

**Remembrance - 'For to God, All Of Them Are Alive'**

Do you care about whose wife this poor woman is after her husband and all six of his brothers die? Good thing it is a made-up hypothetical.

But, if we're all getting resurrected... all... billions... of us... where are we going to live? Is there enough room on earth for all the humans who have ever died?

And whose house do you live in? If you've got a new house, maybe just you. But an old house... does it belong to who built it? And either way - What about the land?

And there's another issue: we're all resurrected. Who ARE you married to if your first spouse had passed? Do you now keep two spouses who may not like each other?

And when you go out to date, do you have to carry a genealogy tree to find someone who isn't your relative? I have uncles I lost in wars before I was born. Resurrected, would they be 18 years old again and I'm going to have to warn my niece "Hey, that's your great uncle! Don't date him!"

These Sadducees... have a point. I'm going to stand with them today and say, "Hey, Jesus, resurrection is a nice idea but like... there's a whole lot of issues with it. Our society, our very planet, is built around assuming people and animals will eventually die."

Sadducees were word sticklers. People of the letter of the law. Rules lawyers. Every society has people who like to be particular about words and so does every organization. There just was a whole denomination of them in ancient Israel. So, they valued every word, every "jot and tittle" or dot and cross, and saw these as important to the faith.

They also only followed the first 5 books of scripture. They thought those were the only ones which were actually God's Word. That would be the Torah: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Torah is the name of both law, like a lawyer, and Law, like the Law of Moses. The Law of God.

The prophets, the writings, the oral Torah and midrash - other branches of Judaism did and do consider these scripture. But not the Sadducees.

They only put authority in the first 5 books. The first five don't reference life after death. They do explain one ought to make sure their childless sister-in-law is cared for in a world where only men held property and businesses.

Now as I'm standing with the Sadducees today, I have to say I put more authority in the Gospels than the rest of scripture. And that to me, scripture is what's in the Protestant Bible. And although interesting, I don't give much authority to the gospels and books that aren't in the Bible we're using today. So don't hate on the Sadducees for having a canon, a set of books, they considered the most authoritative! We all do the same.

So, imagine the Sadducees and I all come to Jesus. They intend to trap him AND all the other sects of Judaism that believe in resurrection. Explain to us, they say, how resurrection can happen? I don't want to trap Jesus, but I sure would like an answer too.

Jesus speaks to the Sadducees and uses the scriptures they respected - the Torah - the first five books. And he also uses the specific words chosen in those books - rules lawyering to rules lawyers. Speaking their language.

"Moses said God IS the God of Abraham..." Is. Not was. Dead people are in the past tense. Scripture speaks of these people as present-tense. Even though they are dead to us, they are alive to God.

Jesus would speak to me using the Gospels - explaining how nothing is impossible for God - even a land shortage. How he was sent to prepare a place for us all - rooms in his Father's house - analogies from this age to help me understand God's age.

Jesus tells us both: "Those who are alive now marry and are given in marriage, but those resurrected live in a totally different way. They cannot die. They are like angels."

Jesus would tell me I don't need to worry about the dating pool in the resurrection - because dating as I know it belongs to the world I am in now where death is a reality. On angelic heaven time, death is not part of society and culture. Maybe genetics are nothing when we are resurrected. Maybe we don't date at all.

I think Jesus is trying to say we don't have the language for life after death. We have only analogies that kind of work. We have glimpses through Jesus' return and through experiences with passed loved ones visiting us in dreams and visions.

We have an itty-bitty hint of the huge reality. We have it shared with us in ways we understand - whether in the first five books for the Sadducees, or the Gospels for me. But yet, the bit we understand is just a piece of the puzzle.

This is a comfort to me. I never met my great-uncle George. I know his photo in his fatigues. It hung on my great-grandmother's wall at home, and then in the nursing home. She'd talk to her only brother. Tell him all that was going on since he volunteered for war and died in the Battle of the Bulge. She knew he still lived, yet was dead.

I can't help but think we don't have the language for the kind of peace that awaits us. The kind of peace we hope to live into here. The peace where death isn't this wall keeping siblings from speaking and a boy never seeing his 21st birthday.

When death isn't a thing.

And shalom - peace that surpasses understanding, peace that we don't have the right words for, peace that is the wholeness of all the universes - the peace of God is our reality.

I don't know what life after death will be like. I don't know how the resurrection Jesus promises works.

But I am certain we do not end when we die. I've had too many experiences that say otherwise! My grandmother, as she reached the end, would tell us George was visiting her and reassuring her all will be well.

I am certain our faith teaches us that the dead yet live. We commune with them in Holy Communion. We join across time and space with all who do this ritual.

And I am certain that whatever happens when we die, our loved ones are there to help us and Jesus himself welcomes us. I do know we are made in love, die in love, and rise in love. Amen.