

BEREANS Bible Institute; Module III

“Ghost Stories” in the Bible”

#2. Are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob still alive?

Matt 22:29-32 Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. 31 But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 32 ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”

Mark 12:24-27 Jesus answered and said to them, “Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? 25 For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 26 But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? 27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.”

Luke 20:34-37 Jesus answered and said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. 35 But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; 36 nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. 37 But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ 38 For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him.” 39 Then some of the scribes answered and said, “Teacher, You have spoken well.”

Jesus’ statement, “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living,” and “all live to Him” are claimed to prove that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still alive as ghosts. There are several reasons to reject this view:

- A. “Living” and being “alive” only refer to **physical life** for humans in Scripture.
- B. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are dead (John 8:52-53, Heb. 11:13).
- C. The question concerned **the resurrection**, not ghosts or the present state of the dead.
- D. The Pharisees and Scribes would not have reacted positively to a “Ghost Story” – “Teacher, You have spoken well” – if Jesus referred to the Patriarchs as being ghosts because they did NOT believe in “ghosts.” (See the Jewish Encyclopedia handout from lesson 3).
- E. Jesus said that Exodus 3:6, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,” was written “concerning the resurrection of the dead” (Matt. 22:31), “concerning the dead, that they rise” (Mark 12:26), and “Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called ...” (Luke 20:37).
- F. Jesus’ statement must be logically consistent with what Moses wrote in Ex. 3:5, **drawing an inescapable conclusion from this passage, requiring a resurrection**. If Jesus meant that the Patriarchs were alive as ghosts, it would **not** require or imply a future resurrection.
- G. The term “the living” is **a present participle, used as a substantive** (like a noun), and does not modify another verb. This Greek construction is NOT time specific (present at that time). “The living” refers to a class of people. Time must be defined by context, which is the resurrection.
- H. Luke adds an explanatory note: “for all, to Him, are alive.” The words “to Him” refer to **God’s unique perspective**.¹ It is wrong to conclude that they are alive **from OUR perspective of time**. (Compare: Rom. 4:16-22 & Heb. 11:17-19).

¹ When the dative case personal pronoun (αὐτῷ) is used with the state of being verb (εἶστιν / ἦν), that is: “is to him,” “are to him,” “is to them,” “are to them,” “was to him” or “was to them,” the sense is always “from his/their [unique] perspective.” See: Mark 9:42; Luke 7:2; Luke 8:42 for examples.