

Man's Spirit After Death

by Bill Crews

How Did Jesus Prove The Resurrection Of The Dead?

The Sadducees, concentrated at Jerusalem and represented especially among the Jewish Levitical priests, were the liberal religious party among the Jews in the first century. They differed from the Pharisees by believing *“that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit”* (Acts 23:8). The Sadducees consistently denied both the existence of spirits and the reality of a coming resurrection. If humans are spiritual beings as well as physical beings, if physical death does not bring all of one's existence to an end, if something about humans survives the death of the body, then there will indeed be a resurrection of the dead.

In Matthew 22:23-30 the Sadducees, to put Jesus to a test, came to Him with their famous hypothetical case involving a woman married consecutively to seven different husbands (all brothers and according to a provision of the law of Moses in Deuteronomy 25:5ff). Jesus handled their “hard” question (*“In the resurrection therefore whose wife shall she be of the seven?”*) with ease. Such a case, far from disproving the resurrection of the dead, presents it with no problem at all. Jesus informed them that in the resurrection there will be no marrying or giving in marriage; the marriage relationship will simply not exist. Then, giving them more than they asked for, Jesus remarked, *“But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?”* To which He added the observation, *“God is not the God of the dead, but of the living”* (Matthew 22:31-32).

In the Old Testament passage quoted by Jesus, Exodus 3:6, God was speaking to Moses at the burning bush.

Abraham (Genesis 25:8), Isaac (Genesis 35:29), and Jacob (Genesis 49:33) had all been dead (physically) for many years when God spoke to Moses. He did not say, *“I used to be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”* He rather said, *“I am the God of...”* This, according to Jesus, necessarily implied that in Moses' day there was some sense in which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob still lived. Without their spirits, their bodies were dead (James 2:26), but their spirits still lived. Therefore, there will be a resurrection.

A Look At Other Passages On The Subject

In many instances the Bible uses *“spirit,” “soul,”* and *“inward man”* interchangeably. The fact that in a few instances (e.g., Hebrews 4:12 and 1 Thessalonians 5:23) a distinction is made between *“soul”* and *“spirit”* does not change this fact. Man is frequently described as *“flesh and spirit”* (Matthew 26:41), *“body and soul”* (Matthew 10:28), *“inward man and outward man”* (2 Corinthians 4:16). When Elijah raised the widow's son from the dead, the child's *“soul”* came into him again (1 Kings 17:21). When Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead, her *“spirit”* returned to her body (Luke 8:55).

Though man is able to kill the body, he is not able to kill the soul, according to Jesus (Matthew 10:28; cf. Luke 12:4-5). God is the Father of our spirits (Hebrews 12:9); He gave them (Ecclesiastes 12:7); He formed them in us (Zechariah 12:1). At the death of the body, the spirit or soul departs (Genesis 35:18; Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59; James 2:26; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; 2 Peter 1:13-14; Philippians 1:23-24).

That the spirit or soul still exists after the death of the body is shown by:

1. **Ecclesiastes 12:7** — the spirit returns unto God who gave it. See Luke 23:46 and Acts 7:59 also.
2. **2 Corinthians 5:1-9** — one can be absent from the body and at home with the Lord.

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