

Mark 12:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife.

Analysis

In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife (ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει, ὅταν ἀναστῶσιν, τίνος αὐτῶν ἔσται γυνή; οἱ γὰρ ἑπτὰ ἔσχον αὐτὴν γυναῖκα). This is the trap's springing. The Sadducees present what they believe is an unanswerable dilemma: *tinos autōn estai gynē* (τίνος αὐτῶν ἔσται γυνή, "whose wife will she be")? Their question assumes resurrection life duplicates earthly marital relationships, creating impossible polygamy.

The phrase when they shall rise (ὅταν ἀναστῶσιν, *hotan anastōsin*) ironically uses resurrection terminology while denying resurrection's reality—they're speaking hypothetically about doctrine they reject. Their logic: if resurrection were true, this scenario proves it creates moral chaos (polygamy) or legal impossibility (multiple valid marriage claims). Therefore, resurrection must be false. Jesus will demolish this reasoning by revealing resurrection life transcends earthly categories.

Historical Context

The Sadducees' question reflects rabbinic debates about resurrection state. Jewish literature from the intertestamental period (2 Maccabees, 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra) discussed resurrection but lacked clear consensus on specifics. Some envisioned resurrection life as perfected earthly existence with marriage, procreation, eating, drinking. Others anticipated transformed existence beyond current biological

functions. The Sadducees exploited this ambiguity, assuming resurrection meant reconstituted earthly life with all its complications. Jesus' answer establishes that resurrection isn't resuscitation (returning to mortal life) but transformation to immortal existence where earthly institutions serve their temporary purpose then give way to eternal realities. Marriage's earthly function (companionship, procreation, imaging Christ and church) finds fulfillment in direct communion with God.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does the Sadducees' question reveal about the danger of imagining heaven as merely an improved version of earthly life?
2. How does Jesus' coming answer about resurrection life being 'like angels' challenge materialistic expectations of eternity?

Interlinear Text

ἐν	τῇ	οὖν	ἀναστάσει	ὅταν	ἀναστῶσιν	τίνος	αὐτὴν
In	G3588	therefore	the resurrection	when	they shall rise	whose	her
G1722		G3767	G386	G3752	G450	G5101	G846
ἔσται	γυναικα	οἱ	γὰρ	ἐπτά	ἔσχον	αὐτὴν	γυναικα
shall she be	to wife	G3588	for	the seven	had	her	to wife
G2071	G1135		G1063	G2033	G2192	G846	G1135