Luke 20:38 He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all are alive to him.

I am going to start with a brief discussion of just who the Sadducees were. Actually little is known of how they came about but they are mentioned by the Jewish historian Josephus as being one of three religious sects of the Jews in and around 150 B.C. The three mentioned are the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes.

Without giving you lots of detailed history, please note that the Sadducees rose and fell in power and influence as the years unfolded. In the days of Jesus ministry the Sadducees were really the aristocratic branch of Judaism, in other words they had most of the money under their control. What is also interesting to note is that in Jesus day the majority of the governing body of Judaism known as the Sanhedrin were actually Sadducee members but despite their money and even their majority in the government it was the Pharisees who had the ear of the people. So even though a majority the Sadducees really had no power. Josephus records that this was so because “the masses would not tolerate them.” In other words the majority of the Jewish people just didn’t like these haughty and snobby rulers.

What I will also tell you is that by the days of Jesus this group is mostly political in nature for in truth as a group they denied and rejected most of Scriptural truth. What did they believe? At best I can tell you only a few things. They only accepted the first five books of the Bible as authoritative, but at least we can say they were very conservative when it came to keeping the laws of Moses. They believed strongly in the free will of man in this life and in that regard also rejected any dependence on divine providence. You heard that right. Basically they didn’t feel that man needed God. As if that isn’t enough, we also know of their rejection of a “resurrection” to eternal life. Basically that is because they simply rejected the idea of a heaven and eternal life in the first place. Their religion was the idea that what you got was this world and once you died your soul died with you. Add to this their rejection of angels and demons and you begin to wonder, what was the point of their religious beliefs? They are really not believers in God and as such have no concerns for a Messiah or the coming of a Messiah. This is important to understand because then you grasp that their attack on Jesus as seen in our text today is really done only for political and practical purposes.

The Sadducees wanted Jesus silenced because Jesus was a threat to their political power and position, especially with Rome. They feared that if Jesus continued with his preaching and teaching that it would cause an uprising and Rome would then come and destroy the nation. They didn’t care about Jesus and what he taught other than to work at shutting him up. By their question of Jesus all they wanted was to show He couldn’t answer and thus cast dispersion on Jesus. They wanted the people to doubt Jesus.

It is absolutely masterful how Jesus deals with these men and in the process teaches us some wonderful truths about God’s kingdom to come and eternal life. Our theme will be: **OUR ETERNAL GOD.**

The events of our text actually occur on the Tuesday of Holy Week. Jesus on Sunday had marched into Jerusalem to the shouts and acclaims of the people much to the dislike of the Jewish rulers. The Pharisees, chief priests and experts in the Law had recently gone head to head with Jesus on various questions and Jesus had, with solid authority, answered their questions and with a parable and questions of his own had managed to bring these enemies to silence. The Sadducees thought they had the perfect question to discredit Jesus and so it is that they confront Jesus to discredit him.

In a way you have to admire what they came up with. A question of marriage and the implications for eternal life and happiness. Actually an improbable question, a woman, because of the Levirate law of Moses, marries and is widowed by seven successive brothers, all leaving her childless and without heir. The question they are seeking an answer to is this: **“So in the resurrection, whose wife will she be?”** I pray that all of you recognize the total hypocrisy and foolishness of this question.

Oh, please note that the world likes such foolish questions. “If God is all powerful can he make a rock so big He can’t lift it?” “If God is so good, why is there evil in the world?” “If God knew Adam and Eve would eat of the fruit, why did He put the tree there in the first place?”” There are many questions like this that can be raised, but I don’t believe they are raised because people want to learn or understand. I believe for the most part they are raised to show how foolish and silly you are for believing in God. Just like the question of the Sadducees before us, there was really no desire to know and learn a truth of God but to simply to show how foolish and inept Jesus was! After all, they, the Sadduccees, in their scholarship couldn’t answer the question and they figured there was no way Jesus could. Not a question to seek truth but rather a question to try and silence truth or to show that God just can’t be truth. When you hear such questions just smile and recognize what is going on.

Well, Jesus heard this question and Jesus proceeds to give an answer that just silences his opponents because in truth they realize that they had been bested. That didn’t end their hatred of Jesus or their efforts to silence him, it just meant they would now, all the more, plot the murder of Jesus. The value of Jesus’ answer for us and any who would listen is awesome. Let’s gain some knowledge.

Jesus starts his answer this way, **“The people of this age marry and are given in marriage but those who are considered worthy to experience that age and the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage.”** With one simple sentence Jesus begins to show their foolishness. He makes it clear that marriage and being married are not going to be a part of God’s eternal kingdom. Marriage is for this life and world. But did you note how Jesus so casually yet clearly speaks of heaven, eternal life and the resurrection? Remember, religiously these men rejected those things so by these words Jesus is clearly telling them they are wrong. There is a heaven and there is a resurrection!

And please don’t overlook Jesus’ subtle condemnation of these men. He said, **“But those who are considered worthy to experience that age and the resurrection from the dead.”** There is a heaven and there is a resurrection to eternal life. This heaven and resurrection have rules and laws about who gets in and who doesn’t. The biggest rule concerning these things is first that you believe, believe what God has revealed and said in his Word. Believe, not because you have experience or seen, but rather because God has declared and revealed these truths. The implication is this: “Don’t believe what God has revealed and said and you have a problem!” I believe these men understood Jesus was saying they had a problem. They didn’t believe the revelation and truth of the Bible. Jesus goes on to teach more.

**“In fact, they cannot die any more, for they are like the angels. They are sons of God, because they are sons of the resurrection.”** This passage does not say that those who die become angles in heaven. In truth, angels are special creatures of God created specifically by God to serve His purpose and will. What this says is that souls in heaven will no longer have the problem of death. Like the angels they will now be eternal. Like the angels they will live in the presence and wonder of God for all eternity. That is what is being pointed out.

Now just a few things here to fathom. Heaven is real. Heaven is the place where you will be with God and you will no longer have the problems that sin has brought about, especially the problem of death. For in heaven you will no longer die. I believe Jesus speaks that way for two specific reasons. First, Jesus knows that he will conquer death. Death, physical death is the result of sin and Jesus will bring it to an end. 1 Co. 15:56 says, **“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!”** In the Book of Revelation it is revealed: **“There will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain, because the former things have passed away.”** The promises of God were that through the Messiah this problem of sin and death would be dealt with. You and I, and all who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we grasp that Jesus came to accomplish this very thing. To put an end to the reign of sin and death. To grant to all who believe the gift of eternal life and salvation!

That next phrase is also important. We are called **“sons of God.”** Here is a reference to the inheritance that God will give. This wonder of heaven is ours because God has adopted us as His children. In Ga 4:7 it is put this way, **“So you are no longer a slave, but a son. And if you are a son, then you are also an heir of God through Christ.”** No less than seven more times you will find passages telling us how we became heirs of God, those who get what God has promised to his children. We get those things in Jesus and what Jesus has done. We become recipients of this wonderful promise of God by faith in Jesus. Faith is simply that we believe what God has said. We trust his revelation and Word and know it to be certain and true.

Now here comes the kicker in Jesus’ answer. **“Even Moses showed in the account about the burning bush that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord: ‘The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all are alive to him.”** Recognize that is from the Pentetuch, the first five books of the Bible, the only five books these men claimed to believe! Jesus now proves his teaching and grasp is true based on what they accept as true. He points to how the Word of God speaks. It speaks in the present even of those of the past. It speaks positively and absolutely of the fact that God, even in the days of Moses, is the God of these men who have left this world. How could this be? Because they left this world for heaven. They left this world and joined the eternal and wonderful realm of the Almighty and Eternal God. These men are with God. These men live with God. These men still exist but do so with God because God serves the living. God is the source and cause true life and of eternity.

Do you grasp the absolute wonder and marvel of these words? Here is what I will tell you. These words mean nothing and will be considered by you to be foolish unless you grasp, understand and believe in God. That means to believe in Jesus. As Jesus trusted and took the Scripture at face value, so should we. As Jesus, eventually through the Holy Spirit, revealed all things necessary for eternal life and salvation, thus we are to believe. It boils down to this: Do you trust Jesus? Do you believe He is God’s Son? Do you believe that what he reveals and says is truth, absolute, wonderful and eternal truth? Then these words are nothing but absolute and wonderful comfort.

And they mean, that your loved one, who had faith in Jesus and was called from this life…that loved one is with God in heaven. With God and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah and Daniel. With Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Peter and Paul! With every soul that has believed and trusted in what the Eternal God has revealed. There is a heaven. When we leave this world, heaven is our eternal destination because we have believe God, we have trusted his Word!

Do you know why this is true? Because of our Eternal God! God is and was and always will be. What God has said, is and was and always will be. His promises are forever. His Word is forever. His salvation and gift of faith is forever. It is not going to change. It is not going to change because God is not going to change. Such is the simple wonder of our Eternal God. He always is. He does not change. His Word and promises are true. Heaven and the resurrection to that eternal life is real.

That’s the very fact of our Eternal God. 1 Sa. 15:29 says, **“The Splendor of Israel will not lie or change his mind, because he is not a man, who changes his mind.”** James 1:17 declares the same, **“The Father…does not change or shift like a shadow.”** God’s eternal nature means that God’s wonder and truth is always, and forever true!

Thank you Jesus for what you have taught. Thank you for revealing all the more the truth of our Eternal God and his awesome Word. Now we know your wonderful truth. There is a heaven and through faith in You we become its heirs! Yes, heaven is real and ours in Jesus. Amen.