

A very busy executive *finally* made time for a week's vacation to spend with his wife. He was leaving on a warm December day from Los Angeles where he was on business – she was to leave the next day from a very cold Chicago ---- to meet up in Cancun, Mexico.

When he arrived at the resort that night-- he sent an email to his wife – only he mis-typed the email address. Instead of going to his wife – the email went to a woman who had just buried her husband that very week.

When the widow opened her emails and read his – she gasped and fainted.

The reason being the email read:

“My dearest. Finally got checked in. I can hardly wait to see you when you get here tomorrow. Your loving husband. P.S.: Be ready, it sure is hot down here!”

The Sadducees who confront Jesus in the Gospel today – were an extremely conservative group among Jews.

They held that only the first five books of the Old Testament – the Pentateuch, were to be held as Sacred and inspired by God – and nothing else – so not the writings of the prophets, not the psalms, not the other historical books nor any of the wisdom literature – found in the other 41 books of the Old Testament.

Those five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy – they thought were written by Moses, himself – with the help of God, of course – and that's what made them so sacred.

The beliefs of the Sadducees were then dictated by what was or was not in those first five books

so in spite of the general belief among the Jews that the dead would rise on the last day, as attested to-- in our first reading – because the book of Maccabees is not among the first five books of the Old Testament – they did not believe in life after death.

That made them Sad-u-see --- because they did not believe in the resurrection of the dead!

Now the Sadducees [or the Sa-duccies as I once heard a priest read] represented the priestly aristocracy in the Jewish pecking order --- so they were found mostly in Jerusalem so as to be close to the Temple.

At this point in his ministry, Jesus had cleansed the Temple by driving out the money changers and the peddlers of animals to be sacrificed – so these professional Temple-goers, these Sadducees – were by this point also the Mad-u-sees – as they were ready for a fight with this Jesus who was throwing a kink into their way of life.

Since they did not believe in the resurrection, they presented Jesus with a problem *they thought* was so complex – it would prove there could be no resurrection.

A rule, appearing in the book of Leviticus, so in the Pentateuch, so, sacred to the Sadducees, stated that “if someone's brother dies leaving a wife but no child, his brother must take the wife and raise up descendants for his brother.” This would preserve the name and memory of the brother, and keep in the family whatever property the brother had, and ensure that the widow would be provided for. How about if there are seven brothers – all married to the same woman -- whose wife would she be at the time of the resurrection, they ask?

Thinking Jesus would not poke this hornet's nest, even with a long stick – it would thus prove there is no resurrection!

Jesus, always ready for a fight of words with hypocrites, answered the Sadducees by telling them they misunderstood marriage and they misunderstood the resurrection.

Jesus is saying human language cannot describe the nature of the risen body when he says those who have risen will be like angels.

In other words, life after the resurrection will be nothing like the life we live now.

Writers through the ages have tried to explain heaven and it seems to be best explained by what it is not: no pain, no suffering, no boredom, no death, no need for the things we now need to survive like food and water and shelter ---

and no need to enter into marriages in order to keep the species from dying out or the estate from dwindling.

So how about the million dollar question – if one is married here on earth – are they married in heaven?

Do we know one another? Are we met at heaven's gate by our family and friends?

Since no one has ever been to heaven and come back to tell us all about it – we can only speculate.

Although we believe that life for those who believe is CHANGED, not ENDED.

So allow me to finally put to use that degree in philosophy I worked so hard to get back in 1981 ---- by relying on the *ontological* argument for the existence of God--- by St. Anselm – and applying it to heaven.

St. Anselm (who lived in the 12th century) said that God has to exist--- if we hold that God is the greatest being we can conceive.

Because if we can conceive God in our mind – this all powerful, all knowing, all loving Father with a beard—or however we picture him or her. . . .

then God has to exist in reality –otherwise the greatest conceivable being would not be the greatest conceivable being because one could think of a being like God – that really does exist in reality and not just in the mind.

I admit --- there is a way in which all philosophy majors are geeks at the core.

Let's not worry about that one but apply that ontological principle to heaven. . . *Let's assume* that heaven is the greatest place we could ever imagine. . . would that not mean the things I enjoy here on earth (a good book, a snuggly cat, my best friend, my mother's love, sunrises and sunsets, blue hyacinths,

and the smell of bacon frying) – must somehow exist in heaven ----

For if they did not – then heaven must not be the greatest place I can ever imagine --- because I could imagine a heaven where these things did exist. .

There's the geek-factor again.

To make things simple let's just say – don't the things you and I enjoy here on earth, including a wife or husband *somehow* have to be present in heaven – or why would we want to go there? – or spend all eternity there?

Sometime, when you lying awake at night trying to go to sleep --- just imagine what heaven is like – and then think – heaven is probably even greater than that. . .

And then think that actually the only things we are going to lose from our lives here on the way to heaven --- is our sins, our fears, our doubts. . .

Isn't God great! And won't heaven be wonderful!