

## The Sad-You-Sees Matthew 22:23-33

One of the leading sects of the Jews in the time of Christ were the Sadducees. The word Sadducees came from the word “Zadokites”, or followers of Zadok. They controlled the temple and priesthood at that time. We read in Acts 23:8 that “Sadducees say that there is no resurrection--and no angel or spirit....”. They denied the resurrection (perhaps any type of afterlife) and they denied the existence of the soul. When the temple was destroyed in AD 70, their sect came to an end. An interesting New Testament note is that none of them were ever recorded becoming Christians.

To remember the distinction of the Sadducees and Pharisees a simple rhyme of alliteration was used: The pharisees believe that there is life after death and that we will all be judged by God; this is very “fair, you see”. The Sadducees believe that this life is all that there is; this is very “sad, you see”.

One of the notes about them is that their lack of a belief in life after death lead them to living for the moment. *“They lived luxuriously, using silver and golden vessels, because (as they claimed) the Pharisees led a hard life on earth and yet would have nothing to show for it in the world to come”* (Avot of Rabbi Natan 5:2).

The point is this: the Sadducees were essentially **Nihilistic**. Nihilism is a broad philosophy that sometimes concludes that there is no meaning to life. Often times this type of existential nihilistic outlook leads to **hedonism**. Hedonism is an attitude (philosophy) that the meaning of life is only about pleasure or self-satisfaction. Consider the words of the people of Israel in Isaiah 22:13: *“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!”* Paul quotes this in 1 Corinthians 15:32 as the conclusion one reaches without purpose in Christ.

Today nihilism and hedonism are rising in popularity. So many people think that things occur without meaning or purpose. They believe that *“We are the result of chance & coincidence”*, *“Nothing we do matters”*, *“He who dies with the most toys wins”*. Theories like evolution promote this nihilistic hedonism. Many movies, TV, and music contain themes that nothing matters, every dies in the end, and there is no purpose to life. The results are seen in all aspects of society; there is a growing lack of respect for life, others, and even ourselves (think abortion or euthanasia), and an obsession with having as many possessions as possible.

When Jesus was challenged by the Sadducees in Matthew 22:23-33, He told them this: *“You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.”* Sadducees were wrong because they missed the point of Scriptures and the power of God. This is true of nihilism and hedonism in general as well.

The power of Scriptures is a power to reveal the meaning of life. Jesus said that Scripture contain the only real absolute Truth (John 17:17). Solomon wrote about the meaning of life in the book of Ecclesiastes, and concluded that without this Truth, everything is meaningless. He found the meaning only in the things of God (Eccl. 12:13). The value of each of our lives is directly addressed and uniquely revealed in Scriptures (Gen. 5:2), and the way to have value and meaning in life is patterned out (Gal. 5:22).

Too, a nihilistic, hedonistic attitude denies God’s very real power. The power of God is a power to overcome death (Psalm 16:8-11), to act in your life (Psalm 34:15-19), to never be alone (Matthew

28:20) and perhaps the most purposeful meaning, to love and be loved (1 John 4:17-5:5). Without the power of God, life IS meaningless. But to accept the power of God is to find meaning even in things that seem random or chaotic.

For many, this is a “Sad-You-See” world. It is full of people without hope, people intent on finding empty happiness in pleasure, people having no meaning in life. These people will stand before God ashamed of having squandered the greatest opportunity ever given. But those who turn to God through the Word of God have hope, real treasure, and true meaning.

Matthew 6:19 *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."*