

A QUICK LITTLE LESSON

By

Kenneth Fortier

Many, if not most Christians, think or believe that the saints of both the Old and New Testaments are alive in some place between death and resurrection. But is that what Jesus and His apostles taught? Let's find out!

In Matthew 22:31–32 we read of Jesus saying:

“But about the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what God said to you, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?’ (Ex. 3:6) He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

Luke records Jesus' response this way:

“But in the account of the bush (Ex. 3:6), even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for **to Him** all are alive” (Luke 20:34–38).

This sure sounds as if all those who died are still alive, doesn't it! However, even though Abraham died and was buried, God spoke of him as still alive; and the Apostle Paul addressed this in Romans 4:17,

“As it is written: ‘I have made you a father of many nations’ (Gen. 17:5). He is our father **in the sight of God**, in whom he believed; the God who gives life to the dead and **calls things that are not as though they were.**”

The Apostle Paul tells in I Cor. 15:16–19,

“For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep (died) in Christ are **perished**. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.”

In I Cor. 15:12–19 Paul tells us that if there is no resurrection from the dead then those who die have actually become **extinct**, i.e., “perished”, which in Greek means “**utterly destroyed**.” That term in the Greek that Paul wrote in is “*apollumi*”.

Notice that I have used the word “**extinct**”! That term, in reality, means “**to be no more**”, i.e., utterly destroyed! Let us look at how the Hebrews who translated their Old

Testament Scriptures into the Greek language — the Septuagint (LXX), and which was translated into our English language — which record what Job had to say about dying:

**“For if a man should die, shall he live again
having completed the days of his existence?
I shall wait until I exist again”** (Job 14:14).

“I shall wait until I exist again”, says Job. The writer of the Book of Hebrews, in chapter eleven, gives us a very extensive list of Old Testament saints by name, and refers to others, who were all commended for their faith:

“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for” (verses 1–2).

In this list we find mention of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — the ones mentioned by God to Moses in Exodus 3:6 — which Jesus named to say that **“to Him (God) all are alive.”** We are not afraid to say that all individuals who died in faith are also alive, even though they no longer exist; for God **“calls things that are not as though they were.”**

All those who died in faith do not now exist, but God promised to re-create (*renew* or *anew*) them on the last day of the age we now live in. The last two verses of chapter eleven, verses 39 and 40, in reference to those mentioned before, give us great encouragement to remain faithful to God until Jesus returns on that last day:

“These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.”

As you have just read, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, along with multitudes of others have to wait until Jesus returns to receive the promise of God. Yes, God will re-create man in His image again, but this time different, and those who believed and obeyed Him in this earthly life we now live in shall be raised, as Paul says in I Cor. 15:

“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (verse 20).

“The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (verses 42–44).

And that is exactly what happened to Jesus, God’s anointed one, the Christ! He died just as everyone does: and was buried in the grave (hades) from which, three days later, He was raised by God to become the first-fruit of the resurrection just as Paul describes in verses 42-44 above — and added: “...just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so we shall bear the likeness of the man from heaven” (verse 49).

He goes on to say:

“Listen, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep (die), but we shall all be changed — in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the Trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For the imperishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. **When** the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, **then** the saying that is written will come true: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory’ (verses 51–54).”

For all who have died with the faith of Abraham, in God’s eyes they are still living, **“for He calls things that are not as though they were!”**

As Cutis Dickinson puts it:

“The Apostle John wrote that at Christ Jesus’ coming ‘**We shall be like him**’ (I John 3:2). Paul wrote that Christ Jesus ‘Shall fashion **anew the body** of our humiliation, **that it may be conformed to the body of His glory**’ (Phil. 3:21).

His image at last! The purpose of God fulfilled. God will not be thwarted by our death and being returned to the dust of the earth. He will have what He set out to create and enjoy forever; man in His image. This is the destiny of the believer, the Christian.

“Eternal life is not an ethereal ghost-like existence in some sky. It is not mere continuation of mind or thought after death, nor a weird reincarnation. It will be a restoration of life to the one who died, in a state that is perfect, with the added quality of immortality (deathlessness) and in a perfect environment.

“To the redeemed the resurrection is an incentive to perfect one’s life after Jesus’ example, for ‘we shall be LIKE HIM...and everyone that has this hope set on him purifies himself, even as He is pure’ (I John 3:2–3).” [Emphasis added – KF]

As Oscar Cullman has written, “Resurrection is a positive assertion: the whole man (or woman), who has really died, **is recalled to life by a new act of creation by God**. Something has happened — a miracle of creation: For something has also happened previously, something fearful: life formed by God has been destroyed.” (*Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead*.)

There are way too many scriptures that back up what is just said to be included in this short article. When Moses was confronted by God Himself in the burning bush, which never got burned up, God revealed Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; individuals whom Moses knew of, and knew that they were dead and existed no more. We have just shown WHY God could say something that would indicate that they are still alive: They are alive **in the eye of God!**, not in reality. That won’t be true until they are re-created at the last day — the day that Christ Jesus returns to resurrect them! It is on that great day that all the faithful of all ages will be made perfect, as Hebrews,

chapter eleven, tells us. No wonder that that is the glorious hope, the **blessed hope** upon which our faith rests.

To close this article, let's all consider what the apostle Peter tells us in his second letter (3:18):

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever!”

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