

# The Question About the Resurrection

by S. Lewis Johnson

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*The sermon explores the Sadducees' challenge to Jesus about resurrection, emphasizing the importance of understanding Scripture and the nature of relationships in the afterlife.*

**Duration:** 55:21

**Scripture:** Exodus 3:2

**Topics:** "Resurrection"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the topic of the resurrection. He begins by introducing the context of the sermon, which is a series of studies where Jesus engages with different groups of people. The preacher then delves into the story of Moses and the burning bush, highlighting how God revealed Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He emphasizes the significance of God's statement, as it relates to the belief in resurrection. The preacher also addresses the importance of Jesus' resurrection, stating that without it, there would be no reason to believe in a loving and powerful God.

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## Transcript

Now tonight our subject is the question about the Resurrection. And first of all, just a few words by way of introduction. It is the famous Day of Questions that we are studying in the two or three studies that we have in this section of our series.

Our Lord will spar with three groups. First, the secularists or the Herodians, and we are skipping that section. It is found in verses 13 through 17, in which the subject of the tribute is brought up, and our Lord answers with his famous statement, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.

And then he wrestles with the rationalists, the Sadducees, and that is the section that we are going to consider tonight. And finally, he will wrestle with the ritualists or the scribes and the Pharisees, and we will deal with that subject later on. So these three groups, the secularists, the rationalists, and the ritualists, are the three groups with which our Lord will spar on the Day of Questions.

The Sadducees were the priestly aristocrats who controlled the temple. They were largely priests or of the priestly element, or perhaps we should turn it around and say that the priests were largely Sadducees, though not entirely. They were conservative in theology in the sense that they did not put any stock in the newfangled nonsense of resurrection.

They believed that God's judgments are accomplished in this world, and we need not look on to the next. And so they did not believe in resurrection. They did not believe in angels.

They did not believe in spirits. And in our day, when so many Christians are so occupied with demonism, they would be ones that would be debunking the whole idea that there is any such thing as demonology at all, for they do not accept angel or spirit. Now the Sadducees come to our Lord with a request.

It is really something of a riddle, and that is why I have the riddle of the Sadducees up. They come to our Lord with a question that concerns the resurrection, and they are introduced as those who say that there is no resurrection. In other words, this was their basic theological doctrine.

It was the doctrine over which they had argued with the Pharisees for many a time, and so consequently it was undoubtedly the sharpening of the debate with the Pharisees that enabled them to ask our Lord a question that would no doubt have stumped any other person but our Lord. I must say it surely would have stumped me. So they come with the question, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

Now there were seven brethren, and the first took a wife, and dying, left no seed. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed. And the third likewise, and the seven had her, and left no seed.

Last of all, the woman died also. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? For the seven had her to wife. Now you see they have appealed to a passage from the Old Testament, Deuteronomy chapter twenty-five verses five and six, in which it is said when a man dies without any seed, it is the responsibility of his brother to marry his wife, and raise up seed to his brother who had died.

And so out of this leveret law of marriage propounded by Moses in Deuteronomy twenty-five, they have propounded this old conundrum which they had used probably often to the discomfiture of the Pharisees. And what made it doubly difficult for the Pharisees was the fact that it was based upon what they had based their reasoning upon the Scriptures. And so it was not a theoretical question entirely, but a question that while theoretical was based upon the Word of God.

And since the Pharisees laid great claims to following the Word of God, this undoubtedly was the kind of question that embarrassed them considerably. It's the kind of question that people often frame and throw at Christians today, such as are the heathen lost? Would a loving God send anyone to hell? Or where did Cain get his wife? Questions like these. These are questions that are based upon supposed biblical doctrines.

And so they are the kinds of questions that would embarrass Christians and make them rush off for help to some Bible teacher. The text is really a paraphrase of Deuteronomy chapter twenty-five, verses five and six, with Genesis chapter thirty-eight, verse eight thrown in. Now let's look at our Lord's reply.

His reply is really a two-fold one. First of all, a negative kind of reply, and then a positive one. In verse twenty-four we read, and Jesus answering, said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God? So negatively he speaks of their ignorance, first of all, and in the first case, ignorance of the Scriptures.

He says, Do ye not therefore err, because you know not the Scriptures. They are drawing inferences and applying them to the next life without considering the plainer teaching of the Word of God. So they are ignorant of the Scriptures.

They are seeking to logically deal with a passage without handling other passages of the Word of God that may contradict their reasoning. And second, they are ignorant of the power of God. They do not seem to realize in their question, do not realize the contradiction of it, that if God is God, he can make a future life different from this one.

As a matter of fact, marriage is a means for the preservation of life, and since in heaven we do not have need for that, there is no need for marriage. And so marriage is not needed in heaven. This text in verse twenty-five, When they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels which are in heaven.

That text is a text which has often been expounded in connection with the incident in Genesis chapter six, in connection with the sons of God and the daughters of men. And if you study the Bible much, or you've read the Schofield notes or other Bibles with other footnotes in them, you will know that the commentators and students of Scripture have debated the interpretation of Genesis chapter six, verses one through four. Let me read these verses just for a moment, or just now, because it may be that you have forgotten those verses.

In verse one in Genesis chapter six, we read, And it came to pass when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair, and they took them wives of all that they chose. And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh, yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years. There were giants in the earth in those days, and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.

Now what makes this passage a difficult passage is that the term, sons of God, in the Old Testament is a term that refers to the angels. And so the idea of the text seems on the face of it to be that the angels saw the daughters of men, that they were fair, and they took them wives of all that they chose. And that raises the question, how can angels intermarry or intermingle with human beings? And various attempts to explain this difficult passage have been given.

Some have said, no, this is not a reference to angelic beings, but this is the godly line of Seth intermarrying with the ungodly line of Cain. But again, the difficulty with that interpretation is that the sons of God means angels, according to Old Testament terminology. Furthermore, in the New Testament, in the book of Jude, it seems almost certain that Jude accepted the interpretation that the sons of God were angels, because he writes in Jude chapter, in Jude verse 5 and 6 and 7, I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord having saved the people out of the land of Egypt afterward destroyed them that believed not.

And the angels, which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness under the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication and going after different flesh. The Greek word there is the word heteros, which means another of a different kind.

And so they went after different flesh. Well now, the angels went after different flesh. It would seem to be a clear reference to Genesis chapter 6, verses 1 through 4. It speaks of fornication, the same kind of thing that you have there.

And so it appears almost certain that Jude accepted that interpretation. And of course, if Jude accepted it, then of course we have to go along with Jude and have to say that that is probably the interpretation of the passage in Genesis 6. But now that introduces a problem that is just about as bad as where did Cain get his wife. And so Bible teachers and students of Scripture have sought to interpret what this meant.

On the one hand, some have said that cannot possibly be because the angels do not marry. And this text is cited. They neither marry nor are they given in marriage, but when they shall rise, he says, they are as the angels which are in heaven.

And so since the angels do not marry or are given in marriage, it's not given in marriage, it's impossible for angels to cohabit with men. Now it is possible that what is meant in Genesis chapter 6 is not a kind of intermarrying in a fleshly way such as you and I think of intermarriage in that fleshly way. It is entirely possible that what Genesis refers to is not that, but a kind of demonic possession in which demons take possession of individuals and they in turn marry the sons of the daughters of men.

At any rate, it's a very difficult problem. I don't have one hour to tell you all I know about it, and I could tell you all I know about it in just about an hour, and beyond that I couldn't tell you any more. I really ought to say the little I know, I owe to my ignorance about something like that.

But anyway, this text always brings that to mind. And our Lord here refers to the fact that angels in heaven do not marry nor are given in marriage. So he says when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels which are in heaven.

So you Sadducees, in bringing this conundrum, you have forgotten a basic scriptural truth that in heaven, when men get to heaven, there is no need for propagation of the species, and consequently the marriage that we know down upon the earth is not something that is going to take place in heaven. This always disturbs happily married couples. I think probably it's quite a bit of comfort to other married couples, but for happily married couples, it really is disturbing to think that after all of these years of happy married life, when you get to heaven, you're going to look at your wife and she's not going to really be your wife any longer.

Now I must confess, that has troubled me off and on. I would rather think that throughout all eternity, Mary Sibley McCormick will be mine. After all, after thirty-five years, thirty-five years I think that I've staked out a pretty good claim.

Now all in just a few moments, we're no longer husband and wife. That's a disturbing thing. On the other hand, I think that we should not forget that when we get to heaven, our love is not going to be removed.

Our love will still be love. It will continue in the glorified state. As a matter of fact, it is going to be defecated and sublimed, purified.

It's going to be a kind of love that we have never been able to have down here upon the earth. Some of the modes in which it manifests itself on the earth are going to be changed, but in being changed they will only be transfigured into higher and better modes of love. Now don't ask me what these are, because I don't know.

There are many things about heaven that I do not know. I know that we shall have an inheritance, but I could not possibly describe that inheritance to you, for the Bible itself only describes it in negative terms. It says it's the kind of inheritance that doesn't fade away, like the dollar.

All of these things about, all of the descriptions of, almost all of the descriptions of heaven are given in negatives. Have you ever noticed that? It's not like anything down here on the earth. And so it's something that does not fade away.

And you can think of other things in the description of our blessings that are not really described, but are just, they are just said to be not like they are down here upon the earth. So the sweetness of love is not going to be eliminated or diminished. And as far as I know, there will be the most endearing of intimacies in heaven.

Heart is going to be interlinked with heart in heaven. Affections will intertwine and interblend. Love will never lie smitten, bleeding, or despised, because now you have been transfigured and you are in heaven in the presence of the Lord.

So I think the relationship that I have with Mary Sibley McCormick will be better in heaven than it is now. And she is in Houston and she cannot say amen at the present time. So here is our Lord's answer, however, to the question, you are ignorant of the power of God.

You do not realize what God is able to do. He can make the future life different from this life, and therefore there is no need for us or the seven, when they are in heaven, to decide who is going to have the woman as wife. Well now, positively, our Lord speaks about the fact of the resurrection, because this is really what brought them to our Lord with this conundrum.

They, you see, do not believe in resurrection, so they have tried to trip him. Now a lot of people know that I believe in election. I got a telephone, a long-distance call this afternoon from a lady who used to attend Believers Chapel, and she wanted to ask me a question about election.

She said, is it true that you believe that God just chooses some people? And I was happy to answer her affirmatively. I absolutely do believe that God has chosen some people. That's what the Bible means when it says that certain ones are elect.

And then she raised an objection. Now she raised it in a very friendly spirit, because she wanted the kind of answer that would support what she had said to her friend. But the end, these questions that are raised are often questions that arise out of a basic disbelief in some particular doctrine.

Now this is exactly why the Sadducees brought this question to our Lord about the woman who had seven husbands, one dying after the other. They weren't really looking for an answer to that question. They wanted by that question to prove that there was no resurrection.

That's why they asked the question, because they don't accept resurrection. So our Lord, recognizing that the root problem is the fact of belief in the resurrection, now turns positively to that. So he says in verse 26, and as touching the dead that they arise, have you not read in the book of Moses? Now you know that was really a sharp knife into their side.

Have you not read in the book of Moses? Now you see they had assumed the fact of the resurrection, and had asked about the manner. But they had assumed the fact only in order to trip our Lord, to show the

untenability of the fact. So our Lord had dealt with the manner first, and he had swept it aside with the power of God.

Now he is going to establish the fact, and you know if you were talking to people who were Sadducees, who were conservatives, and who therefore accepted the law of Moses, the five books of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, in a special sense, you felt that those books were the books of the Bible, and you wanted to answer them, and answer them convincingly, theologically, to what part of the Word of God would you appeal? Why you would appeal to Moses, because they laid great stress upon Moses. Now this is just one of the many manifestations of the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ was the greatest teacher of the Scriptures, who has ever lived. And I am speaking of our Lord from the standpoint of his human nature.

Now he is a divine person, but he learned the Scriptures. He studied those Scriptures just as you and I ought to study the Scriptures, and he was obedient to the Holy Spirit's voice as he was taught those Scriptures. And he learned the Scriptures through the study of the Word, and out of his own study of the Scriptures, he is able to reach back into the texts of the Old Testament, and bring out just the text that blasts the theories of those who seek to catch him with these little problems.

So he says, how is your reading? Have you never read in the book of Moses, you Sadducees, how in the place of the bush, that is in Exodus chapter 3, where God appeared to Moses in the form of the burning bush, or at the burning bush, and how God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. Ye therefore do greatly err.

Now I want you to notice, and I've already tried to emphasize it in what I've said, that the trouble with the Sadducees lay in their failure to read the Scriptures. Now it's not just the Sadducees' problem. Do you remember what our Lord said in the parable of the householder? Look at verse 10 of this chapter, and have ye not read this Scripture? In the Greek text it is the identical form, *unechnote*.

And have ye not read this Scripture? And here now, speaking to the Sadducees, have ye not read in the book of Moses? My dear Christian friends, almost all of our problems arise out of our reading matter. All of us read. All of you in this audience are intelligent.

I look out all over this audience, and I know you so well that I know that some of you are schoolteachers now, and I know some of you used to be schoolteachers. It's amazing how many of you are schoolteachers in this audience, or have been. Now Mr. Pryor's looking at his Bible over there, but he used to be a schoolteacher too.

He taught mathematics. So if you want to know what 2 times 2 is, go to Mr. Pryor. He knows.

And there are some of you who are elementary schoolteachers, and some of you have been other kinds of teachers. So you read a lot, and some of you are businessmen, and you read a lot, and some of you are ladies and housewives and workers of various kind, and you read a lot. Some of you ladies, you're secretaries and you're schoolteachers and probably executives.

I like what John Wayne said the other day. He said to the ladies at Harvard, he said, when asked about women's lib, that he did not care what the ladies did during the day. They could work, they could be executives, they could be anything so long as they had dinner on the table at five o'clock in the afternoon.

Now seriously, all of us read, and we read all kinds of literature. One of the reasons, and I am speaking of myself more than any in this audience because I know myself a whole lot more, and I know what I read. And I read stacks of things, so much so that my eyes trouble me most of the time.

But my spiritual problem rests in my reading matter. I don't read the Word of God enough. Have you not read? Have you not read? Most of our problems are found in the fact that we do not study the scriptures as we should.

Now it's good to rake in as many dollars as you possibly can. After all, the day is coming when you're going to get old, and then you want to provide, you want to be provided for. That's good.

But if you neglect the Word of God along the way, when you get old, surrounded by all of your dollars, and when the rest of you get old, and maybe you haven't got dollars, but you've spent your whole time with your children, in your family, and you've neglected the reading of the Word of God, and you've given yourself wholeheartedly to something that is second best, when you get old, you're going to have a shallow old age. And you're going to discover, too, that when those troubles and trials of old age come, you're not going to have the promises of God to rely upon, to give you peace, and comfort, and assurance, and help, and blessing, when those times come. I know.

I've seen it in my own family. So, what about your reading matter? Now, that's just by way of exhortation. Let's look at what our Lord said.

He said, don't you remember that passage in the Old Testament where God said, I'm the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? Well, now the text is in Exodus chapter 3. I never would have thought of appealing to this for an argument for the resurrection. It so happens I know some passages in the Old Testament that I would have appealed to. I would have appealed to Isaiah chapter 25.

I think I would have appealed to Daniel chapter 12. I never would have thought of appealing to this, but our Lord did. And the doctrine of the resurrection is found plainly here.

There are some of our contemporary scholars who say that the doctrine of life after death is not given in the Old Testament with much clarity. I think when they came forward to ask our Lord the question about this old conundrum, about this woman who had seven husbands, one of the scholars would have jumped up at this time and said, now there's a great deal of debate over the question of the resurrection. And some believe this and some believe that.

You hear me teach like that. Our Lord didn't teach us the scribes or the Pharisees. Now, you know the story.

Exodus, Moses in Exodus chapter 3, was keeping the flock of Jethro. Moses was a troubled man, probably a worried man. Some years before, he'd had to leave Egypt.

And now, after many years tending the flock, suddenly, as he has no doubt many and many a time wrestled with the future of Israel, because he thought it was God's intention that he should lead them out of their captivity. As he wrestled over this question, one day he saw a bush, and the bush burned with fire, and yet it was not consumed. A miracle.

And Moses said, I'll turn aside and look at this great sight. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush and said, Moses, Moses. He said, here am I. He

apparently was not surprised by the voice of God.

And God said, draw not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover, he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God, because he had been taught as all true Israelites, that if you looked upon the face of God, you would die.

And so the Lord spoke to him and said, I've seen the affliction, I've seen the bondage, and I've come now to deliver the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. And you know the story of how Moses said unto God, behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, the God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, and they shall say to me, what's his name? What shall I say unto them? I always have read this with a great deal of interest, because I would like to know what God's name is. And so God said unto Moses, I am who I am.

Now that is the most beautiful text in all of the Word of God, to indicate that you can never prove the existence of God. There is nothing by which you can prove the existence of God. You cannot judge God by any other standard than God himself.

For if you do, you have established a standard that is higher than God. And so, what is your name? I am who I am. And so from that time on, they called him Yahweh.

That's what it means. He is. You hear the scholars talk about Yahweh did this, Yahweh did that, or the Lord did this, or the Lord did that.

He is did it. He is did it. That's his name.

So if you ask God for an absolute name, he cannot give you any name. I am. How do we know, then, that God exists? Well, the very fact that he is God means that he makes himself known to men.

And he does it by means of his Spirit. And he's well able to make himself known to us. Now, in a moment he will say to Moses, I'm the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, because he is able to give us a relational name.

Because a relational name is a name that simply describes some of his activities. And one of his activities was the activity of entering into covenant with Israel. And so he is known as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.

Now, let's look for a moment at this text, and let's see what there is in it that suggests resurrection. Now, of course, we might look at it and say, he said, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. That might suggest that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still alive.

That ought to be enough for the Sadducees. But it wouldn't be enough for me if I were a Sadducee. Do you know why? Because I would say, well, that proves that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are living, but it doesn't prove that they are resurrected.

Because resurrection is not simply life, unless you define it. The angels, the angels live, but they have not been resurrected. All the saints live in the presence of the Lord, in the sense that they are consciously alive in the presence of the Lord.

But they haven't been resurrected yet. Only one person has ever been resurrected, and that is our Lord. Resurrection has to do with a body, as you well know.

Now, let's take a look at it with that in view, then. Now, I want you to notice what God did not say. He did not say, Moses, I am the God of Adam, the God of Abel, the God of Enoch.

In other words, the race relationship is not the question. He says, I'm the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. What is there peculiar about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as over against Adam, Abel, Enoch? Well, there is one great thing that pertains to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

What is it? What is it? Hmm? Covenant. There is one housewife who has not neglected her reading. Covenant.

Yes, God made a covenant with Abraham. He confirmed it with Isaac. He confirmed it with Jacob.

I am the God of Abraham. I'm the God of Isaac. I'm the God of Jacob.

The covenant relationship, that's the question. Now, that covenant involved the fathers. And furthermore, it involved their seed.

For to Abraham and to his seed were given promises. And furthermore, it involved the Gentiles, because all the families of the earth are going to be blessed in Abram. Now, that doesn't mean every Gentile is going to be blessed.

It does mean, however, that there are going to be all kinds of people that are going to be blessed. In addition to the seed of Abraham, there's going to be in the company of those who partake of the Abrahamic promises, there are going to be Gentiles. As a matter of fact, from every tribe, kindred, tongue, and nation, the Bible says.

Furthermore, as you read those promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and to Jacob, it involved them forever. They were given everlasting possessions. And they were given a land as an everlasting possession.

Genesis chapter 17 and verse 8 or 9. Let's verify it. Genesis chapter 17, verse 8, And I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee the land whereon thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God. God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant, therefore thou and thy seed after thee in their generations.

So Abraham then is given a promise that not only embraced him as a man whose name would be great, but he was given a seed, he was given successors, he was given a land, and they were to be everlasting possessions. Now, my dear Christian friend, is it possible for Abraham to have a land upon which he lives with his seed? Is it possible for him to live upon his land without being resurrected? No, it is not. Implicit in the promises of life on the earth on an everlasting possession of a land is a resurrection of Abraham's body.

And that is why our Lord said earlier than this in his ministry, Matthew chapter 8 and verse 11. He was speaking of the day when the promises should be fulfilled. Many shall come from the east and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

So if there is to be a Messianic age with promises fulfilled upon the earth, there must be life in resurrection. Now, in the Bible, this is often called life. But when it is called life, there is understood in

those places the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

Let me show you. Have you got your Bibles? Look at John chapter 5 and verse 25. John chapter 5 and verse 25.

Page 1121. This is the old edition of the Schofield Bible. Page 1121, John 5:25.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. There is resurrection. Live.

John chapter 11, verse 25. Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

And he speaks of the resurrection of the body. Now, 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verses 21 and 22. Paul learned his theology from our Lord and his terminology also.

And we read in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 21 and 22. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

Now, made alive is defined by the preceding clauses, the resurrection of the dead. So then, if there is a Messianic age and if there is life, there is life in resurrection for Abraham and his seed. God is the God of the living.

Now, the Sadducees, by denying the resurrection, angel and spirit, what have they done? They were Jewish men. The Jewish men, their promises rested upon the promises made to Abraham. If you had spoken to a Jew and you had said, now why do you think that you have any special privilege above other men on the face of the earth, do you know what they would have said? They would have said, God made a covenant with our father Abraham.

He made a covenant with our father Abraham and promised certain blessings to us. If I had a Sadducee right here in the flesh, is there anyone here? If I had one right in the flesh here, I would have said, so that is your hope, those promises made to Abraham. Yes, sir, that is my hope.

Well then, those promises involve life on the earth. How is it possible for you to have life on the earth as a spirit? Dr. McGee might say, how can a spirit sit down in the kingdom of heaven upon the earth? You see, resurrection of the body is a necessity for the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham. The argument then is not based on the present tense.

I have often heard people explain that as our Lord answering the Sadducees by saying, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. If he is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, instead of, I was the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, then those men must be living. If he had said, I was, then we could say, well, he was while they were alive.

Now they are no longer alive. But he said, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so therefore they are still living. And that proves the resurrection.

But it doesn't prove the resurrection. It only proves that they are capable of resurrection. Not that there is.

But what blasts that theory is the fact, first of all, that in the Hebrew text in the Old Testament there is no I am. It's just, I, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. Granted, we must supply the verb

to be, but if the argument rests upon it, it would be more normal to have the verb.

Further, in the Markan account here, and some of you, if you have a great testament, you'll notice there is no am in this text. There is in Matthew, however. So you have a little leg to stand upon.

But what overthrows the theory is the final word that our Lord says. He says, after having said, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, he says he's not the God of the dead, but he's the God of the living. In other words, the living belong to him, not the dead.

He's related to the living by covenant. They can call him their God, but the dead cannot call him their God. And so the dead don't belong to the covenant, but the living belong to the covenant.

And because the living belong to the covenant, they have the promises of the covenant. And the promises of the covenant demand resurrection of the body. So, the argument's not based on the present tense.

That's the reason Bruno Bauer, a heretic, looked at this, and he said the argument is laughable, because he heard an explanation in which the argument was based on the present tense. It's not based on the love and faithfulness of God, though of course that is true. That's not precise enough.

This argument is based upon the love and faithfulness of God to his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So, the argument is based on the genitives. He's the God of the living.

He's not the God of the dead. So, what we have then is a covenant-keeping God who, in grace, has entered into relationship with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their seed and all who are to be blessed in Abraham. And he has guaranteed not only the blessings of salvation or justification, but he has guaranteed life on the earth in fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham.

And the one who stands behind it is the self-existent God, the one who says, I am who I am. That's why our Lord, all through the Gospel of John, as I've often said to you, appeals to I am. That's why the Gospel of John is the Gospel of the I am's, because our Lord is using terminology which the Jews would immediately relate to the Old Testament.

I am who I am. And so, when he said, I am the bread of life, he was trying to tell them I'm the Jehovah of the Old Testament that made the covenant with Israel, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When he said, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

When he said, I am the life. When he said, I am the door. When he said, I am the good shepherd.

When he said, I am the resurrection and the life. When he said, I am the true vine. All of these things were designed to say to them just as plainly as possible, I am Jehovah who made the covenant with Abraham.

I see some of the kids riding around and I'll look on the back of their cars and occasionally you'll see a little sign that says, Jesus is. And they have stumbled upon a great theological truth. The self-existence of God.

Of all the doctrines to put on your bumper, the doctrine of the self-existence of God. But there it is. Jesus is.

It's true. Well, now I can understand the accusation that our Lord brings against them. He says, ye therefore do greatly err.

It was a grievous error. For here are men who appeal to the Mosaic law and they've missed one of the greatest truths of it. Resurrection in the Old Testament.

Now the reaction is predictable. The reaction of the multitudes, according to Matthew, was that they were astonished at his teaching. Only rarely are people ever astonished at my teaching.

The Greek word is the verb *exatplasonta*, which means literally to strike out. And so you get the idea of their eyes just bugged out at this kind of teaching. They were just amazed to hear teaching like this.

So I like to tell my students at the seminary that the Seds, that's short for Sadducees, the Seds struck out when Jesus threw them a curve from the Word. But it's more important than that. They were astonished.

That was the multitude's reaction, including the Pharisees. They had all their elaborate arguments for resurrection, but they hadn't heard this one. They were astonished.

And I say that was the reaction of the multitude. I think it included the Sadducees. The reaction of the scribes and Pharisees is given explicitly in Luke.

They rejoiced at the fact that Jesus had muzzled the Sadducees. And the word used there, that's very descriptive, that our Lord had muzzled the Sadducees. I've often said that Donald Gray Barnhouse led me to the Lord.

He had a happy way of illustrating the Word of God. And I'll never forget his references to this verb *phimao*, which means to muzzle. It's used in the great incident on the Sea of Galilee when the storm came and the disciples were in the boat and our Lord was tired from a busy day of ministry and he was back on the stern asleep and the waves were beating against the boat and the lightning was flashing and the thunder was crashing and in the midst of it our Lord stood up in the boat and remember he said, peace be still.

And the word translated be still is from this verb to muzzle. So it's peace, be muzzled. And Donald Gray Barnhouse used to say, now that's a canine metaphor.

And what Jesus really said was, when he stood up, peace. And then he spoke to the winds and the waves, back to your kennels. And there was a great calm.

And I'm sure they were astonished at what our Lord did. Well the scribes and the Pharisees rejoiced at the muzzling of the Sadducees because they had been sent back to their kennels by our Lord, muzzled. Well it's no wonder that some of the scribes said, teacher you have spoken well.

If there was ever an understatement in the Word of God it's that. I must confess every time I read that I laugh. Teacher you have spoken well.

How true that is. And Luke says, after that they durst not ask him any question at all. Have you ever asked somebody a question that was so stupid when the answer came that you realized that you just, you had just played the fool.

And you don't feel like asking any more questions after that. Well that's what happened then. Well if there were any lingering doubts at all about the resurrection after our Lord's words on it, he settled the question finally himself.

Because on the third day after the cross, he rose from the dead. And then the Sadducees learned the truth. And second, as far as the full doctrine of the resurrection is concerned, it is Paul who provides that.

It's Paul who tells us that if there is no resurrection, then we who are believers, who say that we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, our faith is vain. It is empty. We do not really have any doctrine upon which we have placed our faith.

King Clovis was a barbarian. And when someone was telling him the story of the death of our Lord, at a certain point as the story of our Lord's death was being unfolded, and our Lord was hanging upon the cross, and the one who was telling it had pointed out that our Lord Jesus Christ was the great Son of God, but there he was hanging on the cross and suffering and dying. Clovis couldn't stand it any longer.

He reached down, he drew out his sword, he said, if I and my Franks had been there, we would have gone up those slopes of Calvary and we would have taken him down and have saved him. And you know, that illustrates the fact that in the case of our Lord's resurrection, if there is no resurrection from the dead, there is no reason for us to talk about a loving God at all. Because if God allowed Jesus Christ to die, and that's all there is to it, there is no such thing as a God of love.

And furthermore, if Jesus Christ did not arise from the dead, there is no such thing as a God of power. And on the day that he died, the devils and the demons below shouted, we've won, we've won, we've taken the life of the so-called Son of God and thrown it into the grave forever. If there is no resurrection, there is no God of love, and there is no God of power, and there is no Christianity at all.

But our Lord settled that question on Sunday morning. Let's bow in a word of prayer. Father, we are grateful to thee for the Word of God.

And we're thankful for these words that Jesus spoke to the Sadducees. I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. And we know, Lord, that he could say and could have said, I am the God of all who have believed in me, naming their names one by one.

We thank thee for the covenant inaugurated by the blood of the cross, fulfilling the words, this is the new covenant in my blood. And so we thank thee for the hope of the resurrection, guaranteed to us by the self-existent Son of God. Help us to rejoice in it, for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

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