. TW.

trashing a key biblical doctrine He would have none of it and came out with great, focused verbal force.

I fear we are quickly losing this method in our believe-anything-and-everything post-modern world. We are challenged to soften our words about evil, and speak nicely and understandingly about actions which brought about localized earthquakes and divine fire in the Old Testament. We are called to hold our tongue when false religions are embraced and Christianity is effaced. We are told that Jesus was always kind, caring, compassionate and peaceful in His exchanges with people holding opposite positions from His. Such is not the Jesus of the New Testament. He lovingly spoke to the woman caught in adultery, but He reserved some of His harshest words for those smug spiritual leaders who dared to corrupt sound biblical doctrine all for the sake of gaining wealth and power over His chosen people. Friends, I think it is time we remember there are times when you tell a person they are, in fact, deceived, they are wrong, they are in gross sin, and they are far afield from God's gospel truth which saves sinners.

Second, Jesus corrected false teaching with true teaching. He condemned the Sadducees for several things.

On the one hand, He publically condemned them for not understanding and accepting the power of God. They who held to the veracity of the Pentateuch, they who prided themselves in their understanding of the Pentateuch, willingly failed to appreciate the raw, unlimited power of the Almighty. He who parted the Red Sea could easily raise a person from the grave. He who slowed the earth's rotation to give Israel's forces an edge in the battle for the Promised Land (Judges 10) could effortlessly bring a person back to life if He so chose. Regarding this facet of God's character, as revealed in the Pentateuch, the Sadducees developed and pushed a false view of God to the masses.

On the other hand, He condemned them for ignorantly assuming that this terrestrial life can be logically applied to the celestial life in God's eternal kingdom. His point could not have been more powerful: Marriage here does not logical translate to marriage there. His argument is directly related to the angelic realm. As angels do not marry, we will not marry nor be married in heaven. With death abolished and perfect relationships realized in a perfect heavenly environment, we will not need marriage anymore. No, this does not mean you will not know your husband or wife in heaven. How could you not? We will know Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matthew 8:11) so why would we know our mates we were married to for 30, 40, 50 years? You will, but all relationships will be collectively on a different, higher, and amazing plane than what we know presently. Isn't that exciting?

Back to Christ's argument. Since there is no marriage in heaven, then the hypothetical question of the Sadducees is absolutely moot ... really ... ridiculous. Ouch. What does this all teach us? It informs us there are moments when we must candidly, boldly, and sternly point those wrapped in error to the clear truth of the Word of God. Jesus did. Will you?

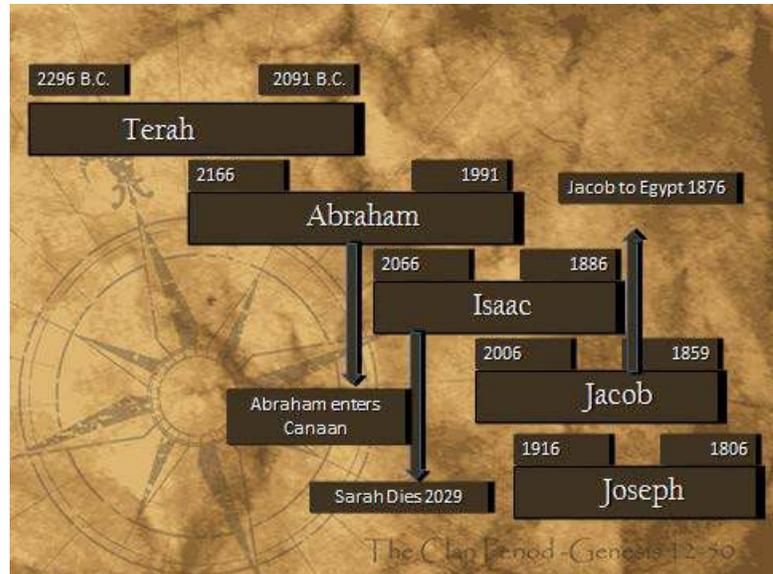
At this juncture, Jesus had effectively answered the rabbinical riddle, meaning He didn't need to go any further, but He did. Why? To plough their hard hearts one more time with His blade of biblical, eternal truth.

<sup>31</sup> "But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: <sup>32</sup> 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 of the living."

Christ's words have a touch of sarcasm to them: "... have you not read ...?" Of course, they, of all people, had read from Exodus 3:6 where God made this statement to Moses at the burning bush. They could cite and quote this verse if anyone could:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק  
וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב

Yes, these words, from a passage they all believed was divinely inspired and written by Moses could easily flow from their intellectually trained troll tongues, but, as Jesus will definitively demonstrate, the truth embedded in these words never rang a bell in their messed up minds. What truth is that? It is a grammatical truth which relates directly to the theology of the resurrection. God said, "I am [present tense] the God of your fathers," not "I was [past tense] the God of your fathers."<sup>4</sup> Taking into account a patriarch like Abraham had been dead for a whopping 545 years, from the time of Moses (1446 B.C.), and wedding this the fact to the fact God told Moses "I am the God" of the patriarchs, this, by definition, grammatically underscores He



He remained their God because they were, in fact, alive in His glorious presence. Sure, the Old Testament taught about God's ability to raise the dead. It's recorded of Elijah (1 Kings 17:8-24), Elisha (2 Kings 4:18-37), and is spoken about quite clearly in Daniel 12:2; however, since these deceived me did not accept these scrolls as divine, Jesus went right to the one they did accept to inform them they had no theological leg to stand on with their opposition to the doctrine of resurrection. God is not the God is dead, decaying bodies, but of living breathing people, whether they walked the streets of earth or the streets of His eternal kingdom! They, if anyone, should have known these from a text like Exodus 3:6. And they should have known it because within their own thrice repeated eighteen benedictions during times of scheduled prayer, they verbally stated the reality of the resurrection. Listen to benediction number two:

"Thou art mighty forever, O Lord ["Adonai," not the Tetragrammaton]: Thou resurrectest the dead; art great to save. Sustaining the living in loving-kindness, resurrecting the dead in abundant mercies, Thou supportest the falling, and healest the sick, and settest free the captives, and keepest [fulfillest] Thy [His] faith to them that sleep in the dust. Who is like Thee, master of mighty deeds [=

<sup>4</sup> Jesus calls Himself the great "I am" in places like John 8:28, 58; 13:19; 18:8, thereby linking Himself grammatically with the God of the Old Testament who, according to the Greek Septuagint (LXX), also held this title (Deuteronomy 32:39; Isaiah 41:4; 43:10).

owner of the powers over life and death], and who may be compared unto Thee? King sending death and reviving again and causing salvation to sprout forth. Thou art surely believed to resurrect the dead. Blessed be Thou, O Lord, who revivest the dead."<sup>5</sup>

Ostensibly, Christ's method calls us, in some instances, to go one step further in our quest to destroy vain attacks against the faith and to showcase eternal and divine spiritual truth. When He directed the Sadducees back to Exodus chapter 3 He did so for good reason. Spiritual truth was under attack and those who directed the attack, therefore, needed a more pronounced, powerful word from the Word. Mark this well. Sometimes we probably walk away too quickly from a verbal exchange when, in all reality, we should have not walked off the set in an interview, but should have stayed in our chair and given more insight into spiritual truth verses spiritual error. Oh, for God to make us all more courageous for Him. Oh, for God to take our biblical learning and life experience and make it a formidable tool in His hands in the troubled times in which we live!

What is most interesting is the response Jesus received from His teaching:

<sup>33</sup> When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.

Makes you want to ask: Why were they astonished? I think the answer is simple: The Sadducees had posed this righteous riddle before and no one had ever been able to refute it, that is, until the Son of God, the author of Life showed up and debated them. His pristine exegesis of their inspired text left them speechless and defenseless. Luke's parallel account adds this amusing footnote:

<sup>39</sup> Some of the scribes answered and said, "Teacher, You have spoken well" (Luke 20).

---

<sup>5</sup> [Jewishencyclopedia.com](http://Jewishencyclopedia.com): Collection of benedictions forming the second—the [Shema](#) being the first—important section of the daily prayers at the morning ("Shaharit"), afternoon ("Minhah"), and evening ("Arbit") services, as well as of the additional ([Musaf](#)) service on Sabbaths and holy days. Literally, the name means "eighteen"; and its wide use shows that at the time it came into vogue the benedictions ("berakot") comprised in the prayer must have numbered eighteen, though in reality as fixed in the versions recited in the synagogues they number nineteen. As the prayer par excellence, it is designated as the "Tefillah" (prayer), while among the Sephardic Jews it is known as the "Amidah," *i.e.*, the prayer which the worshiper is commanded to recite standing (see also Zohar, i. 105). The eighteen—now nineteen—benedictions, according to their content and character, are readily grouped as follows: (1) three blessings of praise ("Shebahim," Nos. i., ii., iii.); (2) twelve (now thirteen) petitions ("Bakdashot," Nos. iv.-xv. [xvi.]), and (3) three concluding ones of thanks ("Hoda'ot," Nos. xvi. [xvii.], xviii., and xix.). The first three and the last three constitute, so to speak, the permanent stock, used at every service; while the middle group varies on Sabbath, New Moons, and holy days from the formula for week-days. The construction of the "Shemoneh 'Esreh" complies with the rabbinical injunction that in every prayer the praises of God must precede private petitions ('Ab. Zarah 6), as the following comment shows: "In the first three [V11p270001.jpg] man is like a slave chanting the praise of his master; in the middle sections [V11p270002.jpg] he is a servant petitioning for his compensation from his employer; in the last three [V11p270003.jpg] he is the servant who, having received his wages, takes leave of his master" (Ber. 34a).

Makes you smile, doesn't it? In one verbal volley Jesus demolished an argument the resurrection-loving Pharisees and Scribes had been unable to handle since anyone could remember. Ironically, some of those who had opposed Him moved toward Him with this word of encouragement and thanks. Please, do not ever underestimate the power of bold, courageous, sometimes terse defense of truth in a spiritually dark ... and sometimes dangerous ... godless culture. Stand your ground. Share what God has taught you. Dismantle false teaching. Point the lost to the fact that they will all be resurrected either to life or to judgment.

<sup>25</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. <sup>26</sup> For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; <sup>27</sup> and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. <sup>28</sup> Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, <sup>29</sup> and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment (John 5).

Let's get real and make this personal: Where you will wind up is a decision you must make and that decision is directly tied to what you think or don't think of Jesus, the Christ. Is He your Lord and Savior or not (Romans 10:9-13)?

The Sadducean-type does not think there will be a day of divine reckoning. They are the consummate hedonist, living for all they can get out of this life, be it moral or immoral. They live for power, really, they are consumed by it. They love to control people. They love to watch less intellectually gifted people squirm and cower before their intellectual prowess. They do what they want because they do not think they will have to give account of their actions to the living God. They have a form of religion but it is inherently powerless and is only used to further their insatiable desire for more power in this life. They are, like the ancient Grecian Epicureans, all about minimizing pain and maximizing pleasure. Yes, pleasure becomes the ultimate guide for what is true and right about life to the Sadducean-type.

If this is you, Jesus has just brought your false system to the ground so you will see how a personal relationship with the living God is the only way to have a meaningful, fulfilled, enjoyable, purposeful life. He is now waiting for your next move, and He's hoping it is not one more insincere, illogical argument designed to push Him away.