



Conducted by
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“Jesus said that God is a God of the living: i.e., ‘the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob’ yet Peter says (in Acts 2) that David is ‘both dead and buried’ and ‘is NOT YET ascended into the heavens’. Where is David? Is he in a different state from that of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?”

The statement with which this question opens draws our attention to the Lord's encounter with the Sadducees which is recorded in **Matt. 22:32**. You will remember that the Sadducees denied the existence of a future life, and, therefore, the possibility of resurrection from the dead. By quoting God's words to Moses found in **Exodus 3:6**, Jesus asserted that, though *physically* dead, the three patriarchs continued to exist in another realm; in other words, they were still *alive*.

When God spoke to Moses, the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had all been dead for centuries, therefore our Lord was drawing the attention of the Sadducees to the undoubted fact that if, as they claimed, the patriarchs had ceased to exist at death, God would have used the *past* tense of the verb *'to be'*, and would have said, *'I was the God . . .'*. But instead, He used the *present* tense - *'I am the God . . .'*

(And, by the way, notice that this is an interesting example of 'verbal inspiration'. Here we have an argument based on the *tense* of a word!)

Peter's statement concerning David, found in the other passage to which the questioner refers, **Acts 2**, must be considered in relation to the prophecy made by Nathan and found in **2nd Sam. 7; 11-13**. In that chapter, we read that King David had been assured by God that his royal House would be established and that the Kingdom of his *'seed'*, who should reign after him, would be established for ever.

It is important to notice that the word used in v.12 is not the commonly used word, *'ben'* which means *'son'*, but the word *'zera'*, which means *'offspring'* or *'progeny'*, and that the fulfilment of this promise was not realized when David's immediate successor, his son Solomon, became king.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, on the Day of Pentecost Peter declared that the prophecy referred to the Messiah, the 'Christ', who was to come; that is, to the one whom every Jew would know as David's *'greater Son'*. In fact, the Jewish teachers of New Testament times themselves understood this to be a Messianic promise and would

therefore raise no objection to Peter's interpretation.

Nathan the prophet said that God's promise would be fulfilled when David *'slept'* with his fathers, that is, after he was dead and buried, when God *'raised'* one of his descendants to sit on his throne. Indeed, Peter, claimed that David clearly understood this, because, being a prophet himself, he *'spoke of the resurrection of the Christ'*, in Psalm 16; 8-11, where he even called the Christ *'my Lord'*;

"The LORD ('YHVH') said to my Lord ('Adonai' . . .)"

Peter then proceeded to point out that the conditions were right for the fulfilment of Nathan's prophecy, reminding the Jews that David still lay in his grave, and stating that *'his tomb is with us to this day'*. On the other hand Jesus, the descendant of David, had been *'raised'* from the grave (Rom. 1;3-4), and had ascended to heaven, and is now at God's right hand, having been declared *'Lord and Christ'* (Acts 2;35).

Thus, the contrast which Peter emphasizes in his sermon is a contrast between a David who has *not yet* been *physically* raised from the dead, and who has *not yet* nor *physically* ascended to heaven, and a Christ who *has*.

The 34th verse, to which the question refers, would be accurately translated - and much easier to understand - if it were to be rendered *"David did not ascend into the heavens"*. Again, there would be no argument from Peter's audience! They knew that when David died his body went to the grave, where it still rested. Any devout Jew, listening to Peter that day, could have shown where he believed the tomb was situated. In 1st Kings 2:10 we read that he was buried *'in the city of David'*, the old part of Jerusalem, which today lies outside of the city walls.

We understand, therefore, that the verse is not making a statement concerning the destiny of David's *soul*, but is pointing to the difference between what happened to the *bodies* of David and Jesus, and has nothing to do with David's eternal destiny.

The question asks, *"Where is David?"* In Acts 13:22, Paul tells us that God said, *"I have found in David a man after my heart, who will do all my will"*, and in the 36th verse of the same chapter, the apostle declares:

"David, after he had served the counsel of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers . . ."

On the basis of this testimony from an inspired apostle, I think we may take it that, wherever the soul of David is at the present time, it is safe in the keeping of the God whom he served, and like all the righteous dead, he is awaiting the resurrection of the body which the Lord's own resurrection made possible when He became:

'the first-fruits of those who sleep'. 1st Corinthians 15:20.

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