

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Jesus' Antagonists**      Twentieth Week in Ordinary Time      Friday, August 22, 2014  
8:15 AM    **Ez 1:1-14; Mt 22:34-40**    Queenship of Mary    (Love is something that can be infinitely shared.)

There were **two principal antagonistic groups** that frequently sparred with Jesus, **the Sadducees and the Pharisees**. They were very different. The **Sadducees** really were an **aristocratic priestly clan**, not originally part of the twelve tribes of Israel at all, who had been **brought into the covenant by King David**. It was a clever alliance. David wanted support of the **Jebusite priests**, and so he offered them what you might call a monopoly on the ministry in the Temple of Jerusalem, Zion, which had been a Jebusite city before the time of David. So this was the group. They believed in a very unusual way, and they did not accept, what had become a very popular, belief in the resurrection of the dead. **They believed that God's justice was realized in this life.**

Now you heard the reading from Ezekiel. They heard the reading from Ezekiel and they believed that meant, and probably did, the restoration of the people, not resurrection from the dead in the sense of Jesus Christ rising from the tomb, but rather **the resurrection of the people of Israel from the grave of their despair**. Well, Jesus countered them because **Jesus himself believed in the resurrection of the dead**. Even before he was raised from the dead he believed in that possibility. He had that hope. And in that he was **like the Pharisees**. Some scholars even call him a Pharisee, although I think that's going too far because **he also disagreed with the Pharisees on many, many points**.

So now the Pharisees come to him and they are talking about the Law. **The Pharisees believed in the fullness of the Law; that means oral and written**. Now this is quite a bit of stuff, over ten thousand different instructions, oral and written. The written part only six hundred some, six thirteen, oral many, many more. **Jesus** wasn't too keen on the idea of the

oral Law in the first place, and when it comes to the written Law he does accept it; however, he **interprets it in such a way that everything gets down to two things: “Love God with your whole heart, mind, and soul,”** which he simply borrowed from Deuteronomy chapter 6; **“Love your neighbor as yourself,”** which he borrowed from Leviticus chapter 19. He is saying nothing new in itself. The words are not new. What’s new is that this is everything, that everything depends on these two. That is not what the Pharisees wanted to hear.

**According to them the entire Law had to be kept in its totality.** Every single commandment, every single instruction, every single interpretation was all of equal value and had to be kept in toto. **And that was a heavy burden. About this Jesus says, “My burden is light”**—your burden is heavy. Your burden is too much to bear. “My burden is light.” What is my burden? This: love God—whole heart, mind, and soul, all your strength—put it into that. And by the way, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” **because love doesn’t require parceling out.** You can love God with your whole heart, mind, and soul and still love your neighbor because the love you give to God isn’t something you can’t give to your neighbor as well. And the love you give to your neighbor is not something you can’t have for yourself as well. **Love is something that can be infinitely shared**—infinitely. This is a key, a very important key, to the teaching of Jesus and to the understanding that Matthew had of what he was all about.