

LIFE BEFORE AND AFTER DEATH

1. Is there a life after death?
 - a. Jesus and the Sadducees
 - b. Universal Desire for Perfect Happiness
 - c. Job's Conclusion
2. If there is, what then is the purpose of this life?
 - a. To choose WHO you are by HOW you relate to others.
 - b. Growth as a Lifetime.
 1. Paul telling the Thessalonians that to get ready for the future is to pay attention to the present, to not let faith go without expression, but to let faith flourish in charity.

JOB 19:23-27 A:

1. Life does not always make sense. Job has never sinned, and so should be rewarded with a long and healthy life, many children and lots of land. However, he loses all and now must wonder why. It occurs to him that if God is good, and if his life is so miserable, there must be some explanation. He ends his book with the proclamation that he will trust in God, his Redeemer.
2. Doesn't everyone want to be perfectly happy? Yet, no one is. If God is good, and if we all desire perfect happiness, there must be some way in which we can get it. Job did not understand how, but believed it was possible. So do I.

II THESSALONIANS 2:13-3:5:

1. The City:
 - a. It was an important port city in Northern Greece.
 - b. It was founded in 316 BC by Cassander, a general under Alexander the Great, and named the city after Alexander's half sister and Cassander's former wife, Thessalonica.
 - c. Conquered by the Romans in 168 BC, it then became the Roman capital of the Province of Macedonia in 146 BC.
2. Paul:
 - a. He arrived in Thessalonica in 50 AD, having been just arrested and then expelled from Philippi, Thessalonica being about 97 miles East of Philippi.

LIFE BEFORE AND AFTER DEATH

- b. His success with the Jews was minimal as usual, and so he began to preach not in the synagogue, but after 3 weeks did so in the home of a man named Jason, converting a large number of "God fearing Greeks" and pagans. The Jews, jealous of Paul's success, stirred up a mob and had Paul expelled from the city.
 - c. Paul must have had a great deal of love for the people of the city, as he uses the word "brother" 21 times in his epistle, far more than the others.
3. Occasion for the Letter:
- a. After leaving Thessalonica, Paul met more opposition in Beroea and escaped alone to Athens, where his preaching failed to make converts.
 - b. When Silvanus and Timothy joined him in Athens, Paul was anxious that the Jews in Thessalonica had destroyed his work there, so he sent Timothy back north to see how things were going. Paul himself traveled further south to Corinth. Timothy later joined Paul in Corinth explaining that things were going OK; hence Paul's first letter to them is gentle and optimistic. His message was that faith is not acquired all at once, but needs a lifetime to grow in deeper understanding.
 - c. A few months later, Paul wrote the second letter, being upset that due to persecution, the Thessalonians were thinking that the Parousia was already here, and so began to prepare for the afterlife and neglect acts of charity in this life. Faith without charity was seen as empty, and so Paul uses his authority in the letter to restore order.

LUKE 20:27 (28-33) 34-38: Sadducees and the Resurrection: 1.

Sadducees:

- a. The term derives from a Greek word meaning "righteous". They acted that way, relying only upon the Torah, not also Tradition as the Pharisees did. They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead because it was not mentioned in the text of the law of the Old Testament, whereas many Pharisees did, using tradition and common sense to reason that a life after death made sense.
- b. Their origin is from the Priests of the temple; when in exile in Babylon, the Persians who had conquered the Babylonians saw the priestly class as the authoritative representatives of the people. Hence, the Sadducees became the aristocracy, the upper class of Jews, who then used their influence upon returning to Israel to gain power in terms of owning land and running lucrative businesses as merchants.
- c. Hence, they were entrenched in maintaining the status quo, and advised accepting the dominance of a foreign power whom they could not logically dislodge.
- d. They were then hated by the Zealots, but most saw the Zealots as extreme.
- e. However, as the Pharisees, whose name means "separated ones", wanted to separate themselves from the Romans and all non-believers, and so the Pharisees and the Sadducees often clashed.
- f. The Pharisees were more lenient in their understanding of the Torah, better understanding scripture through the wisdom of tradition. The

LIFE BEFORE AND AFTER DEATH

Sadducees by contrast literally interpreted scripture, and urged harsh and rigorous interpretations of scripture and the penal code therein.

- g. Once the temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD, the lack of need of priests resulted in the Sadducees disappearing.

2. A Woman with 7 Husbands:

- a. The law of the Levites as in scripture maintained that to ensure the continuity of the family, should a married man die, then his unmarried brother would take that woman as his wife.
- b. The Sadducees then pose a ridiculous situation to show that the resurrection of the dead did not make any sense. If a family had 7 brothers, and the first brother marries but dies, and his 6 brothers take this woman one-by-one as their wife, then when everyone dies and goes to heaven, who is this woman's husband in heaven?

3. Life after Death:

- a. Jesus pulls the rug out from under the thinking of the Sadducees by telling them that there is no marriage in heaven.
- b. While this is upsetting to many who marry today, it makes sense. Why? Well, the purpose of life on earth is to grow through interaction with others. Death is the end of that growth. Marriage is the primary way in which a man can grow, as the relationship between man and woman is intense. However, once they die, they no longer need to grow and hence do not need to be married. You are in heaven for eternity what you have chosen to be on earth during time. You will be with those who have died, but will not need to grow due to your reaction with them. You are whom you are going to be.

The Rev. Peter K. Stimpson

