**“God of the Living”**

Psalm 148

Exodus 3:1-15

2 Thessalonians 2:1-8, 13-17

Luke 20:27-40

22nd Sunday after Pentecost

Jesus said: “That the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now He is not God of the dead, but of the **living**, for **all live to Him**.”

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Bridge**

Sometimes conversations can be absolute “**apples and oranges**”. In other words, while seemingly in the **same ballpark**, home runs are not touchdowns, base hits are not first downs, and a pitch-and-catch (while **similar**) **aren’t the same**. Center field is not the 50-yard line even though they both are grassy and central, in some way, to the playing surface. To quote writer Stephen King: “**Books and movies** are like apples and oranges. They both are fruit but **taste completely different**.” And “**comparing** **science** **and** **religion** isn’t apples and **oranges**. It’s more like apples and **sewing machines**.”

A “**comparison of things not really at all similar**” is the meaning of the “apples and oranges” expression. In one sense, it’s necessary to sometime **describe comparisons that way** because (without describing it in such terms) one might not be able to **put to words** the **silliness of a discussion** and then, second, it quickly makes the point that **THE POINT could be missed in the unrelatedness of the argument**.

**Text**

“Atheists” (practically) asked Jesus about **marriage relationships in Heaven**. See, Sadducees who **don’t even believe in Heaven** asked an “apples and oranges” / convoluted (dumb) question that **they took a whole paragraph to** describe (the first half of our Gospel account). Pharisaic (“scribes”) enjoyed the absurd humor of their idiotic effort, but knew it absurd. “Some **Sadducees**, those **who deny that there is a resurrection**, asked Jesus this question: “**In the resurrection**, whose wife will a woman having been passed from one man through to each of his 6 brothers be, having had no children with any of them?”

Let me tell you what brought this about … and, then, what Jesus did with it. Religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus. Most all of them (Sadducees and Pharisees) conspired to trap Him into a condemning comment any way that they could. Both groups (Sadducees and Pharisees) joined forces (even thought they didn’t agree on theology) to corner the Savior into what they thought they could use as an excuse to execute Him. Here the Sadducees asked Him the stupid question that they didn’t even believe-in-the-**premise-of**: **life as** how Jesus called it in “**that age**” which is indeed beyond “**this age**” …

… which is why I called Sadducees “atheists”: because “**this age**” was their **only concern** … not really a **faith in the Living God who holds-together living saints here and in all that’s to come**. Marriage, careers, morality, and cares only of this world, **THAT** was the religious worldview of a Sadducee, and why that’s **religious** is because any idea that shapes thoughts and actions is a religious exercise in either believing or disbelieving, so **here’s** another example of “this age’s” craziness no different 2,000 years later as polls now among even supposedly-Christian religious people show that Sadducees exist today (people not accepting some aspects of the “age to come” … not counting on it). In other words, while “I’m But a Stranger Here, Heaven is My Home” is a great song, not every mouth that sings it actually has the “**God of the Living**” as his god, but rather a **god of dead people** and **only-wishful** thoughts.

**People with a god of the dead act like** (for instance) nobody’s watching (like there **is no** “great cloud of witnesses” around baptized people and no God and angels marching with what’s with us in a **communion of saints** encouraging and worshiping collectively in word and deed, **demonstrating** the temporariness of “this age” used for the eternal benefit of “that life coming”, not concerned so much about comforts and careers here, moods **level** in eyes on **forever** and the **cosmic** rather than on what “swings in every wind’s turn”. A movement in the 60s said that “**God** is dead”, so obviously **thought that** **those passing from this planet are not-taken to where living is really living**. So Sadducees are around today. They’re “**Moralists**” or various other forms of religious worldview, **morality for all of them** the **only** life-affect instead of **what’s based on an eternity with a Living God who’s all about constantly (and forever) creating joy and a life that only begins here**.

“So”, Sadducees asked Jesus, “whose wife would a woman be in a **supposed**-heavenly?”. They asked Jesus a **detailed “in-that-age” question** about the “**levirate**” (or “**kinsmen redeeming**”) **marriage** of a woman who (**in “this age”**) didn’t bearing a child with **any** of 7 brothers. Asking the “**apples**” question **about** the resurrection they wouldn’t acknowledge, Jesus answered with the “**orange**” of actually **KNOWING IT** and **HIMSELF BEING IT**.

He said: “you Sadducees aren’t asking what you ought to be asking.” “**Marriage is for this age**”, and it’s **here** for all the right reasons but **unnecessary in** **that age** where brothers are brothers by **Holy** blood (not **human**), and bonds are (in every way) **tied the same way but not by any choice except for the Father’s**. Those worthy to attain to **that age and its resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore because they are just like the angels in perfected yet are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection**. But **here’s** what you Sadducees **are missing**: even Moses showed **that the dead are raised** in the passage about the burning bush where **he calls the Lord (the Angel of the Lord appearing to Him that way) God of an alive and well (perfected)** **Abraham** and **an alive and well (still)** **Isaac** and an **alive and well (still)** **Jacob**. This is not a description of a god of **dead people**, but the **God of the Living**.” And the context Jesus used to bring to Sadducees what they really ought-to-have-loved was Moses who they brought up themselves: the Angel of the Lord’s appearance as a burning bush talking about the Communion of Saints represented by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The **Son** (who was always the Old Testament’s Angel of the Lord before becoming incarnate in Mary) was, is, always has been, and always will be the “**I Am**” of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as reinforced all through the Gospel of John where He said further “**I AM** the resurrection and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” “**In Him**” is resurrection and an ongoing (forever) life, saying that here just as He had within a burning bush: “**I AM** not god of the dead, but the **God of the Living** for **ALL LIVE TO (IN and ON-ACCOUNT-OF) HIM!”**

**Application**

Some of you know that I’ve been in a C.S. Lewis **reading and discussion group** for, now, probably 4 years. We’re (just now) finishing-up the straight-through work in the entire series of the 7 books of the Chronicles of Narnia. The first one (“The Magician’s Nephew”) begins with what’s a rebirth in baptism of a couple of children to a **whole different existence** to be called Narnia. Through a pool of water, two and (ultimately) lots more enter what’s gets then made by the Christ figure this Narnia that’s Christian life (or an existence where wonderful things are all possible. Fears and apprehensions still get thrust at Narnian walkers, but there is (there) a constant awareness and presence (joy reigned-through and controlled) by the one who represents the Saviors’ work and protection.

At the end of the last book (“The Last Battle” … and here’s an, I’m sorry, spoiler) **everyone dies**. It’s a **joyful end** (or, more accurately, transition) **though**: simply **through a door to what’s been always ready there as NEXT**. Not everybody gets its joy (some **never wanted it**), but **all who’d been baptized for that purpose and received it** began then what’s called the “**REAL STORY**” since all-that-came-before-it the last paragraph of Book 7 calls only the “**Cover and Title Page of the Story**”.

“To explain how this land (in “**that age**” as Jesus called it) was different from the old Narnia, would be best told as **how fruits taste there**. Every rock and flower and blade of grass **there** looked as if it all **meant more**.” “I am home at last!”, said one character. “This is my **real country**! I **belong here**. This is the land **I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it fully till now**. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it **sometimes looked a little like this**.”

The “**old Narnia**” is where saints existence blessed while yet in the sometimes tears of earthly struggles. The “old Narnia” is (“**this age**”) for-the-moment embattled (hence **7 books** chronicling different adventures there) yet emboldened-within and cared-for (led even) by the God who lives also well beyond “this age” and ourselves, making **different as different could be the country in which we walk from where it was that we’d come prior to baptism into that eternity**.

Jesus’ “oranges” compared to Sadducees “apples” was the **resurrected life that’s “in Him”** … and **there He stood** right in front of them … and “apples and **sewing machines**” would be a better comparison about what they asked for and what He offered.

The way C.S. Lewis’ Chronicles of Narnia leaves readers was with the “sewing machine compared to apples” notion of **blessedness** through all 7 of the documented adventures in walking and even flying (as the book calls it) “**FURTHER UP AND FURTHER IN**” to the **always-better-and-fuller** that the blest are **HEADED-TO**.

“I **Know** That **My Redeemer Lives**”. He **is** the “**God of the Living Abraham and Isaac and Jacob … and of me**”. And, so, thanks be to the God of the Living, in +His name, Jesus with the Father and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding keep your heart and mind in Christ Jesus. Amen.