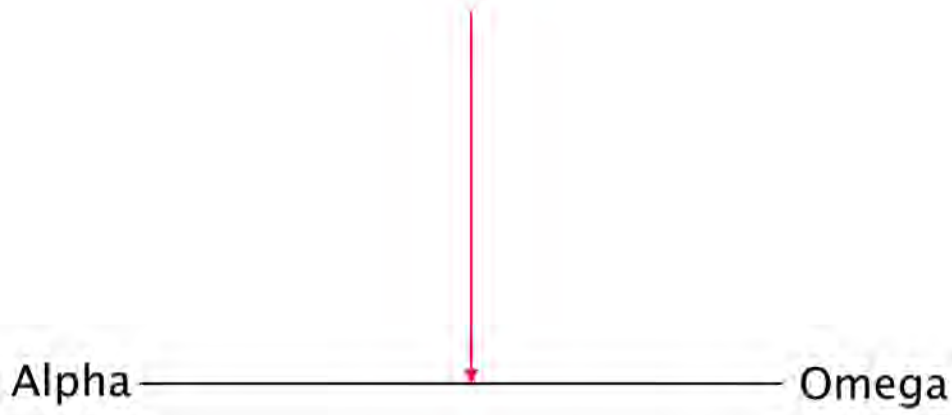


Devotion for Monday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent - *Forever I AM* - 7 February 2016, Anno Domini

We live in the present, the line of time stretches from the unfathomable past to the unknowable future, yet we live in the present, where God's Finger touches that line.



*18 Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying, 19 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. 20 Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. 21 And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. 22 And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. 23 In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife. 24 And Jesus answering said unto them, **Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?** 25 **For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.** 26 **And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?** 27 **He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.** (Mark 12:18-27)*

Our Lord will reveal some manifold truths of God in this lesson. I say manifold because the Word of God is so pregnant with meaning and hidden gems that He cannot utter a single thought that is not laden with truth and mysteries in abundance. At first reading, this passage seems to address the state of marriage as it relates to the saints in Heaven, and a simple explanation of how God had assured Abraham that he was his God. But, in reality, the spiritual ramifications are far more expansive.

We have seen how the chief priests, scribes and elders of the Jews approached Christ in the Temple to enquire by what authority He cleansed the Temple; but instead of forcing our Lord into a rhetorical corner, His would-be antagonist were hushed by His own question: *The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me.* (Mark 11:30) This question they could not answer without a double jeopardy. Then the religious Pharisees and the Herodians (supporters of the secular power of Rome and her pawn, Herod) came to "catch Him in His words" by asking if tribute should be paid to Rome or not. Once again, Jesus routed these malefactors.

In the present text, we see the Sadducees joining the parade to come before Christ to try their skills of outsmarting God. The arrogance of each of these groups is readily recognizable in their failure to learn, from the first humiliating defeats, that they lacked the intellectual and spiritual acumen of winning any dialectic with the Son of God. This last group is different from the Temple rulers and Pharisees in that the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. These Sadducees furthermore rejected the authority of the very scripture which they quoted in the

writings of Moses. Perhaps they believed Moses, but not the God of Moses.

Our Lord answers, in simple terms, their question concerning the state of a complicated serial marriage in the resurrection. *“For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.”* This is a profound mystery; however, the remaining commentary of Jesus exceeds the gravitas of the first. Our Lord addresses their abject error in their unbelief in the reality of the resurrection. ²⁶ *And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? ²⁷ He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.*

The explanation revealed in our Lord’s words transcend time and mortal being. I offer the following quoted text from the Biblical Illustrator: *Christ raises the question: Could God call Himself Abraham’s God if He had permitted his hopes to be disappointed, and his whole life to be dissipated by the touch of death? Whatever we love we seek to keep alive, and, if God loved Abraham, would He let him die? If the Sadducee was right, Abraham was at the time a handful of desert dust in which certainly God could take no peculiar interest. The fact that man can engage the interest of God, speak to Him, enter into covenant with Him; be beloved, embraced, protected by God, is the proof of immortality. Because God lives, he will live also whom God loves. There are many arguments that go to prove immortality, but this is chief, that God loves man, delights in him, and would be Himself bereaved, and spend a desolate eternity, if death robbed Him of the spirits that trust Him. (R. Glover)*

The entire issue is comprehended in the eternal nature of the Lord. He is the great “I AM!” He bore that title and nature before the worlds were made. He bore that title in addressing Abraham; He bore that title in His earthly ministry; and He bears that title today. He is the eternal I AM because He is not bound or limited by the Space-Time Continuum. He exists apart from our time scale.

God spoke to Abraham from the Burning Bush and identified Himself as I AM. The I AM was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – and all who believe in the Promise made to Abraham. If our Lord is the ‘I AM’ God of Abraham whom He loved (properly termed loves), was there any point in time when He ceased to be His God, and became His God at some later theoretical point (such as some time after the death of Abraham)? That would make no sense at all. Since God is unchanging in His nature and being, He is forever the God of all whom He has called and chosen. He loved Abraham (and you and me), and He will not allow those He loves to perish – even for a second. Once He is our I AM God, He is forever our I AM God.

As mortal men and women, we tend to speak of our loved ones in Christ, who have passed beyond the veil, in the past tense, i.e. “She was such a sweet and precious mother.” But if we believe God, we will admit that such a past tense reference is inappropriate. Those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ never die, but merely pass beyond our means of feeling, seeing, hearing their presence among us! In fact, the existence and being of the saint, passed into glory, is more real and stark than we in this present life. Those who pass from this life in Christ are identified IN Him and are also borne in paradise by the I AM. Being in Christ makes the saint as timeless and his Transport.

The love of God is a sure sanctuary that loses none that it receives. That love cannot let go. Instead, God will make every allowance to insure the eternity of all that it embraces. Even though the justice of God demands a sentence of death upon all who sin (and God cannot contradict His own Law), He makes a remarkable and amazing provision for that sentence to be paid by the innocent blood of His only Begotten Son. It is that sacrifice and redemption to which we look awe, gratitude, and abject humility during this season of Lent.