

It happened one night this week. Slowly as the temperature continued to fall past 40 degrees, past 30, settling somewhere around 21 or 22 almost every plant in our front yard died. In one night they went from beautiful growing plants to dead dried up plants. No amount of warm up, even to 70 degrees yesterday would bring them back. There's no middle ground. They're either dead or alive and now they're dead.

There's no middle ground with your life either. You're alive or dead. But what's after dead? The answers to that universal question can be summarized to two sides with no in between. Either there's a place you go after you die or there's not. Pretty persistent is the idea that there really is nothing after you die. Your life comes to an end and that's it; six feet under, worm food. It gives people the excuse to get as much pleasure and fun out of living as they can assuming there are no consequences. If I'm destined for six feet under in a box then what's the use in trying so hard now? Why worry about tomorrow? I'll live for today.

Everyone comes into contact with death. Close loved ones, distant relatives, friends, eventually even us. And then what? Is this age all there is? Jesus answers that in the gospel. He says you and I are...

**Saints of two ages  
God's living children  
Children of the resurrection**

The Discovery channel is bound to start teasing again soon. Discover what the Bible really says about Jesus. Find out why Mary couldn't have been a virgin. Learn the story the Bible doesn't tell of Jesus' birth. Christmas and Easter are natural times for skeptics. Their conclusions are obviously not supported by the Bible. Their goal is to make fun of the Bible and tear down Christians. The Sadducees were much the same. They only believed in the first five books of the Bible. They didn't believe in resurrection or angels. They were not followers of Jesus, in fact they wanted to make fun and discredit him if possible.

You can hear their snickering as they pose their ridiculous scenario. **"Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. The second and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. Finally, the woman died too. Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be?"** Remember, they don't believe in resurrection. They used this Law of Moses as proof. Their minds were locked on their present age. Their assumption was that things would always be as they were. People lived, people died, and that was it. Like so-called scholars on TV trying to poke a little fun at believers, the Sadducees were trying to have a little fun with Jesus.

Theirs was a faulty assumption. Jesus solved it by reminding them this age isn't like the next age. That's right. There's an age to come; a future for all those who live but will die. **"The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die."** Big changes are coming. Marriage is just one relationship that is for this age, not the one to come. Please don't let that truth hurt if you're looking forward to reconnecting with a spouse in heaven. God gives marriage as a blessing in this age of misery. Heaven's age won't have misery so it won't need the relationships of earth to help. God promises our greatest relationship will be directly with him, directly with Jesus. Marriage and family relationships are for this age, right now.

Having never seen heaven we're almost forced to make things up. It's easier to say marriage exists in heaven, or you'll be comforted by your favorite pet, or the streets will be paved with gold and we'll be walking on clouds with a bright light around us. We do whatever we enjoy here on earth 24/7 in heaven because it makes us happy. See how heaven becomes what we imagine? It's also easy to worry about our arrival in heaven. Will it be pleasant seeing my family in heaven if I don't get along with them here? What about multiple spouses, estranged children, ex-friends? I don't want to fight, maybe its best I don't go. It all causes us to concentrate on this life to make the most of our time now because this age seems like all we've got.

There are two ages. We live in the current age while thinking always about the age to come. Only children of God get to that age. The only way to be God's living children is through God. **"Those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection of the dead...are God's children."** God must declare us worthy. He has. Our sins make us unworthy, but God went a long way to declare us not guilty of our sins. He went all the way from heaven to earth. Jesus came to transform us to be like him. He makes it so that in the age to come we don't have to fear death because it will be gone. There will be no more death. Our fear of death is removed in Christ who died for us. Jesus keeps our minds on the coming age because this age isn't going to last forever.

Moses took off his sandals as he approached the bush. It was totally engulfed in flames yet not consumed. What was he seeing? That's when the voice came from the bush. God spoke to him. **"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."** Moses recognized the names of his ancestors. His faith had come from them. But they were long dead and buried. Still God spoke of them as if they were alive, as if he still knew them. This story of Moses was used by Jesus to show the Sadducees that God's living children turn into children of the resurrection.

Often those Discovery channel shows try and quote Bible passages to support their foolish conclusions. They use the obscure or verses pulled out of context to try and get you to believe the Bible is saying something other than what it really is. The Sadducees did the same thing. They thought this obscure rule by Moses showed there could be no resurrection. Jesus made clear they weren't reading their Scriptures closely enough. Jesus used a story of Moses too, the burning bush, in order to show God **"is not the God of the dead, but of the living."** People who die in God receive a new classification. They're called **"children of the resurrection."** They will take part in the resurrection of the righteous. Their life is determined and focused on the new life to come in the resurrection. They may be physically dead, but to God they're alive.

Death looks like it strikes a victory every time it hits. If you've lost a loved one you know that strike. It cuts people down in their primes. It takes people shockingly young. It shows no mercy taking people when they and others least expect it. It stalks each one of us. We try and ignore it, pretend it doesn't exist. We think if we don't talk about death then it can't win. We deny we deserve it saying we haven't done anything to deserve such harsh treatment. Sure we're not perfect, but we haven't sinned that badly against God. Why take my life? Yet every sin you and I commit further proves death is most certainly what we deserve.

If God were the God of dead people, if your dead loved ones and mine were simply gone, life would certainly be sad. It would mean God had not defeated death. Death was still holding people as prey and we would be next. Death would be proven stronger than God to the point God could do nothing about it. The redemption plan God presents to us in the Bible would be a failure. There could be no triumph for anyone. Only a sad reality where death is triumphant.

So are dead people going to rise or not? Jesus says yes they will at the resurrection. **"He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."** We're living children of the resurrection looking forward to the coming age of resurrection. The faithful who have died believing in Christ also wait for the coming resurrection of the dead. A victory has been scored over death. Christ Jesus struck that blow by rising himself from the dead defeating death once for all. Death no longer holds prey. Believers who die merely sleep waiting for bodily resurrection. Their soul already enjoys heaven right now. The redemption price was Christ's own body and blood. He had to be the sacrifice to carry our sins. God proves stronger than death. Redemption is an accomplished fact. Death is not triumphant. Saints are triumphant in Jesus.

We're saints of two ages. Saints who live now as God's children wait for a resurrection. Saints who have died in faith are saints triumphant already enjoying Christ's victory for them. That will soon be our victory. Don't fear death. It's been defeated and can't win. Christ claims you. He's God of the living. And remember the saints triumphant whose earthly life and struggles are over. Their souls enjoy the blessings and glory of heaven in the presence of Christ. They await a resurrection, same as you. When Christ returns in glory all will rise to see him. Saints triumphant will join with saints on earth to become the saints of heaven to be with Jesus forever.