

Sadducees

Notes from a teaching by Kent Dobson-Summarized by Adam Huschka

We don't have any writings that come from the Sadducees themselves and thus everything we know about them we know from their enemies.

History

- Came from the Hasmonean ruling family (high priestly family) 150 years BCE.
 - Had all the ruling power.
- Sadducees movement born out of the high priesthood.
- When Herod came to power he removed them from power.
- When Herod died the Romans restored them to the high priesthood.
- Sadducees most powerful people in the land at the time of Jesus
- Ananias had a dynasty of high priests.
 - 5 sons were high priests.
 - Son-in-law Caiaphas also high priest.
 - Family of Anas the most important family of the most powerful group at the time of Jesus.
 - Acts 4:5-7; 5:17
- John 11:45-50
 - Caiaphas statement was the exact opposite of Jewish thought in his day.
 - Jewish parable, "If a gentile comes to you a group and says to you, 'Hand over one man or we'll kill you all,' it is better that all of you die than hand over the one man."
 - Gives us insight into his thinking, that is, protect their power at all costs.
- In the gospels "Sadducees" and "chief priests" and "high priests" are the same people.

Lifestyle and Work

- Everything involving the Sadducees revolved around the Temple.
 - Everyone according to Jewish law had to pay a tax and visit the Temple 3x per year.
 - All the income from the offerings, Temple tax and all things Temple fell into the lap of the Sadducee.
- Owned large amounts of Jerusalem and Jericho (summer homes).
 - According to Jewish Law the Levites were not supposed to own any land, this is why they were so hated.
- Centered in Jerusalem; you don't find Sadducees in Galilee.
- Jerusalem even had 2 streets: a high and a low. The high street was for them so didn't come in contact with lower class.
- Rome gave them their power.
- Didn't have philosophical problem with taking in Greek culture.
 - Went to theatre and games.
 - As much involved in Greek culture as Jewish.

- Wanted the power of the Temple to rest exclusively in their hands.
 - Made a decree that no sheep or goat for sacrifice could come from outside their flocks. (opposite of the Torah's teaching)
- Wanted Jerusalem controlled exclusively by the elite.

Theology

- No Oral Law; rejected the Oral Law.
 - Oral Law=Pharisees or Rabbis "saying of the fathers"
 - Those who followed oral law taught it should not be written down but passed on verbally.
 - Rejected by Sadducees.
 - Wrote down and distributed a law of their own.
- Torah and Tanach
 - Not true that Sadducee only held to the Torah.
 - Honored entire Hebrew Bible.
 - Did elevate Torah above everything else (not unique to them).
 - Did something Pharisees didn't. Would say, "You should do what we say because the Torah says it." They traced everything back to the Torah in order to give them authority.
- Rabbi Antinous of Socco who eventually became a Sadducee and thus Sadducee followed his teaching (ironically).
 - Said, "No reward is to be granted in the future world."
 - Meant 3 things:
 1. They rejected the resurrection of the dead.
 2. They stressed human responsibility and weakened God's providence. When something bad happens result of chance and bad result. If something wrong fix it; no divine intervention.
 3. Didn't believe in angels (Acts 23:8)
 - Rejected the spirit world.
- Non-apocalyptic. (This makes them different than every other religious group).
 - Their concept of a Messianic Kingdom was much more this worldly and metaphorical.
 - They were not a Davidic family and thus to believe in the coming Messiah would have been death to their power.

Jesus' Attitude Toward the Sadducees

Luke 19:45-48

- Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem not only to die but to confront the Sadducees.
- First encounter with the Sadducee
- Jeremiah 7 is where this passage is quoted from.
 - One of the most venomous attacks on the Temple aristocracy and the religious establishment in the Hebrew Scriptures.

- Also says go up to Shiloh and see what I did there
- Archaeology tells us that Shiloh was raised and burned to the ground, and it was a holy sanctuary.
- Jesus is telling them the Temple is going to burn!

Luke 20:9-19

- Main Character: the son.
- The Vineyard: Israel.
- Bad People: Sadducees/tenants who are treating people poorly.
- Climax: Father sends the son and the Sadducee kill him. Then Jesus quotes Psalm 118.
- In Jewish tradition you never tell a parable that is not connected to a Biblical verse (a verse being elaborated on).
- Quoting from Psalm 118.
 - Every festival in the Temple the priests sang Psalm 113-118, which means 3 times per year the priests said, “The stone the builders rejected...”
 - The people said the stone was David (popular interpretation of the day).
 - Samuel when picking David only after being rejected by his dad.
 - David is a picture of the Messiah.
- Jesus is saying that He is that Messiah and even if you reject me, you’re going to be thrown out.
- V.18
 - Rabbinic text, “If a stone falls on a pot, woe to the pot. If a pot falls on a stone, woe to the pot. In either case, woe to the pot. So whoever attacks the people of Israel receives his deserts in their account.”
 - Jesus quoting this and saying it doesn’t matter what you do, how you encounter the stone, the stone will be victorious.
 - He will be victorious and the tenants will be kicked out.
- Israel finally had their guy who was confronting the religious establishment.

Matthew 26:61

- The motivation behind this trial is that if the Sadducee can prove that Jesus in violation of Jewish law, the people will reject him.
 - Jesus on trial for being a false prophet.
 - Deuteronomy 13 says that false prophets should be killed.
- V.63...are you the Messiah
 - Why does Caiaphas jump to this?
 - Zechariah 6:12 says, “the one called branch will build the temple.”
 - Caiaphas is asking, “Are you the Messiah; is that why you said what you did about raise it in three days?”

Bottom Line

1. Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem to confront the religious elite: in teaching and physically by cleansing the Temple. Came as a revolutionary of the people.
2. Claimed to be the Messiah.