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**"...WHOSE WIFE SHALL SHE BE OF THE SEVEN"**

Patrick Morrison

Jesus is Rabbi (John 3:2), the Master Teacher (Mat. 19:16), the teacher's teacher. No man spoke as He spoke or taught as He taught (Mat. 7:28-29). On numerous occasions His foes sought to ensnare Jesus in His own words (see Mat. 16:1; 19:3, 22:35; Mark 12:13; John 8:6), but His masterful use of logic and reasoning left His detractors unable to answer (Mat. 22:46). It is in the course of one of these "trials" that the question in the title is posed (Mat. 22:28). Initially, the Pharisees and the Herodians (more a political sect than a religious one) came to Jesus with the intent to trap Jesus in His words. They, therefore, posed a question regarding the paying of tribute to Caesar (Mat. 22:17). The answer of Jesus astonished many to the point that they simply went away, unable to confound the Master Teacher (Mat. 22:22). The same day the Sadducees approached Jesus with the hopes of entangling Him in His teaching (Mat. 23:23). The Sadducees were a religious sect which stood in opposition to the Pharisees. While smaller in number than the Pharisees, many of the aristocracy belonged to the sect of the Sadducees. The primary contentions were that the written law of Moses was the only law to guide Israel (the Pharisees asserted and taught that oral tradition was just as binding as the Law), and that there is no resurrection of the dead. This latter doctrine also caused the Sadducees to reject the idea of angels and spirits, as well as the idea of future reward or punishment.

The question posed by the Sadducees on this occasion was based on the duty of a brother to raise up seed to continue the seed-line of his departed brother (Deu. 25:5-10; read also Ruth 4:1-12). The Law of Moses required that the brother next to the deceased brother take his former sister-in-law as his own wife. The first child born to this union was to take the name of the deceased brother, so that his line might continue. Should the kinsman refuse to accept this responsibility, it was to be made known unto all that are in the city in a public display (Deu. 25:8-10). Based upon this law of the redeemer-kinsman, the Sadducees then pose their query to Jesus. Suppose a man took a wife, and died before being able to bring children into their union. His brother accepted his responsibility according to the law, taking his brother's wife as his own, but also died before being able to raise up seed to continue the brother's line. This scenario is repeated until all seven brothers have taken this woman to wife, but failed to bring children into the marriage. The question is then posed to Jesus, "In the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven?" (Mat. 22:28). The response of Jesus to their inquiry is both pointed and to the point, a display of masterful logic, taking advantage of the opportunity to teach even beyond the direct answer to their question.

(continued on page 2)

“...WHOSE WIFE SHALL SHE BE OF THE SEVEN” (continued from page 1)

Jesus responds to their question, “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God” (Mat. 22:29). The Sadducees showed great ignorance of the Scriptures, both in their misunderstanding of the resurrection and in their error regarding the nature of marriage as it pertains to life beyond this earthly existence. Marriage was designed by the Almighty in order that man might be complete—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. It must be remembered that as God surveyed His handiwork before the creation of woman, He acknowledged that it was “good” (Gen. 1:25). But upon realizing that it was “not good that the man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18), God created a helper suitable for man, and His assessment of the creation was upgraded to “very good” (Gen. 1:31). While marriage serves to make man whole in so many ways, it is intended primarily to serve as a means whereby man might enjoy companionship (Gen. 2:20) and sexual fulfillment (Gen. 2:24), and procreate (Gen. 1:28) in a Divinely-approved manner (Heb. 13:4). God also designed the marriage relationship to be binding until death (Rom. 7:1-4). Death severs this most tender and sacred of human relationships, this showing that marriage is not intended to continue throughout eternity. In heaven, wherein flesh and blood shall not enter (1 Cor. 15:50), the purposes accomplished in marriage will no longer be present or necessary. From the resurrection onward, man will neither marry or give in marriage, but will be as the angels (Mat. 22:30). So far as it can be determined from Scripture, angels are asexual beings, and being completely spiritual in their makeup, have no need for, nor do they desire, the fulfillment of physical longings. It is not to be understood that man becomes an angel after death, but is merely likened to the angels in this regard of the marriage relationship as it pertains to life hereafter.

As touching the resurrection, the Sadducees displayed the same ignorance as they had regarding marriage. It is said that the Sadducees denied the resurrection because it is not explicitly stated in the Pentateuch. Jesus addresses their gross misunderstanding of the resurrection, as he quotes from Exodus 3:6 to show that though Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had long been dead, God speaks of them in the present state of being (“I am the God of Abraham...,” not, “I

was the God of Abraham...”). Herein was sufficient proof, even from their own Pentateuch, that the Old Testament patriarchs were familiar with and believed in the resurrection of the dead. Hebrews 11 certainly reveals that the great champions of the Israelites looked with great hope and anticipation to the resurrection of the dead: Abraham was convinced that God would resurrect Isaac when he was called upon to take the life of his son (Heb. 11:19), and many others suffered for their faith knowing that they would obtain a better resurrection (Heb. 11:35). Job posed the question, “If a man die, shall he live again?” (Job 14:14). His trust in the power and the goodness of God led him to conclude, “And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God” (Job 19:26). Daniel also believed in the resurrection at the last day: “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2). Isaiah touches on the resurrection when he states, “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise” (Isa. 26:19). David longed for the hope of the resurrection, and the joy that would accompany his reunion with the son born to the illicit relationship between him and Bathsheba. After praying and grieving for the sick child, David cleansed himself and worshipped God at the news of the death of his child. When questioned by his servants as to why he would pray and weep while the child lived, yet not do so when the child died (2 Sam. 12:21), David replied, “But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me” (1 Sam 12:23). No, the resurrection was not simply a New Testament concept. It was clearly something for which the men and women of faith longed and into which they placed their hope. What a miserable existence for the Sadducees, and for all those who live life without the hope of life beyond this life: “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Cor. 15:19)!

(from *The Words of Truth* Jan, 2009)

Patrick Morrison preaches for the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ in Jasper, Alabama. He is a 1999 graduate of MSOP.

## The Rest of the Story

Barry Grider

Paul Harvey, one of the most recognizable voices in broadcast journalism, died last week at the age of 90. Harvey loved America and the American way of life. His daily commentary, with the familiar “and now the rest of the story” was always filled with wisdom, common sense, and a bit of humor. He will be missed.

As I think about Paul Harvey’s trademark line, it really is the responsibility of every Christian to tell others the rest of the story. Was that not what Jesus did in the sermon on the mount (Mat. 5)? Over and over again Jesus would say, “Ye have heard that it hath been said... But I say unto you.” The Lord is expressing His desire for His listeners to hear the rest of the story.

As followers of Christ today and as proclaimers of His gospel we make known to the world the rest of the story. Let the one who has bought the evolutionary lie, hear the rest of the story, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). Let the one who has bought the “faith only” lie, hear the rest of the story, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). Let the one that has bought the “one church is as good as another” lie, hear the rest of the story, “There is one body” (Eph. 4:4). The list could go on and on as we think of the countless philosophies and religions of men that teach error and blind men to the truth (2 Cor. 4:4). However, dear Christian friends, let us be bold and try to save them by telling “the rest of the story.”

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