

The religious leaders all seemed to be against Jesus, but there was a couple of different factions even amongst them. Two of these groups were the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and one major issue they differed on, was the resurrection of the dead, and life-after-death.

The Pharisees believed in life after death, and the Sadducees didn't. And there's an easy way to remember which is which:

The Sadducees didn't believe in life-after-death, and so they were "sad, you see" ...

And so they came up to Jesus with this curly question:

If a man marries a woman, and he dies, so she marries his brother, and he dies, so she marries another brother, and he dies, and so on, ... all the way, until she'd been the wife of all 7 brothers, and they'd all died..... in the resurrection, which one will she be married to?

Now for a start, I reckon if I was brother No. 4, 5, 6, or 7, I'm not too sure I'd be too keen on fronting up as the groom... And I'd certainly be checking the kitchen cupboards very carefully, for a half-used bottle of arsenic....

But apparently, this actually happened: And of course, life expectancy back then was no where near what's it is today... a simple accident like a compound fracture, or a bad cut, could turn septic, and it could very well prove fatal... And so it wasn't an uncommon thing for a woman to lose her husband...

But I think this raises a very legitimate human question – who's wife **will** she be?

And Jesus' answer reveals something to us about the nature of relationships, in the resurrection: Marriage between a man and a woman, is God's design, for **this** age – not the next:

30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

Something we have to realise, is our minds – our thoughts – our hopes for the future, are somewhat limited by our current earthly existence.

The very **best** thing, that has **ever** happened to me in my life – without a doubt – is my marriage to Robyn... and so, with this experience, if I try to picture an afterlife of joy and wonder and contentment, how could I possibly picture it, without Robyn as my wife????

And there lies my problem: My mind, is limited. It's limited by the very best of my earthly experience... And to be very frank, the very best of my earthly experience – although it is wonderful – is not good enough – it's no where **near** good enough to illustrate the beauty of the resurrection...

And so, I have to accept, that in the afterlife, although I will still know Robyn, and recognise her, and relate to her, and commune with her, and we'll worship God together... I have to accept that we're not going to be in a marriage-like relationship.... There's going to be something better... The wonder and awe of our relationship with Christ, will be so much more amazing than even the very best marriage...

You know, some Muslim young men, strap bombs to themselves, to kill, maim and mutilate, people by the hundreds, in crowded market places... And what's the motivation? Straight to paradise, and 72 virgins, all for youⁱ

As if unlimited sex is the best the afterlife could offer.... How sad is that???? What a carnal motivation.....

I'm afraid they're going to be pretty badly disappointed: Firstly, it's only those who are in Christ who enter Paradise, and secondly, male/female relationships are going to be very different, where one does not lord power over the other, and one isn't there to be used by the other, and one won't be nagging the other.... But even the very best that good, healthy, loving male/female relationships have to offer here on earth, will be superseded, by something far more, unexplainably wonderful...

They **neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven**

Now, for today, I'm going to be sharing under 2 different headings:

1. Elements of faith; and
2. Actions of faith

Where does faith come from? - what can I base my faith on?
And what should faith lead to????

So firstly: Elements of faith: Where does faith come from? What should I **base** my faith on? When there's so many different opinions on:

- What the bible means
- On, how much of the Bible is true?
- Does God still heal today?
- Or, what's the place of other religions?
- Or, what happens when you die???
- Or what is or is not sin???

In an age when there's so many different opinions on all these different things, how can we have confidence, that **our** faith (what **we** believe) is true?... Or does the truth even matter? Can we just have our own beliefs, and as long as we're sincere in what we believe, and we're nice people, we're going to be ok with God???

Well, I want to say to you today, "Yes, the truth matters."

When Jesus was on trial before Pilate, He said this: ^{John 18:37...}

For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world— Can anyone finish that sentence for me???

What do you think He said?... What was the purpose Jesus was born???

What was the reason He came into the world???

To save us from our sins? To die and rise again? To live as a good example???

^{John 18:37...} **For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."**

Do you think that truth matters??? Too right it matters... It's the very reason for which Christ came – to bear witness to the truth... And everyone who is of the truth, listens to Christ.

So, it's pretty obvious the Sadducees weren't of the truth, because they would not listen to Christ – they were trying to prove Him wrong.

When the Sadducees hit Jesus with their curly question, He said to them, "You've got a problem with your thinking about God, and you're wrong on 2 counts": He said **"You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God."**

To know the truth about God, is not a difficult thing – God is not elusive.

Mark Twain once said, "Most people are bothered by those passages which they cannot understand; but as for me, I always notice that the passages in Scripture which trouble me most are those which I do understand."ⁱⁱⁱ

It's not that hard to understand – it's all written here – right there in God's word. If you want to know God better, get into reading your Bible... The trouble isn't that God hasn't revealed Himself – the trouble is, we don't love God enough to want to know Him.

There are 2 things here, that lead to a wrong understanding of God: Ignorance of the Scriptures, and ignorance of the power of God...

So, let's do a couple of examples: creation: Did God create the world, or is it one big exercise of cosmic chance, such as the big bang and evolution. Where once there was nothing, and this nothing became something, and it exploded, and here we are today???

So did God create, or was it by chance? Well, the bible is not silent on this issue. Not only in Genesis, but right throughout the bible, God is named as the creator. If you know the Scriptures, you know what the Bible says on creation.

But knowledge of the scriptures alone, isn't the only barrier to belief. The other barrier to belief, is ignorance to the power of God.

If you know the Scriptures, and if you know that God is all powerful, well you know the truth. God created the world. There are plenty of people who know their bibles, but don't believe in creation. Now, why do they have trouble believing that God created the world??? It's because they don't know the power of God.

If you know – if you **truly** know and **believe**, that God's power is limitless, you're not going to have any trouble at all with creation, nor anything else in the Bible.

Some people don't believe in the virgin birth. Some people don't believe in the resurrection of Christ. Some people don't believe that God still heals people today. Why don't they believe? On what basis can I confidently say that they are wrong??? It's because they either don't know the Scriptures (because it's very plain in the Scriptures), or they don't believe in the power of God.

The Scriptures testify to these things – the only thing left, is for the power of God to make it true.

The basis of our faith is God, revealed to us in Christ, testified to in the Scriptures...

Know the Scriptures. Know the power of God, and you'll know the truth of the matter.... That's what we base our faith on. Knowledge of the Scriptures, and Knowledge of the Power of God.

So we come to our second heading: Actions of Faith

One of the principles of discipleship is "Faith without action, is dead"

If you **know** the scriptures, and if you **know** the power of God, well this knowledge **must** be out-worked with actions... God doesn't make Himself known just so we can have a nice devotional thought. Faith must lead to action.

And that action, is love... Love God, and love others...

Jesus was asked, "Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?????" And of course, when they asked about "the Law" they were asking about the first 5 books of the Old Testament.

Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment.

39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

All of the Law and all of the Prophets – basically all of the Old Testament – testifies to these 2 commandments – Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul and with all of you mind.... And love your neighbour as yourself...

Some people say, "Oh, the god of the Old Testament, is an angry god – a god of no love.... And I have to say, to come to a view like that, is a wrong view – to believe that, shows an ignorance of the Scriptures. Because right throughout the Old Testament, we find a God of love. And when we know the Scriptures, and when we know the power of God, to put that knowledge into actions, means that we love God back. And it means we love others. If you love God, you'll keep His commandments...

And to keep His commandments, is not an onerous duty – it's an expression of our love for God. It's an expression of our love for others...

Jesus said to love God with all of your heart; all of your soul; and with all of your mind...

The Heart – is that part of us, which is the centre of our personality. It is often the place in which God reveals Himself to us. It's our feelings – our emotions...

Love God with all of your feelings.

Love God with all of your emotions.

Love God with your whole heart...

Love God with all your soul.

The original Greek word for 'soul', is the word ψυχή
(*psychē*)

It means out intellect – our life – who we are – it's what makes us tick...

And sometimes, feelings might let us down... When bad stuff happens, you mightn't **feel** like praising God, and you might have trouble in your heart, loving God, or praising God...

And that's where we have to let our soul kick in... love God with all of your soul – all of your life – all of your being – not just because you feel like it – Live it – despite your feelings....

And love the Lord your God with all of your mind.

Love God with all of your understanding.

Love God with every bit of your intelligence – yield it to Him...

Love God with all of your thoughts.

Feelings are not enough. Knowing on the inside, isn't enough.

Love God with your thinking.

Love God with your reasoning.

Elements of faith – Know the Scriptures; Know the Power of God – and you won't have any trouble discovering the truth about God.

And Actions of faith – love God; Love others

I think that's enough for today. Questions???

ⁱ www.islamhelpline.net/node/6495

ⁱⁱ www.holwick.com