

Mankind in general has always anticipated an afterlife of some sort. This idea is built into the heart of man that there must be some sort of continuation of existence after this physical life is over. However, man's idea of the afterlife is of his own making not what the Scripture teaches.

An ancient Egyptian book "The Dead Files" is filled with stories about life after death. One is a story of a man who was found buried with a boat to sail through the heavens during the next life. Ancient Greeks placed a coin in the mouth of corpses to pay the fare across the mystic river of death into the land of immortal life. Some American Indians buried a pony and bow and arrows with a dead warrior in order that he could ride and hunt the happy hunting grounds. Many eskimos who died early were customarily buried with a dog to help guide them through the cold wasteland of death. The tombstone of Benjamin Franklin, who didn't claim to be a Christian in the biblical sense, says this, "The body of Benjamin Franklin, printer, lies here food for worms. Yet the work itself is not lost, for it will, as he believed, appear once more in a new and more beautiful collection."

Its important for us to note the OT writings that were available that detail the hope of eternity. Psalm 16:9-10, "Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will dwell securely for You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay." Psalm 49:15, "But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol (grave), for He will receive me." Daniel 12:2 defines this in very clear detail, "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt." Many Jews did believe in the afterlife, but the ones who asked Jesus this question, the Sadducees, did not believe in the resurrection.

POINT 1 - WHO THEY WERE AND WHY THEY WERE ANNOYED (VS. 23)

The main groups at this time, the Pharisees, the Zealots, the Essenes and the Sadducees.

- The Pharisees - elevated traditions above Scripture
- The Zealots - political and military activist
- The Essenes - were scribes of sort, much time copying OT scriptures
- The Sadducees were largely in control of the Temple. And until Jesus came in and ruined their income scheme they couldn't have cared less about Him.

1A - One of the key elements to know about the Sadducees is they didn't acknowledge any worth or authority of Scripture with the exception of the first five books of the Bible. They were even bigger legalist than the Pharisees, priding themselves in Levitical purity and being true preservers of the faith.

1B - The belief they had about no resurrection. The reason behind such a view was their high view of the first five of the Bible where Moses gave no direct teaching about the resurrection. And they considered all other books to be a mere commentary on the first five books. A man who doesn't believe in a life after this present life really has little motive for living other than what pleases him.

APPLICATION: Many today in the church live as if there is no judgment. Because they have a low view of God in eternity and in their life now.

After death he neither experiences pain or joy. Life ends when you die and nothing more. When Paul was on trial for his belief in the resurrection of Jesus we find this in Acts 23:6-8, “Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead! As he said this, there occurred a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.”

- The vast difference of the Pharisees and Sadducees
- The one thing that united them was to get rid of this Jesus

In Acts 4:1-2 the Sadducees continued to persecute those who taught the resurrection of Jesus, “As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.” The audacity to teach the truth in the face of one’s own tradition, pride and human belief.

POINT 2 - THE ABSURD QUESTION (VS. 24-28)

The law which the question was based upon is from Deuteronomy 25:5-6, “When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a strange man. Her husband’s brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her. It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.”

- The question seemed to have Jesus trapped they thought, given if you believe in the resurrection then whose wife shall she be?

POINT 3 - THE ANSWER (29-32)

3A - I am sure they expected Jesus to be silent since the question was obvious. His response they are mistaken or they err. In other words, Jesus said you are “dead wrong.” The word from where we get “err” or “mistaken” means to “go astray, wander off or deceive.” One commentary says, “It often carries the idea of being cut loose from reality.” In fact Jude 13 says concerning these false teachers, “wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.” Nothing could have been worse for them than to have been condemned of not knowing areas of Scripture they made such claims to know much about.

3B - The ignorance of God's power. This is in response concerning the question about whose wife she will be. In the heavenly state He declared there will be, "neither marry nor are given in marriage." Marriage is beautiful, ordained, designed by God, but is an earthly institution and temporal. But in eternity reproduction, childbirth, marriage won't be necessary because there will be no death no new life no sin no struggles no decay. We won't be angels either, the text says "are like angels" so don't think you will get wings and fly around like a Boeing 747. And we should touch on this, I don't know exactly how it will be in eternity. But I know three things:

- He has prepared a place for me - John 14:1-3, "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."
- When we die, 2 Corinthians 5:8, "to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord."
- When He returns, He will give us a glorified body, when the dead in Christ shall rise and those that remain will be changed.

We will also be glorified, perfect and won't have a human earthly mind. I think it's worthy to read 1 Corinthians 15:39-44 to affirm this as well. What they missed, and often we do, is that God is so powerful, He can transform a lifeless, dead body into a glorified, perfect, holy body to enjoy Him forever. He will raise up a glorified body.

3C - Ignorance Of Scripture. The statement Jesus refers to was one they read and knew. He pointed to the Pentateuch to prove this. He reminded them of the statement spoke by God many times and recorded numerous times in the book of Exodus. Luke 20:37, "But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the burning bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

Jesus uses this argument to prove the present tense usage of the words "I am." After Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were long dead, the Lord was still their God, and they were experiencing fellowship with Him now. And Jesus uses this term as well with the great "I AM's" in the gospel. The present tense is used in this text because He is not a God of the dead, but of the living.

He is presently the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These men aren't dead but in another realm with God in the heavens. Hebrews 11:13-16, "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them."

By this Jesus accomplished what no great and so called wise Pharisee could ever accomplish. He proved the resurrection of a new life in the OT. The Sadducees were silent. The truth was obvious. The conviction was paramount. I am glad today that God isn't dead nor silent nor quiet nor unaware of what is happening. I rejoice today that when this ole body lies silent in the grave, that I will be with a living, eternal, glorious and majestic God who become sin for me so that I can live. 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." John 11:25, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies."

In the Temple Christ magnified His deity and the religious leaders left speechless. Today, many see the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but leave. Don't. Repent. Believe. And have eternal life with a new body in the eternal glory of God. We don't speak of God in past tense!