

Matthew 22b

Who appeared on the scene next (v. 23)? A group of Sadducees.

Who were the Sadducees? A religious sect of Jews in Jesus day. They were wealthy, property-owning aristocrats. They were the liberal theologians of that day. They denied the resurrection of the body, the existence of angels, and miracles. They only believed in the first five books of the Bible -- the Torah (Pentateuch). They were more of a political party than a religious sect. They were also more accommodating with the decisions of Rome than their counterparts, the Pharisees.

What was the question they asked Jesus (vv. 24-28)? First, they reminded Him of the law concerning levirate marriage (Deuteronomy 25:5). Under that law, if an Israelite died without leaving children, his brother was supposed to marry the widow to preserve the family name in Israel and keep the inheritance within the family.

Trying to trap Him in a theological controversy that would destroy His reputation, they then presented a riddle concerning a woman who lost her husband, then married one of his brothers. The second brother died, so she married the third—and so on, down to the seventh. Finally, the woman died. Then came the question designed to humiliate Him, *"Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?"* The Sadducees were trying to make the resurrection appear ridiculous.

How did Jesus reply (vv. 29-32)?

vv. 29-30 Jesus corrected the Sadducees' two false notions: First of all, the Sadducees were ignorant of the Scriptures. He said that Heaven, the resurrected state, will be much more than just a glorious version of earth. In fact, in heaven, marriage will be unnecessary. Once individuals have received glorified bodies no longer subject to death, the need for procreation, one of the basic purposes for marriage, will no longer exist. Believers in glorified bodies will be like the angels, in that angels do not reproduce themselves.¹

vv. 31-32 Secondly, they were ignorant of the power of God which raises the dead. Jesus quoted a statement God had made directly to Moses at the burning bush: *"I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"* (Exodus 3:6). If Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not continue to live after death, He would have to say that He *was* their God. But here, Jesus quotes from Exodus (one of the five books of the Bible the Sadducees said was genuine) where God says that He *is* their God, speaking in the present tense and thus proving from the very books they believe in, that there is indeed a resurrection of the dead.

How did the crowds react (v. 33)? They were astonished all the more at His teaching (cf. Matthew 7:28; 22:22).

Who next appeared on the scene (v. 34)? When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced their antagonists, the Sadducees, they showed up to renew their attack against Him.

What question did they ask Jesus (v. 36)? Their spokesman, a lawyer i.e., an "expert in the law," asked Jesus which is the greatest commandment -- a test to prove His quality as an interpreter and teacher of the Law.

The rabbis identified 613 commandments in the Mosaic Law, 248 positive and 365 negative. Since no one could possibly keep them all, they divided them into "heavy" (more important) and "light" (less important). The Pharisees taught that the Jews needed to give attention to all the laws but particularly the "heavy" ones. This Pharisee was asking which of the "heavy" ones Jesus considered the "heaviest."²

How did Jesus reply (vv. 37-40)?

22:37-38 The Lord Jesus summarized man's obligation to God as the first and great commandment: *"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."* This means that man's first obligation is to love God with the totality of his being.

22:39-40 Then Jesus added that man's second responsibility is to love his neighbor as himself. We should think of how much we love ourselves, of how much of our activity centers around the care and comfort of self. Then we should try to imagine what it would be like if we showered that love on our neighbors. Then we should do it.

Such behavior is not natural; it is supernatural. Only those who have been born again can do it, and then only by allowing Christ to do it through them.³

It is inappropriate to argue from this command that one needs to learn to love himself or herself before he or she can love someone else.⁴

What did Jesus mean when He said, "All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (v. 40)? Moses brought us the Ten Commandments, and Christ just reduced the ten to two. These two commandments constitute the basis of the moral character of all the others. Love is the fulfilling of the entire law (Romans 13:8-9; Galatians 5:14). Love is the master virtue of the Bible (Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 6:5).

How did Jesus turn the table on the Pharisees (v. 41)? Having received several questions from His critics, Jesus now turned the tables and asked the Pharisees a question.

What did He ask them (v. 42)? *"What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?"* This question confronted the Pharisees and the assembled crowd with who He really was.

How did they reply? The Pharisees gave a standard correct answer based on Old Testament passages (Isaiah 11:1, 10; Jeremiah 23:5-6) that the Messiah would be a descendant of David. However this was not the complete and proper answer.

What follow on question did Jesus ask them (vv. 43-45)? Quoting from Psalms 110:1, Jesus pointed out that the Pharisees' answer contained a problem: How could Jesus be David's son if David called Him his Lord? He apparently must be more than just a human son. The answer is -- David's Lord and David's son are one and the same Person.

How did the Pharisees answer Jesus (v. 46)? No one dared answer His question or debate points of theology with Him. All His opponents had been silenced. They were unwilling to admit that Jesus had to be both a descendant of David and God at the same time. The confrontation had ended. His enemies could not escape the logical consistency of Jesus' biblical arguments. But rather than submitting to His authority, as they should have done (cf. 21:23), they plotted His destruction.

¹ Louis A. Barbieri Jr., "Matthew," The Bible Knowledge Commentary: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Victor Books, 1985), 72.

² Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Matthew, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 569.

³ William MacDonald, Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1288.

⁴ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Matthew, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 570.