

# OpenTheo

## Wedding, Render Caesar, Resurrection (Part 2)



### **The Life and Teachings of Christ** - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg explores Jesus' response to the debate on whether it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar. Jesus used a coin with Caesar's stamp to make the point that supporting the government requires citizens to pay taxes, but emphasized that God should come first. The discussion also covers Jesus' views on the Sadducees and their beliefs about the afterlife and resurrection, with Jesus citing examples from the Bible to support the idea of an afterlife. Overall, the audience is left amazed by Jesus' teachings and his knowledge of scripture and the afterlife.

### **Transcript**

...and he did not regard the person of men. That is, he did not kowtow to persons of rank or of money. He wouldn't cater his words or tailor his words to the preferences of people of importance and rank and influence.

All those things they said about him were true. The thing is, they didn't believe it. They spoke these things in hypocrisy, and none of those things were true of them.

They didn't come in truth. They didn't speak the word of God in truth. They did respect the persons of men.

They did kowtow to the authorities. Everything they said about him was in fact true, but they didn't regard it to be true. They no doubt regarded it to be true of themselves, because it's clear that the things they said were intended to be positive things, and most people think positively about themselves.

At least these people certainly did. So, the irony is, they thought they were this way, and he wasn't. Or in fact, he was really this way, and they weren't.

But they were totally hypocritical in the matter, and the only way they could hope to succeed in convincing him that they were sincere in this matter, is to send people he hadn't interacted with before. So they send their disciples to bring this, as if these were just young skulls full of mush, uninfluenced by the powers that be, and just searching for truth. Troubled over an ethical dilemma.

Should we pay these tribute taxes to Caesar, or should we not? Now, the issue is a live issue. Just a few years after Jesus was born, probably when he was about ten years old, in the year 6 AD, a man named Judas of Galilee had started a revolt against Rome. He had eventually been caught and crucified, but his revolt lived on, even in Jesus' day.

And the revolt he started was called the Zealot Party. Even one of Jesus' twelve apostles had been converted out of that party. And the Zealots were like the Maccabees of a couple hundred years earlier.

They were men who resisted the involvement of pagan rulers over God's people Israel. And they did so through guerrilla warfare and through treachery and violence. They actually murdered Roman soldiers in the dark and stuff, and they did nasty things.

The Maccabees had done that a couple centuries earlier and were great heroes. The Zealots, however, were not successful. Eventually their entire party was stamped out.

In fact, the last of them were wiped out in 73 AD at Masada. And that was the end of the Zealot Party. But the Zealots' teaching was, and Judas of Galilee had taught this, that it is unlawful for a Jew to pay tribute to a pagan ruler, because, he said, the Jews are God's kingdom.

God alone is their king, and for them to pay tribute to anybody other than God, especially to a pagan, is to deny God as their king. Therefore he thought it was unlawful and immoral to pay tribute to Caesar. Now, although most Jews did not withhold their tribute money for fear of retaliation from Caesar, the popular support was with the Zealots.

Most of the Jews resented the Romans also, and they were glad for people like the Zealots. It's like most of us don't go out and protest against abortion at abortion clinics, but some of us are glad that some people are out there getting in the face of these people. Maybe we don't approve of everything they're doing.

I personally have some problems with some of the things that have been done in the name of pro-life, but I'm glad there's people out there who are confronting the issue. And I think that's how most of the Jews felt about the Zealots. They didn't want to go stick their neck on the block to be crucified next as one of the Zealot Party, but they were glad someone was out there doing it, harassing the Romans and stuff.

And so the Jews in general, the masses, were friendly toward the Zealots' idea that they shouldn't be required to pay taxes to Caesar. On the other hand, of course, if one would come out and say, yes, don't pay taxes to Caesar, he would label himself or he'd identify himself as a Zealot and make himself the target for legal retaliation from the Romans. Therefore, in bringing this question to Jesus and asking him to make a decision about it, they put him in a position to be alienated from the people who loved him, the masses,

the peasants and so forth, by saying, yes, you should pay tribute to Caesar, or if he gave the other answer, to get in trouble with the law, with the Romans.

Now, as it turns out, when he came to trial, there were false witnesses that brought charges against him to Pilate, saying that he forbade people to pay tribute to Caesar. It did Jesus no good, in a sense, to give the right answer here, because they abused it anyway, they fabricated his answer. His answer he gave actually was essentially telling them to go ahead and pay tribute to Caesar.

And yet, even though he made this statement, he was accused later before Pilate of having taught just the opposite, of forbidding people to pay tribute to Caesar. So it did him no good to answer wisely here, but his answer has been marveled at by scholars throughout history. I mean, you just instinctively feel like this was one of the clearest examples of a word of wisdom in operation, the gift of word of wisdom in operation in Jesus.

Because it was like Solomon, when the two prostitutes came battling over the same baby, and he got a word of wisdom saying, well, let's cut the baby in two, and you'll both be satisfied, right? And by this means he discovered who was the true mother. It was a stroke of genius, and in the book of 1 Kings it tells us that his fame went abroad throughout the whole world based on that decision. And it is a striking and brilliant decision.

This statement of Jesus at least equals that. In fact, Jesus said, one greater than Solomon is here, meaning himself. And Jesus' answer here, one gets the impression, he said it without batting an eye, he didn't have to say, ooh, this is a really hard one, let me figure this one out, give me a few days on this, you know, and then come back with this really brilliant answer.

They just asked him, and he gave them an answer. And his answer was, it even caused them to marvel. It says in verse 22, when they heard these words, they marveled, and left him and went their way.

They couldn't find any fault with what he said. Well, before he answered them, he asked them to show him a coin, a denarius. Now, the denarius had an image of Caesar's face stamped upon it.

Solomon pointed out that since Jesus had to borrow this coin, that this proves that Jesus was poor, because he didn't even have a penny. To use this illustration, he had to borrow one. He says, show me a denarius, give me one.

Now, I do believe Jesus lived a poor lifestyle, and I believe his disciples were poor also, but I don't know that this particular story proves that point. Because the denarius, the minted Roman denarius, had to be used for paying the tribute, and many pious Jews

would never carry such a coin, because of their scruples about graven images. There was an image of Caesar on the coin.

It was a graven image. And many of the more devout Jews were opposed to even owning such a coin, or possessing one. It's possible that when they had to pay their tribute, they'd go out and instantly exchange their Jewish currency for one of these coins and immediately make their tax payment, so they wouldn't have to be in possession of a coin.

But Jesus apparently didn't carry these coins. The interesting thing is that his critics did. Probably one of the Herodians had one.

And he said, show me one of these coins. And so they showed him one. He said, well, whose face is that anyway on there? And they said, well, that's Caesar's face.

And he said, well, then render to Caesar what's Caesar's. I know somebody who is a Christian who objects to paying taxes, and he does not believe that Jesus was in this statement, advocating the payment of taxes. Now, most would say, it looks like he said it to me, to go ahead and pay Caesar his tribute.

My friend felt that what Jesus was saying is, whose face is on this coin? Well, it's Caesar's face. Well, give him his face. It says nothing about taxes, but if it's his face, let him have his face.

But don't let him have your money. Now, I personally disagree with this. This is just a way that a friend I used to know tried to justify his own tax revolt against what was clear evidence from Scripture that Jesus did say to render taxes to the Caesar.

Now, Jesus didn't leave it at that, though. But he crowned his statement with this balance, and give to God the things that are God's. Anything that truly belongs to Caesar should not be withheld from him.

And anything that truly belongs to God should not be withheld from him. Now, what does belong to Caesar? Well, obviously his face belongs to him. But the coins obviously bore evidence that they belonged to him also.

They had his face on them. He must have minted them. You Jews, you must have gotten these coins from Caesar.

Did you not? Well, they must be his. Give them back to him. The word render means to pay, or even to pay back.

The Greek word render. In fact, I'd like to point out that when they came and asked Jesus the question, in verse 17, they said, is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? The word pay they used there is just the general Greek word for give. To give tax money to

Caesar.

And the answer that Jesus gave, render to Caesar, the word render there in verse 21, means pay or repay. So they were asking whether they should give Caesar the tribute as a gift from them. And he says, no, give it to him as a payment for services rendered.

A gift and a payment are two different things. They were seeing the tribute money as something they were having to give as a gift to Caesar. He says, no, pay him his wages.

This is his coin. It came from him. Give it back to him and give it to him for services rendered.

Pay him his salary. Now, Jesus didn't say it in that many words, but Paul did. And over in Romans chapter 13, in verse 7, in talking about government officials, Paul said, render, therefore, the same Greek word, render, pay, therefore, to all their due, taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, and honor to whom honor.

Now, how does Paul figure who is due these things? Who has this coming to them? Who has earned it, in other words? Well, it says in verse 4 of the same chapter, Romans 13, 4, for he, the government official, is God's minister or servant to you for good. If you do evil, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain, for he is God's servant or minister and avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore, you must be subject not because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake, for because of this you also pay taxes.

Why? Because they, the government officials, are God's servants attending full time to this very thing, continually to this very thing. The idea is that just like the Levites serve full time as God's servants in the temple, so the government officials serve full time as God's servants in the state. And the Levites had to be supported by those for whose sake they served.

That's what the tithes were. The priests were given the tithes and the Levites were given a tithe, and the priests were given a tithe of the tithe. But the tithe was like a tax paid for services rendered by the Levites.

They were serving God full time. They couldn't go out and work a secular job, so they had to be supported by those whom they served. Likewise, full time government officials are serving God also.

They are called of God to serve and you are the ones on whose behalf they are serving and therefore pay them their salary, he says. They are ministering continually. They are full time ministers.

They have to be supported and therefore you pay taxes. So, the idea is when the government renders services, it's only fair that you pay them for their services just like if

you had a worker come and do work, you know, roof repair on your house or work on your car or whatever, and he charged for it, then you pay him what he earned. Now, the government is seen in the Bible, even secular government is seen as having a service that it performs for God.

Now, Paul makes it clear that what they do for God is they avenge God's wrath on those who do evil. That's what God has hired the government to do and that's what we are supposed to pay them to do to enforce criminal justice, basically. One of the most galling things, of course, that Christians have to face in the secular world is that pagan governments often lose track of what justice is.

A lot of times people who are criminals and should be punished go free and people get punished and penalized who haven't really done anything seriously wrong and the government isn't doing what it's ordained to do. Nonetheless, that doesn't change the fact that God has ordained the government to do the right thing. If the government doesn't do the right thing, they'll have to answer to God for it, but they are nonetheless doing some services for us and we take advantage of their services.

The Roman emperor paved a great number of roads and built a great number of buildings. Even the temple in Jerusalem was greatly embellished by Herod out of his own treasuries. The buildings and the roads that the Romans provided provided a service to the Jews and the Jews should appreciate it and give Caesar what belongs to him, pay him for his services.

He also provided peacekeeping forces. Now, of course, the Jews didn't appreciate these peacekeeping forces because that was called the Roman Occupational Army in their territory and often the peace was kept at their expense because they were the ones causing problems. They were the ones rising up in revolt that the peacekeepers came and quelled the revolt.

Nonetheless, the presence of the Romans did provide a sense of law and order and it is generally believed by historians that the Romans were pretty good at this, that they were pretty good at law and order and therefore they provided the service, the basic services that God ordained the government to do. Therefore, Jesus said, pay him for his service. I'm not asking you to give a donation to Caesar or to give him a gift, I'm asking you to pay him what he earned.

Give him his wages. Render or pay to him what you owe him. But pay and render to God what you owe him.

Now, what does one owe to God? Everything, really. And as we could probably put a title over Romans 13, which we were looking at a moment ago, Romans 13 where Paul talks about the government officials, we could title that chapter Render to Caesar the Things that are Caesar's. The previous chapter in Romans, Romans 12, could be titled Render to

God the Things that are God's.

In Romans 12, 1, it says As I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, to God, which is your reasonable service. And he goes on to explain more. We present ourselves to God.

We render to God what belongs to him. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6, You are not your own, you've been bought with a price. You belong to God, therefore give him yourself.

Now, what Jesus was saying in answer to this question was, what you pay to Caesar is not anywhere near as important as what you end up giving to God. Because God has the highest claim. Now, if you took what really belonged to Caesar and gave it to somebody else, for example, I think I mentioned before, I know some people who, Christians, pacifists, who object to the amount of money that our government spends on military things.

Particularly, they object to nuclear weapons. And I remember them telling me that when it comes tax time, they actually figure out how much they owe in taxes total. And then they figure what percent of the national budget is spent on military.

And they take that percentage of their tax money and subtract it. And they don't send, they send their taxes less that amount to the government. But they send a letter with it.

And they say, because we object to the military on grounds of conscience, we are subtracting from our taxes the amount that you would spend on military efforts. And we are sending it instead to such and such organization, which is an organization that promotes peace, or amnesty international, or someone like that. Usually some secular, or if possible, a Christian organization that they believe in.

Now, I personally don't, I haven't been in touch with these people for a long time. And I'm not sure how the IRS has responded to this. But I have a feeling the IRS doesn't honor this kind of approach.

My guess is that these people, if they have continued to do this, probably have had some problems with the tax people. I haven't seen them for years. But, no one has.

They just disappeared without a trace. But the government doesn't consider that you can take what belongs to Caesar and give it to somebody else. You can't take the portion of your taxes that Caesar says are his for the military and give them to some other organization of your choosing.

It is wrong if you hire someone to come and mow your lawn, that you pay some other lawn service that didn't mow your lawn instead of the people who did. When they render you the service, you pay them. And you say, render to Caesar, what are Caesar's? He provides a service, you give him what he provides.

But it is equally wrong to take what is God's and render it to somebody other than God. In fact, it is morally wrong to give to Caesar what belongs to God. Just as Caesar would object to you giving what belongs to him to somebody else, so God objects to you giving something that belongs to God, giving that to Caesar or anyone else.

Which is one of the reasons why we have to draw the line somewhere in terms of our obedience to government. Not all Christians draw the line at the same place, and I won't draw it for anyone else. Each person has to do this in his own conscience.

But we have to reckon with the question of what has God authorized government to do and what has he not authorized them to do. And of the things that God has not authorized government to do but they do anyway, how many of them can we support passively and how many of them do we have to say I can't agree with this, I just can't submit to it because it's immoral. Those are the issues that not all Christians agree about.

Obviously, among those things that I would not submit to government about would be if they told me to go to war. I'd go to jail first. I'd rather be in jail than go to war.

And it's not because I think it's safer in jail. Pacifists have not been treated very well in military prisons historically. Sometimes it's safer on the battlefield than for a pacifist to be put into a military prison.

But the point is it's not a matter of safety, it's a matter of conscience. And there are many other issues of this kind. Of course, some of the present issues that people are wrestling with are the government claiming the right to determine how you educate your children and whether you should register your children with the state even if you're not sending them to the state schools.

The state requires it but many Christians I know don't do it. And that's simply because they don't believe that they should authorize the state to oversee the education of their children. It's not the state's business and to even register with the state is perceived as a compromise just like wearing a swastika would be considered a compromise by many Christians in Germany although some Christians in Germany wore swastikas but would have objected to killing Jews.

Different Christians draw the line at different places. There were Christians in Germany who actually wore a swastika and he actually served in German armies but no doubt some of them would have drawn the line someplace like if they were told to go out and wipe out Jews wholesale. I imagine there are some Christians who wouldn't go that far.

And there are those who not only wouldn't go that far but wouldn't wear the swastika at all because of what it symbolized. And so each Christian has to make up his own mind before God and through his own personal leading at what point the government is



overstepping that which really belongs to God. The early Christians shortly after this time would not render to Caesar what Caesar demanded of them because he began to demand that they worship him.

Nero and many other Caesars after him required people to worship him at certain times. Domitian required Christians to pronounce him Lord and to burn incense unto him. Mostly they wouldn't and so they were fed to the lions and wiped out in other ways.

But they couldn't do that because worship was owed to God alone and to render to Caesar the thing that belongs to God would be to rob God of what he has coming. So what Jesus had to say here has very far-reaching ramifications because all Christians live in some land that has secular government. I don't know of anyone who lives in a Christian country because I don't know of any such country.

Therefore all Christians have to wrestle with the issues of how much do I honor and how much do I resist the laws of secular government. And in answer to that question you have to wrestle with other theological questions like what has God ordained the government to do and to what degree will you go along with the government when it does things that God has not ordained it to do. And at what point is the government actually requiring you to do things that God would forbid you to do.

And where do you draw those lines? That's up for everyone to make his own decision. And I personally I wouldn't want to be in the position to make those decisions for other people. But I've done a lot of thinking about that and every Christian ought to think about that for himself and say well what am I going to do and what would I do and what would I not do if the government required it.

Whatever taking the mark of the beast may be referring to in Revelation is obviously something that is imposed by government and yet which God insists that his people do not submit to. There are times when one must defy government because a Christian must render to God the things that are God's and not render those things to man even to Caesar. By the way, Jeremiah had to confront an issue very much like what Christians throughout history have had to because in Jeremiah's day many Jews were carried away into captivity in Babylon.

In fact, eventually they all were but even when Jeremiah was still in Jerusalem some had already been carried away. Daniel and Ezekiel had already gone with two previous deportations and the Jews who were in Babylon were living away from their religious community in a totally secular pagan world. And so they were very much like the Christian living in the pagan world that we live in.

They were in a culture that did not appreciate their values, didn't follow their God and they had to decide how do we get along here, what are we supposed to do in this country. The situation of the Jews in exile was very much like that of the Christian in this

world because we're in exile in this world. We're called strangers of the diaspora, the dispersion in 1 Peter 1. We are scattered away from home and we are living among pagans and under their authority very much like the Jews in Babylonian exile did.

So what Jeremiah wrote to these people is applicable in some measure at least to Christians with reference to our relations to the worldly government under which we live. Now in Babylon those Jews who had already been carried away had some prophets among them, some prophets living in Babylon who were saying don't settle in here because you're going to be delivered from here quick. God is soon going to overthrow Babylon and we're all going back to Jerusalem.

And Jeremiah said no, that's not true. God is going to take us all back to Jerusalem but it will be 70 years from now after most of you are dead. So settle in and get used to it.

In Jeremiah 29 we have a letter that Jeremiah sent to the exiles who had gone ahead of him into Babylon. And he had a word from the Lord for them. And in Jeremiah 29 5 God said to them build houses and dwell in them.

Plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and beget sons and daughters and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands so that they may bear sons and daughters that you may be increased there and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive.

And pray to the Lord for it for in its peace you will have peace. Jeremiah 29 verses 5-7 These exiles can hardly think of anything but going home to Jerusalem. And they really liked it when prophets rose up and said have no fear God is soon going to take us home to Jerusalem.

We will be leaving Babylon soon. Very much like Christians who are always looking to leave here and go to heaven. Now I am eager to leave here and go to heaven.

But only when I die. Or when Jesus comes back. The problem is people become obsessed when Jesus comes back because they don't know how to coexist with the world.

The world is against us. The world is not friendly to us. It doesn't embrace our values.

And so certainly Jesus must come back and rescue us from this. That's analogous to the Jews in Babylon saying certainly God is going to take us back to Jerusalem where it is more comfortable. He wouldn't expect us to live here.

And yet Jeremiah's message was hey get used to it. You are going to be there for a while. Settle in.

Get a job. Build a house. Get married.

Get your children married. Have grandchildren. Dig in for the long haul.

And pray for the peace of the government that you are living among. Because if they are at peace it will help you. By the way Paul gave the same instructions in 1 Timothy 2. In fact it sounds almost like the exact instructions that Jeremiah gave to the captives in Babylon which it's possible even that Paul was sort of applying the same thing from Jeremiah 29.7 when he was instructing Timothy in 1 Timothy 2.2. Remember Jeremiah 29.7 said seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away and pray to the Lord for it.

For in its peace you will have peace. Look at the opening words of 1 Timothy 2. Paul said therefore I exhort first of all that supplications prayers intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men for kings and for all who are in authority that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior. So with reference to what we owe Caesar I don't know that we owe Caesar our prayers but we owe it to God to pray for Caesar because God has told us to do it and therefore if one would ask what is our obligation to the government in which you know the secular government under which we live certainly part of that obligation is to pray for the peace of the land we're in pray for the government Paul indicates we will have a more quiet and peaceable life if we do this and prayer what is prayer but spiritual warfare? Prayer is the principal means of spiritual warfare and therefore we do not fight in the nation's carnal wars for its peace and for its quietness but we fight a spiritual battle for its peace and quietness we pray for it and that's doing far more that's engaging a greater power than the military powers of any nation on behalf of it so Christians ought to be praying for kings, for governors for presidents, for whatever prime ministers and for lawmakers and law enforcement agencies and for all government officials that whatever they may intend to do they will end up only doing what God wants them to do for the well-being of the kingdom of God and for the Christians who live under their reign and so that's part of our obligation to government which is one of the issues that spins off of the question of paying tribute to Caesar you see Jesus was basically saying to the Jews get used to it Caesar is here to stay you better start paying him he's going to be in your employment for a long time Jesus did not embrace the zealot's vision just the opposite the parable he had just told was that the Romans were going to come and wipe out Jerusalem because of the Jews' revolt against God so anyway that's that exchange then we come to Matthew 22 verses 23 through 33 fairly quickly I want to go through this the same day the Sadducees who say there is no resurrection came to him and asked him saying teacher Moses said that if a man dies having no children his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother now there were with us seven brothers the first died after he had married and having no offspring left his wife to his brother likewise the second also and the third and even the seventh even to the seventh and last of all the woman died also therefore in the resurrection whose wife of the seven will she be for they all had her Jesus answered and said to them you are mistaken not knowing the scriptures or the power of God for in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels of God in

heaven but concerning the resurrection of the dead have you not read what is spoken to you by God saying I am the God of Abraham the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob God is not the God of the dead but of the living and when the multitude heard this they were astonished at his teaching now just as the Herodians and the Pharisees were somewhat adversaries of each other there was a very clear rivalry between the Sadducees and the Pharisees the Pharisees had been put to silence quite obviously verse 22 says when they heard these words they marveled and left him and went their way they knew they couldn't get him I mean they brought one of the hardest conundrums to him to try to trap him and he had gotten out of it effortlessly it's very possible that the Sadducees gloated a little bit overseeing their rivals the Pharisees put to shame like this but then they decided to take their turn at it the Pharisees had failed to bring him down they would come at him now I would like to suggest to you that the question that they brought to him was no doubt the best attack on the doctrine of the resurrection that they could come up with the principal point of rivalry between the Pharisees and the Sadducees had to do with the afterlife and spiritual things we're told elsewhere that the Sadducees didn't believe in angels they didn't believe in spirits they didn't believe in the resurrection of the dead they didn't believe in essentially they didn't believe in the spiritual realm at all in fact some words of Josephus about the Sadducees have given the impression that they didn't even believe all the Old Testament scriptures to be scripture there have been some different ways of interpreting what Josephus said here but most scholars believe based on what Josephus said that the Sadducees only accepted the five books of Moses as scripture the Torah what we call the Pentateuch that the other parts of the Old Testament they didn't recognize as authoritative and they based their whole beliefs on the Torah well that being so they differed radically from the Pharisees the Pharisees believed in angels they believed in spirits they believed in the resurrection of the dead and they believed in all the scriptures and the traditions of the elders as well on the one hand the Sadducees made the mistake of not acknowledging all the scriptures and on the other the Pharisees made the mistake of acknowledging the traditions of the elders as highly as the scriptures Jesus obviously stood somewhere in between but on the issue of the resurrection Jesus was on the side of the Pharisees Jesus believed in the resurrection and this was such a point of volatile disagreement between the Sadducees and the Pharisees that we recall a time in the book of Acts where Paul standing before the Sanhedrin with his neck on the line they wanted to hang him kill him stone him, whatever he noticed, it says in the book of Acts that part of the Sanhedrin were Pharisees and part were Sadducees so he decided to bring the house down by saying loudly he says men and brethren I stand on trial before you this day because I profess belief in the resurrection of the dead and in response to this the Pharisees said hey, there's nothing wrong with this guy he's like us we believe in the resurrection of the dead too and the Sadducees said no, he deserves to die and the Bible says that there began to be this madhouse riot in the Sanhedrin among the judges themselves between the Sadducees denying the resurrection and the Pharisees who wanted to stand up for Paul just because he agreed with them on the resurrection that was a pivotal point of

disagreement between those two parties and Paul knew how to exploit it to the full now he had been a Pharisee himself he knew what an issue it was and it certainly was the Sadducees and the very point that the Sadducees challenged Jesus on was this one the one point at which he agreed with the Pharisees and no doubt this was the best argument that they with their brilliant theologically trained minds could bring up against the resurrection they didn't believe in the resurrection and it is my assumption that they had used this argument against the Pharisees to good effect probably many times before because the Sadducees and Pharisees debated this point of resurrection all the time and it can hardly be that the Sadducees would come half-cocked with one of their lamer arguments against somebody who had shut down the Pharisees and the Herodians so readily they must have brought their strongest most potent their most unanswerable argument against the resurrection to make Jesus look bad and I would like to suggest that the Pharisees had never been able to answer it it seemed unanswerable and just like in the previous case Jesus answered it effortlessly but you can see why the Pharisees couldn't answer it in order to answer it one would have to have knowledge that only God would know I mean the answer was well in the resurrection people are like the angels the Sadducees didn't believe in the angels either so Jesus rubbed that in their face well people in the resurrection they're just like the angels the Sadducees don't believe in the resurrection or in angels he says they're like the angels of God in heaven they don't get married now how could anyone know that but God there's no revelation of that in the Old Testament that people in the resurrection don't get married only God would know such a thing that's why the Pharisees didn't know the answer and couldn't have ever answered this before only someone who had revelation straight from God on this subject or God himself would be able to answer with this authority that Jesus did but he did so instantly he didn't say I think so or it's my judgment that or you know after a lot of consideration of this point I believe this he just said it as if it was true as if he ought to know what people are like in the resurrection and surely he ought to he spoke the words from God and that shut them down quickly but what I want to say is that this point they brought to Jesus must have had the listeners on the edge of their seats because I'm sure even any Pharisees in the crowd were listening with their ears perked up because here's no doubt a question that they themselves have been asked and been put to shame in debate with the Sadducees because they couldn't answer it and the question did seem to present an unanswerable dilemma and it was simply this the law of Moses which the Sadducees did accept as scripture and so did the Pharisees and so did Jesus it had this law that's called the Law of Levirate Marriage levirate comes from the Latin word lever which means brother-in-law and you're familiar from reading the Pentateuch that this law is restated in several books of the Pentateuch that if a man died childless and left a widow his next brother if he had one should marry her and the first child of that marriage would be named after the deceased brother so that his inheritance could be carried on in his family in his name any other children from that marriage later would be named after the brother who had married her and presumably if the second husband died childless then if there was another brother in line he should step in and there's no end to it so they

raised this subject it may have been a true story or a false one in all likelihood they raise it as a they act like it's a true story but it could easily have been a hypothetical case but not an unthinkable one seven brothers the oldest marries a woman and dies childless obviously the next brother in line has to marry her but he dies childless so the next brother has to eventually all of them marry her in sequence and each dies childless so there's seven men all dead and then she dies no wonder after going through seven men like that but eventually everyone dies but the idea is now consider the absurdity of believing in something like a resurrection of the dead because if there were a resurrection of the dead this very situation which the law of Moses itself required to come about namely that this woman had several husbands if all these people are resurrected then there's seven men all have the claim on the same wife now by the way to the Jew it wasn't unthinkable that seven women might have the same husband because polygamy was definitely a double standard that they had a man could marry several wives but it was unthinkable that a woman would have several husbands all at once and in the resurrection it is presumed that all these husbands would be alive simultaneously all of them could say well she was my wife and they'd all have a truthful claim therefore what they're suggesting is that the very thing the law commands precludes the possibility of there being a resurrection because God himself by commanding this leviathan marriage would be setting up a situation that would be an impossible situation in the resurrection and that's why the Pharisees couldn't answer because they too admitted that the leviathan marriage was of God and Jesus didn't deny that either so how do you answer that in the resurrection it seems to present such an absurdity and they thought they had Jesus over a barrel here but Jesus said you are mistaken because you don't know the scriptures or the power of God their rejection of the resurrection doctrine was based on two problems one is they didn't know the power of God they probably doubted the possibility of raising the dead the power of God was they were strangers to it but they also didn't know what the scriptures taught one of the reasons may have been because they only accepted the Torah they didn't have all the scriptures that they acknowledged there are references in Daniel and Isaiah to places about the resurrection and the day it would appear but the Sadducees didn't recognize that as scripture they only acknowledged the law of Moses therefore their failure to know the scriptures and their failure to acknowledge the power of God prevented them from being able to believe in the resurrection now for a Jewish peasant untrained like Jesus to challenge these religious authorities and say you don't know the scriptures no doubt insulted them and stung them deeply but Jesus didn't mind he just went on with his statement he says in verse 30 for in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like the angels of God in heaven again mention the angels of God in heaven Jesus is very brassy he knows that the Sadducees don't even believe in angels but he speaks as one who has been there he knows they are there he is going to be he knows what's in heaven there are angels there and he even knows what resurrected people are like they are like the angels they don't marry now lots of Christians have asked the question whether in the resurrection those of us who are married now whether

we will still be married in the next life or does it just mean that new marriages will not be formed after the resurrection some have assumed that this is the case that since God has joined a husband and wife together as one flesh no man should put it asunder and God won't put it asunder either well whether that's true or not I can't say we just don't know there are some mysteries that are not answered about the resurrection I know that the belief back in the 70's held by many Christian friends of mine that no new marriages would be formed after the resurrection but marriages formed in this life would be honored and continuous in the resurrection that was a belief at least held by many and so there were a number of people myself included that got married quite young in the light of the fact that we thought the rapture was going to be soon and thought well if we don't get married now we'll never get a chance and we called that the pre-rapture rush and I had some friends who were not at all eager to get married and they formed their own little club and called themselves bachelors to the rapture and that was all in light of this particular statement of Jesus that in the resurrection they're not going to get married and therefore the idea was if you're going to get married at all you better do it before the rapture because after that you just won't have a chance I don't know the answer to that and I would say this that if we are married those of us who are married before the resurrection and if somehow the marriage is somehow honored or continuous in the resurrection I'm sure it won't take the same form it would be different I have the impression from what Jesus said that angels are not sexual creatures they're not made for marriage so why would they be created sexual and if we're like them in the resurrection then presumably whatever sexual aspects there are of marriage will probably not be an issue will not be present in the resurrection if the marriage exists at all it wouldn't need to be the sexual aspects of marriage are for reproduction but they're also for the symbolic portrayal of the relationship of Christ and the church all those symbols and stuff will be replaced by substance when Jesus comes back anyway that's a side point but Jesus is able to answer because he is God because he knew what the Pharisees didn't in defense of their own doctrine he could say well this is not a problem the fact is he is probably saying that marriages will not be honored in heaven even those that were contracted on earth because in view of their question that would be the necessary understanding of the statement because they're talking about marriages that were contracted on earth and what will be the status of these in heaven if Jesus was saying well marriages contracted on earth will still be okay in heaven or in the resurrection then we got the very problem they're suggesting there's seven guys who are legally married to her on earth and so she's going to have seven husbands in the resurrection so Jesus' statement probably should be interpreted as saying there won't be marriage as we know it not in any of the senses that would make this woman's condition absurd at least in the resurrection it just won't be an issue but then he turns on them he not only answers their question but then he nails them with something of his own in verse 31 and 32 and 33 but concerning the resurrection of the dead have you not read what was spoken to you by God saying I am the God of Abraham the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob but God is not the God of the dead but the living now what is this

argument here first of all I would note that the quote he gives in verse 32 comes from the Pentateuch Genesis 3:6 and 31:5 where God was speaking to Moses at the burning bush remember the Pentateuch was part of the scriptures of the Sadducees acknowledged so he says ok you don't accept the prophets you don't accept the Psalms I'll go to the scriptures you do accept and show you that the resurrection is a true doctrine let's go to Moses' own writings then at the burning bush God said to Moses I'm the God of Abraham the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob but Jesus says but God doesn't how can God be the God of dead people God is only the God of living people to say that God is somebody's God it means he's the God they worship the Babylonians had their gods and the Philistines had their gods but David said that Jehovah was his God and Abraham said that Jehovah was his God but that simply means he worships Jehovah how can God be worshipped by people who are dead God isn't the God of dead people he's the God of living people but when God made this statement to Moses Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been dead for centuries so how could God at that late time as a contemporary of Moses say I am the God of these men who happen to have been dead for centuries God's not the God of dead men so they must be alive that's what Jesus is implying even in Moses' day though these men had died they continued to live they continued to be worshippers of God now you might say that doesn't prove the resurrection that just proves that the spirit lives on after death because after all Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had not yet been resurrected when Jesus made this statement or when Moses heard that statement from God therefore you might say that doesn't prove the resurrection that just proves an ongoing life true, it does but you see the Sadducees denied the existence of spirits too they didn't believe in life after the grave and Jesus is saying Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob must have been alive even after they died or else why would God at that time later say that he was still their God we see in the story of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16 that Abraham was still alive in a certain place awaiting judgment so Jesus said you should be able to deduce from this that people do have a life beyond death and to the Jew that would suggest that there must be a bodily life later because it was the Greeks who believed in a continuing disembodied spiritual state the Jews had no concept of that if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived on after death it must be their destiny to live on in faith and to have a physical body someday to be resurrected and that's what is implied no Jew would see it otherwise and Jesus assumed that his statement would prove that there is a resurrection Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are going to be there and they were alive in some form in some place even in the days of Moses because God is not the God of the dead but living and it says when the multitudes heard this they were astonished at his teaching why? because he spoke like somebody who knows he was able to point out things in the scripture they had never seen but he could also tell about things that only God could know like what people are going to be like in the resurrection and what the angels are like and so they were astonished at his authority he spoke like no other man well there's a couple other things in this confrontational series that we'll look at next time are there any questions?