

Luke 20:27-40
Resurrection Life

27 Then some of the Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection, came to Him and asked Him,
 28 saying: "Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife, and he dies without children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother.
 29 "Now there were seven brothers. And the first took a wife, and died without children.
 30 "And the second took her as wife, and he died childless.
 31 "Then the third took her, and in like manner the seven also; and they left no children, and died.
 32 "Last of all the woman died also.
 33 "Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife does she become? For all seven had her as wife."
 34 And Jesus answered and said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage.
 35 "But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage;
 36 "nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.
 37 "But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'
 38 "For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him."
 39 Then some of the scribes answered and said, "Teacher, You have spoken well."
 40 But after that they dared not question Him anymore.

Despite the general decline in religious belief today, most people in America continue to believe in an afterlife. And apparently that is regardless of your worldview. I was amused to read the following opening line from a newswire article on the subject: ***Most Americans, including half of all atheists and agnostics, believe in an afterlife, in heaven and in hell, a new nationwide survey shows.***

Half of all atheists believe in heaven? That's rather like saying I don't believe my neighbor exists, *but I'm sure his house does...*

It is amazing how many different people believe in an afterlife and how powerful a motivating factor that belief is. I mean consider for a moment why the people who attacked London and most recently Sharm El-Sheik in Egypt were willing to die in order to do so? It isn't just that they were committed to a militant Islamic ideology that they hope will triumph worldwide, each of them had a belief that by taking place in what they refer to as "martyrdom operations" they would obtain an assured place in a heaven filled with all the carnal delights they could ever want. In fact dying in the Jihad is the *only way* according to Islamic doctrine, that one can be absolutely sure of entering into heaven. The Kamikazi pilots of WW2 firmly believed that by their deaths their souls would be enabled to dwell and consort forever at the venerated Yasukuni Shinto Shrine. You couldn't pay men to do those things, and yet tell them that by doing these things they gain eternal life, and they are willing.

But that begs a critical question doesn't it? Namely, ***are these things true? And how can we know for sure? IS there an afterlife?*** If there is will we have bodies or will we be permanently disembodied spirits? Will we see our departed relatives? Will we recognize them?

Everyone it seems has an opinion about this, so much so that I've actually heard people using phrases "Well in my heaven, we'll have..." So we are prone to have arguments about it, but who really knows the truth?

In chapter 20 of Luke, we read about two different religious parties within Judaism, that had wildly diverging ideas about life after death. The first party was the Pharisees, they firmly believed that there was an afterlife, and that in fact not only our souls but our bodies would someday be resurrected. The Bible tells us even from Genesis 2 that human beings were created with a body and a soul and they believed that the soul could not die, and the body would be *resurrected*. *The Greek word for that is Anastasis, which is where the name "Anastasia" comes from.* It means to rise again and that means someday after we die our bodies will rise again. They believed that the righteous would be resurrected to dwell forever with God, but that the unrighteous would go down forever to hell.

They based that belief on the many scriptures of the Old Testament that speak of life after death.

For instance:

***Psalm 16:9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope.
10 For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.
11 You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.***

***Psalm 73:24 You will guide me with Your counsel, And afterward receive me to glory.
25 Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.
26 My flesh and my heart fail; But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
27 For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry.
28 But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, That I may declare all Your works.***

***Daniel 12:1 "At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book.
2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.
3 Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.***

Now there was another party in Israel, the Saducees. They were sort of the theological Liberals of their age. While they believed in God, they didn't believe in most of the supernatural elements of the bible. They didn't believe in Angels and they believed that the soul perished with the body. The only books they accepted were the first five books of the bible written by Moses called the Torah or Pentateuch. They were concerned with the here and now and the status quo, and their religion was full of formalism, but little or no spirituality. It was a religion of symbolism but without the heart. It's interesting how as religions decline the emphasis on heart religion and revelation decreases while the emphasis on formalism increases. The first church that Joy and I attended after our conversion didn't believe any of the fundamentals of the Christian faith, and yet their service was literally packed full of high church ceremony. *"All form and no Substance"*

Well the Sadducees hated Christ intensely and so they came to him, hoping both to show him up in front of the people. No doubt they also wanted to show up their theological opponents the Pharisees, so like most cynics in religion they pose a strawman question for Christ hoping to make anyone who believes in a bodily resurrection.

If you've done any witnessing to skeptics you will inevitably encounter the kind of absurd question they pose, "*Can God create a rock too heavy for him to move?*" and so on.

The Sadducees come to Christ posing a situation where a woman married seven brothers each in turn. This is based on the Jewish law that if man died childless it was the duty of his unmarried brother to marry his widow and raise up children who might then inherit his brothers possessions. That way, hopefully the land set aside for particular tribes by Moses would not pass out of their control. Realistically this would happen once or maybe at the most twice as was the case in the story of Tamar in Gen. 38. The Sadducees of course want to make the situation as difficult and ridiculous as possible so they blow it out to seven.

If there is a resurrection, they want to know, when they all rise again from the dead, whose wife will this woman be? "See how silly the idea is, can you imagine all the bickering that would go on! That proves its all make-believe"

This is rather like a modern skeptic asking, well if there is a resurrection what about all those people in heaven who died in their infancy? Or who died having lost limbs? They wouldn't be able to get around would they!

Both questions presuppose that our resurrection existence is exactly the same as our earthly existence. But that is not the case as we shall see.

Now how does Jesus answer them, well he doesn't answer by saying "well in *my heaven*" grounding as so many people do today in opinion and speculation. Where does Jesus go to give them an answer? Jesus goes to the word of God. That is how he answered error again and again, *it is written*.

And there, Christians, we learn something vitally important, don't seek to impress the unbeliever with well reasoned arguments or to say "my opinion is..." give them what the word says. O sure, support the word, but remember it is Scripture and NOT our opinions, that is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. Also remember, you may be able to win arguments using reason alone, but only the Word of God has the power to change hearts, and isn't that our objective in witnessing?

Jesus tells the Sadducees in Matthew 22:29 what their problem is *Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.*

And then he goes on to tell them, yes now in this present age, you are fulfilling the creation ordinance to marry and multiply and fill the earth. But don't you know that the age to come is going to be different? In the resurrection, not only will there be no more sin and no more death, but the total number of the redeemed will be completed. God knows from the beginning how many adopted children he intends to have, how many human bodies and souls will be created, and how many will go on to glory. That is why he Jesus in Revelation answers the question of **the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.:**

Rev. 6:10 How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

In the resurrection, they will be like the angels. Not like them in the sense that Angels are only spirits without bodies, but like them in the sense that they will no longer marry and have children. All things in that sense will be perfectly complete, and the communion that all believers share both with one another and with God will be so perfect, that it will make even the closest union that people can have on earth – marriage between a man and a woman – seem like separation by comparison.

Jesus then goes on to show them that as Calvin put it **"In short, it is impossible to conceive any thing more absurd than this dream, that men formed after the image of God are extinguished by death like the beasts."**

And because he knows the Saduccees didn't accept the other books of the bible, he uses a section from Exodus to prove that there is an afterlife, namely that God is the God of the Living not the Dead. When he spoke to Moses at the burning bush he didn't say, I *was* the God of Abraham, he says "I AM the God of Abraham." Proving to them that all who die in Him, eternally live in Him as well.

It is a mark of God's sovereignty that He is able to bring great good even out of Evil. "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good" as Joseph told his brothers who sold him into slavery in Egypt. Because the Sadducees asked a question out of evil intent, we learn something important about the resurrection.

Now its interesting, you talk about all the things we've been talking about and most people will say, that's great. Sure some are going to have problems with a bodily resurrection, but the idea that the soul continues after death, and that someday it will be reunited with the body, is ok. **As long as what?** As long as the Soul is going where? To HEAVEN. As long as it is all reward and no punishment.

You remember that survey I mentioned earlier? It went on to say: **"While 76 percent said they thought heaven exists and 71 percent voiced the conviction that there was such a thing as hell, only 0.5 percent expect to wind up in this terrible place upon their deaths. On the other hand, 64 percent told Barna's pollsters, "I will go to heaven."**

You remember what Daniel said: **"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt."**

Were their no afterlife, some would be beyond punishment.

Kids: Where was Christ Born?

Where did He Die?

Why Did He die?

So that by believing in him we might.

John 3:14-15 "14 "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

15 "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but **have eternal life**.

God's Love is not arbitrary love. It is Covenant Love, according to his promises.

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.