

Ch. 20:27 Now there came to Him some of the Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection), 28 and they questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN'S BROTHER DIES, having a wife, AND HE IS CHILDLESS, HIS BROTHER SHOULD TAKE THE WIFE AND RAISE UP OFFSPRING TO HIS BROTHER. 29 "Now there were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died childless; 30 and the second 31 and the third took her; and in the same way all seven died, leaving no children. 32 "Finally the woman died also. 33 "In the resurrection therefore, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife." 34 And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, 35 but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; 36 for neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. 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. 38 "Now He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to Him." 39 And some of the scribes answered and said, "Teacher, You have spoken well." 40 For they did not have courage to question Him any longer about anything.

The tragedy here is that you could have asked Jesus anything and found out truth that is unknowable except from the Creator of everything, and you ask Him the *Can God make a rock so big He can't lift it* question. *You can't marry your sister, so, who did Cain marry??*

You could have asked Him anything you wanted to know. Stink bugs? Really? Was that really necessary? What purpose do they serve? He would have told you the answer. But not these folks.

The question is rhetorical. We think we're smart and you're stupid. Anyone who believes in resurrection from the dead and a life beyond this one is stupid. We're smart and everyone else is stupid. So there. Impossible question with an impossible answer that proves how smart we are and how dumb you are.

Unlike the previous question designed to start trouble any way it was answered, this one just seems to be aimed at showing that Jesus can't solve the riddle of life after death any different from anyone else.

It could have caused a division between Pharisee's and Saducee's perhaps, but there weren't that many Saducee's anyways and that wouldn't have solved the problem that they have.

Let's set some background. Who exactly are the sect of the Saducee's? Well, first of all, they are unique in their dis-belief. Their main distinction is in what they don't believe. They don't believe there is existence after physical death.

In every age and every culture there are now and have always been persistent belief in life after death. Indians on this continent with no input from God's revealed truth believed in some kind of happy hunting ground. They would be buried with favored articles that they could use in their next life.

In Egypt, pharoahs were entombed with ships to negotiate the voyage through the stars. It's built into us by God. We are image bearers and we have eternal longings.

C. S. Lewis famous quote in *Mere Christianity*; *“If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world.”*

This longing for another world is universal. Every culture in every time recognizes what Lewis so brilliantly states. We have within us this insatiable notion of eternity. God designed us as eternal beings. It's the fall and the diminished state of this world with it's life cycles and death that is odd. Out of step with the reality we were made for which is eternity. We are eternal beings.

That makes the sect of the Saducee's truly irregular. Truly odd in the sense that they had distanced themselves from the eternality that we all sense. And how they had arrived at that place is interesting.

They claimed to be the true religion gone back to the very roots of it all. And what they taught was Moses. Moses 5 books are all there is. That's how the children of Israel marched in here, and everything beyond Moses authorship is not inspired words of God.

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. That's it. That's all we need. And there's nothing in those books about heaven, hell, afterlife, eternity, angels, devils. All of that stuff is made up nonsense as far as they're concerned.

The saducee's don't believe in eternal life, and that's why they're sad - u - see. They were sort of puffed up about their elevated true knowledge within the strict parameters of Moses alone. Back to the basics guys. And it left them with a very *go-for-the-gusto-because-now-is-all-there-is* type of ethic.

It turned out that it was the aristocrats of the Jewish nation who were the saducees. And they were in bed with Rome. To a point. They were filthy rich on account of the business surrounding the temple and Rome had allowed them to pretty much do as they pleased with the temple and the ritual and the collection of temple taxes and tithes. Rome was good business.

The question they pose is sort of haughty. Sort of gnostic. We know what's really true and you folks are a bunch of believers in hocus pocus that isn't from Moses so it means nothing.

What did the writings of the old testament affirm. The other authors. The Psalmists and the prophets. The other accepted books.

Job, who many believe predates Moses had said; *“Though He slay me, yet will I rejoice, yet will I trust in Him.”* After death, after the slaying of this body, Job says he will continue to trust in God. Job also said;

25 *“And as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives,
And at the last He will take His stand on the earth.”*

26 *“Even after my skin is destroyed,
Yet from my flesh I shall see God;*

27 *Whom I myself shall behold,
And whom my eyes shall see and not another.
My heart faints within me. Job 19:25 - 27*

That's pretty clear. My skin will be destroyed but with new flesh and new eyes I shall see God. It won't be somebody else. It'll be me and not someone else. What a glorious statement of truth.

Psalm 49:15, *“God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, He will receive me ” “I will awake in His likeness,”* says the psalmist.

Psalm 139:8 , *“If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there. If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there.”* After this life whether in heaven or in hell, God is inescapable. He is there.

Daniel’s prophecy, 12:2. *“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, and the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.”*

Eternity is a reality in the jewish writings and this little sect of purer than thou jews were in the minority. The big majority believed in life beyond this world.

So, the saducee's come to Jesus with a question designed to show how idiotic it is to believe in life beyond this life. A question not even God could figure out. They'll have a bit of fun making Jesus look dumb with this one.

27 Now there came to Him some of the Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection), 28 and they questioned Him, saying, “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN’S BROTHER DIES, having a wife, AND HE IS CHILDLESS, HIS BROTHER SHOULD TAKE THE WIFE AND RAISE UP

OFFSPRING TO HIS BROTHER.

This is levirate marriage. It was important in Israel after the tribes entered the promised land and the area was divided up between the families of the 12 tribes, you possessed the land by succession.

So if a family head perished and had no son to inherit his portion, the ownership of the family was lost. Moses wrote that if a man perished with no heir, but he had a wife, his brother was to take that wife and raise up an heir which by their law then became the dead brothers son's inheritance to keep the family name alive.

It was as if the dead man was able to have a son. A surrogate father but the family line remains even though the man died childless. The apportionment of the family stays intact with the help of a brother. The dead man's name lives on. Important in that culture to be able to hold the property apportioned to the family.

You can imagine brothers with adjoining farms who need the combined area to render a product that is more sustainable to both families. One brother dies and the land goes back to the tribal elders to re-apportion to someone else. Unless the living brother can raise up a seed with his dead brother's wife to hold onto the land apportioned to the dead brother.

Deut. 25:5“ 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. 6 “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. 7 “But if the man does not desire to take his brother’s wife, then his brother’s wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, ‘My husband’s brother refuses to establish a name for his brother in Israel; he is not willing to perform the duty of a husband’s brother to me.’ 8 “Then the elders of his city shall summon him and speak to him. And if he persists and says, ‘I do not desire to take her,’ 9 then his brother’s wife

shall come to him in the sight of the elders, and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face; and she shall declare, 'Thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.' 10 "In Israel his name shall be called, 'The house of him whose sandal is removed.'

This is the situation that the saducees are going to cook up a plot so convoluted that not even God could sort it out, which of course means that the whole deal about resurrection is farcicle and baloney. Ludicrous.

29 "Now there were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died childless; 30 and the second 31 and the third took her; and in the same way all seven died, leaving no children. 32 "Finally the woman died also.

Wow. This woman is more successful at diminishing a father's sons than anything else. Each brother dies. How'd you like to be 4th or 5th in that line up. Guess it's my turn to die. Like a line of sheep in the slaughter shute. But the Saducee's are obviously using some poetic license to make a point.

33 "In the resurrection therefore, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife."

Obviously there's going to be a fight over her in the next life. Who get's her? What?? No takers. Nobody wants her?? The whole point they're making is, the whole idea of resurrection is flawed. This would be impossible for even God to sort out.

Their point is loud and clear. Moses didn't teach resurrection and the whole idea presents problems that are too ridiculous to sort out and it's a lot of baloney what these pharisee's believe about resurrection. We've made our point. There is no resurrection, no life after this life. Period.

34 And Jesus said to them, We need to stop for a moment. This is one of the few times where we really must get help from the other synoptic writers in order to fully give every dimension to this story. Luke leaves something out.

And if Luke was all we had, the ultimate meaning doesn't change or diminish. It's just that Matthew gives us a useful phrase right at this juncture that makes the whole picture more fun. Matthew tells us that Jesus responded with;

29 But Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures, or the power of God. Matt. 22:29

Jesus says here's your problem. You're wrong and here's why you're wrong. Dual problems. You don't understand the writings. The scriptures. The very words of God revealed to you in the scriptures.

You've erred because of two things. You don't understand what's told to you in scripture, and you're God is too small. You've mis-perceived scripture and you've mis-perceived God. Your God is way too small and powerless because you've not believed the writings. Small God. Small power. Tiny shrunken theology. Tiny powerless God. Impotent book. Impotent God.

Then He patiently explains to them the unseen realities beyond this world.

34 And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, 35 but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage;

Let's try to unpack what Jesus patiently tells His hostile and dis-believing audience. First He speaks of two ages. aiōnos eon. An extended period. An age as in ages and ages. A reality with given characteristics.

We often speak of the church age. The age of grace. The time period after Israel was temporarily set aside. 2000 years of available forgiveness for sins. Nothing to do but acknowledge your sin and receive the gift of forgiveness by grace.

The question was about the marriage problem in the next age which the askers do not believe in. And Jesus answers; In this age we have the never ending cycle of life. Birth. Marriage. More births. More marriages. A continuous

cycle of image bearers to give Glory to the Creator.

Just as an aside; What if . . . now bear with me here and let me just throw out an idea for what it's worth . . . What if Satan said to himself, I've got to stop this cycle. I've got to jamb up this machine that's forever and ever creating more and more image bearers that give glory to God who I hate.

I know what I'll do. I'll destroy families so that the little image bearers suffer and are all screwed up. Plus I'll kill as many of them in the womb as absolutely possible. And finally, I'll advance same sex coupling so that no more little ones are happening.

Win win, since same sex couples are an abomination to God and make Him furious, plus the advantage of fewer little image bearers. Just saying. It seems like a great idea . . . if you're Satan.

But Jesus acknowledges the plan of God for this age. Marriage between a man and a woman and the natural product; children. Jesus, in this verse, acknowledges normal marriage as it was known without any question for thousands of years. No explanation needed . . . until 2021. If He had defined marriage as one man one woman His audience would have looked at Him like He's a loony. Of course.

Plus the voice of God, through Moses, already laid out that pattern in the first chapters of the first book. To repeat God's normal accepted pattern for marriage would be redundant. Genesis 1:27 For 2000 years anyone reading the paragraphs I've just written would have thought me a fool. Of course.

There are males and there are females. They get married and form a new family and produce more image bearers for the glory of God whose image they bear. A never ending cycle.

So we have an age where marriage and reproduction and death are the never ending cycle during the age. But Jesus says, there is in fact another age to come.

*34 And Jesus said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, 35 but those who are considered worthy to **attain to that age** and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage;*

That age. What age? The resurrection from the dead. That age. There is a resurrection into a new and different age.

And please notice, not everyone will attain to the next age. At least not to the part of it that is lovely. That's a direct swipe at these dis-believers. You won't be in a good place in the age to come. The resurrection from the dead that Jesus is speaking about is a resurrection to glory.

We learn two things. That resurrection is attained. And it's attained by those who are worthy. For Jesus purposes here, that's all the information given. We learn from other places what God requires in order to be worthy of sharing His glory and bringing glory to Him in heaven.

Jesus said it in the Sermon on the Mount. *Therefore you must be perfect . . . as your Father in heaven is perfect.* Mt. 5:48 That's the requirement to attain the resurrection from the dead into God's presence and glory. Perfection. Sinless perfection. How's that working out for you?

There is a resurrection from the dead. There is another age, not this present age. Those who are worthy will arise from the grave into that age. There's no sex there.

Sorry Mormons. Sorry Islamists looking forward to the pillows and the black haired virgins. Next age, no sex. No celestial sex. Why? No need.

36 for neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

The whole cycle of birth, life, marriage, sex, children, death, is for this age, but in the age to come, there is no death. All of those cycles so normal to us

in this age are not going to be a part of the next age.

We'll be like angels as far as never dying is concerned. We'll be son's of God. Forever. And ever and ever and ever. The next age is forever, for those of us who are resurrected into glory.

It's a lot of information for guys who think they're smarter than everybody else who does believe in an age to come. They think they're the ones with a deeper knowledge of all things. No resurrection. This is all there is.

But Jesus says, you have a tiny God and a tiny theology built around your tiny God, and you're very wrong. God lives in eternity, in a different age, and He's bringing many many sons unto Him in His glory.

Can you prove that Jesus? Where, in Moses writings, does that belief have a basis?

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. 38 "Now He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to Him."

Two matters to consider in that verse. God is not the God of the dead. From the moment of conception when life begins and for all eternity after that moment, God is God of a living person. Death is not final.

The second matter is the final words. For all live to Him. In some form for ever and ever, all live to God. Whether in hell in torment forever or in heaven in His shared glory as sons, all live to Him. Every knee will bow in worship and acknowledge that Jesus is Lord of all.

We can barely conceive of eternity. But one thing I am sure of. We'll look back on this time, this age, this life cycle of birth, life, marriage, children, death as 5 minutes long. Compared to eternity this age, this life is a blink of an eye. Why is it so hard for us to let go of the things here and invest in the

next age.

Finally, in my own furtive imagination of this scene, in my hollywood version, Jesus looks around and sort of says; Anybody else? Anyone else want to bring it? Who's next? Come one come all. That's just the Jim version, but the final words would fit perfectly in my version of this drama;

39 And some of the scribes answered and said, "Teacher, You have spoken well." 40 For they did not have courage to question Him any longer about anything.

Death is not final. There is an age to come. All will be living beings in some form in some final destiny in the age that never ends. What we do here, matters to the outcome there. Wisdom is to live in this 5 minute life to store up treasure in eternity.

I have a favorite quote that I heard in a movie about Vincent Van Gogh. In the movie he says to a priest at the sanitarium; *Life is for sowing. The harvest isn't here.* I looked it up on line and it turns out he wrote that quote to his brother Theo in a letter in 1883. He said; *What a mystery life is, and love is a mystery within a mystery. ... to see more and more clearly that life is only a kind of sowing time, and the harvest is not here.* Vincent Van Gogh 1883 in a letter to his brother Theo

This life is a time for sowing. But we don't reap the harvest in this life. We are sowing for a harvest in eternity. What a sobering thought for our generation who are driving themselves quite mad trying to reap whatever they can reap here because they don't believe in God, or in eternity. This is all there is. You'd better go for broke here, because this is it.

When is the last time you met a christian who is not living for the present? Someone who is investing now to reap in the age to come. This life is 5 minutes long. Eternity is forever. Sow here to reap there. The Saducees were wrong. This isn't all there is. This is a blink of an eye. Invest here to reap there.

