

Luke 20:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

Analysis

Master, Moses wrote unto us—The Sadducees cite Moses (Deuteronomy 25:5-6), their only accepted Scripture. **If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother**—the law of levirate marriage (from Latin levir, 'brother-in-law'). The Greek describes ἀναστήσει σπέρμα (anastēsē sperma), literally 'raise up seed.'

This law protected childless widows and preserved family inheritance within tribes. The brother's duty ensured the deceased man's name and property line continued. The Sadducees will use this honored Mosaic institution to construct a scenario they believe makes resurrection impossible or absurd.

Historical Context

Levirate marriage (yibbum in Hebrew) appears in Genesis 38 (Tamar and Judah's sons) and Ruth 4 (Boaz and Ruth). It was practiced but not universal in Second Temple Judaism. The duty could be refused through the ceremony of chalitzah (removing the sandal). The institution protected women in patriarchal society where widows without sons faced destitution.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does levirate marriage reveal God's concern for the vulnerable (widows) within Israel's social structure?
2. When have you used Scripture correctly cited but wrongly applied to attack rather than understand?
3. Why do theological opponents often begin with common ground before springing their trap?

Interlinear Text

λέγοντες	Διδάσκαλε	Μωσῆς	ἔγραψεν	ἡμῖν	ἐάν	τινος	
Saying	Master	Moses	wrote	unto us	If	any man's	
G3004	G1320	G3475	G1125	G2254	G1437	G5100	
ἀδελφῷ	ἀποθάνη	ἔχων	γυναῖκα	καὶ	οὗτος	ἄτεκνος	
brother	die	having	a wife	and	he	without children	
G80	G599	G2192	G1135	G2532	G3778	G815	
ἀποθάνη	ἵνα	λάβῃ	ὁ	ἀδελφῷ	αὐτοῦ	τὴν	γυναῖκα
die	that	should take	G3588	brother	his	G3588	a wife
G599	G2443	G2983		G80	G846		G1135
καὶ	ἐξαναστήσῃ	σπέρμα	τῷ	ἀδελφῷ	αὐτοῦ		
and	raise up	seed	G3588	brother	his		
G2532	G1817	G4690		G80	G846		

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 38:8 (Resurrection): And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother.

