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Whose Wife Will She Be at the Resurrection?

Matthew 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-40

Tuesday the twelfth of Nisan

Whose wife will she be at the resurrection? DIG: Given that the Sadducees were status quo politicians and strict materialists (Acts 23:8), how do you imagine they questioned Yeshua? With what title? Tone of voice? How seriously did Jesus treat this absurd question? What did Christ say was the source of their erroneous assumption? What if He had ridiculed it? What does the Lord teach about life after death? How does He demonstrate the fact of the resurrection?

REFLECT: Which do you know more about, the Bible or God's power? What are your hopes for growing in the other area? How do you deal with someone who wants to argue a point in the Bible? What if the person has honest questions and you don't have the answer? What hope does the resurrection give to you?

The Sadducees were the second major religious sect in Isra'el during the first-century. There is no doubt that the sect of **Sadducees** originated in reaction to the Pharisees, and were the polar opposite of **them**. Relatively few in numbers, **they** were not held in as high esteem by the people as were the Pharisees. **The Sadducees** dressed elaborately, in white-and-blue linen caps with a gold band on the brow, and blue robes adorned in bright tassels and bells. Over their robes they wore capes and purses adorned in gold and precious stones.¹²⁸⁷ **They** took everything very literally, both in their judgments and in their doctrinal views. That principle was indeed absolutely necessary to their very existence.

Because **they** were the priests who oversaw the Temple, **the Sadducees** were more aloof and did not interact much at all with the common Jewish people. **They** too were very observant Jews, but with a different focus. Whereas the Pharisees were out in the synagogue community and on the streets, **the Sadducees** held their lofty position as the aristocrats of first-century Judaism. **They** belonged chiefly to the rich, luxurious and aristocratic party, including the wealthy families of priests like Annas and Caiaphas. While one could choose to join the Pharisees, it was only by priestly birthright from the tribe of Levi that one was included within the exclusive society of **the Sadducees**. **Their** given

name meant *the righteous ones*, which was an assumption based upon their high calling, but the name and the reality seldom met each other.¹²⁸⁸

That same day, on **Tuesday, the twelfth of Nisan**, the main day of examination (**to see link click [Ix](#) - The Examination of the Lamb), the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a theological question in the Court of the Gentiles. This was one of their main theological distinctions. **The Sadducees** were considered more conservative than the Pharisees. The reason for this was because **they** only believed in the five books of Moses alone, and did not view the Prophets and the Writings as inspired from **God**. So **they** claimed that **they** found no evidence concerning the doctrine of **the resurrection (Acts 23:8)**. So **they** denied the existence of **angels or spirits (Acts 23:8)**. For **them** there was no afterlife for the soul beyond death and **no resurrection** of the body later. **They** believed each person created their own destiny and therefore deserved their lot in life, whatever it was.**

Several representatives from this group approached **Yeshua** with a theological question. Sure enough, **they** asked about a teaching from the Torah. **Rabbi, they said, Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for him (Mattityahu 22:23-24; Mark 12:18-19; Luke 20:27-28)**. This was the important commandment of the levirate marriage that was a vital protection to women in the ancient Near East. In many societies, if a woman was widowed and childless, she was in danger for her life with no outward means of support. The Torah required that a man's family was then responsible to care for the widow through **his brother (Deuteronomy 25:5-10)**. **The Mishnah would eventually devote an entire tractate to it (Yebamoth) when it was eventually compiled about 200 to 220 BC. The practice was considered to be connected with the territorial possession of Palestine, and ceased with the destruction of the Jewish commonwealth (Bechar. 1.7)**. So far so good. But then came a distinctive twist in **their** hypothetical story.¹²⁸⁹



Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since

he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. Finally, the woman died too. Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be since all seven of them were married to her: (Matthew 22:25-28; Mark 12:20-23; Luke 20:29-33)? Maybe the question should have been why are all these guys dying after marrying this woman! The purpose of this hypothetical question was to make **Jesus** look stupid or silly. Again, along with the previous dialogue with the Herodians (see [Iz - Is It Right For Us to Pay Taxes to Caesar or Not?](#)), the question was clearly a calculated one. **The Sadducees** like to ask the Pharisees tricky questions to make them look stupid, and often succeeded. Now **they** tried the same tactic with **Yeshua**. This was the examination of **the Lamb** to see if **He** was an acceptable sacrifice. But it was really strange that they even mentioned **the resurrection** in **their** question because everyone knew that **they** didn't believe in it anyway!

Jesus replied in a general way at first: **You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures** (like many people today). Thus, **they** did not give authority to some of the most important aspects of **the TaNaKh**, but that wasn't **their** only problem. **They** also minimized **the power of God**. These were supposedly the most educated holy men of **YHVH** serving in the Temple. In spite of that, **they** had a theological blind spot with regard to **the resurrection**. Continuing to speak in generalities, **Messiah** continued: **The people of this age marry and are given in marriage** (Matthew 22:29; Mark 12:24; Luke 20:34).

That said, **Yeshua** elaborates why **they** were wrong in **their** conclusion. **But at the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage and can no longer die for they will be like the angels in heaven.** **Angels** were originally created. There are the same number of **angels** today as when **they** were created. **They** do not reproduce **their** kind. Human beings in the next life will not be **angels**, however, **they will be like angels** in that **they** also will not reproduce **their** kind. There will be an entirely new dimension with glorified bodies when **the resurrection** comes (**First Cor 15:52**), and the old marriage covenant will be a thing of the past. **They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection** (Mt 22:30; Mk 12:25; Lk 20:35-36). The believer's relationship with **Christ** will be completed by **the resurrection**, just as **Messiah's** sonship was (**Acts 2:32-36, 13:33; Romans 1:4**). So **Jesus** teaches **them** plainly that there will be a **resurrection**.

It is important to understand that later on, Judaism upheld the doctrine of **the resurrection** of the dead. It was a critical doctrine within Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of The Jewish Faith, and still found in most daily prayer books today. **The Talmud, reflecting on the pharisaic doctrinal stand, is short and to the point: All Isra'el have a share in the**

world to come . . . and these have no share in the world to come: Those who say, "There is no resurrection of the dead from the Torah and the Torah is not from heaven" (Tractate Sanhedrin 10:1-3).

Then **the Lord** got specific. The Pharisees believed that you could derive doctrine from **the** entire **TaNaKh**, *plus* the rabbinic interpretation found in the Oral Law (see **Ei - The Oral Law**). But **the Sadducees** believed that while doctrine could be derived from the five books of Moses alone, **they** viewed the Prophets and the Writings as mere commentary and could only be used to illustrate doctrine. **Jesus** could have quoted verses like **Job 19:25-26**, **Psalm 16:10**, **Daniel 12:1-2**, **Isaiah 26:19**, and so on, but **He** knew **the Sadducees** would not have accepted it as authoritative, so **He** challenged **them** from a source **He** knew **they** would surely believe and respect - the book of **Exodus**.

The real issue with the example that **the Sadducees** used was neither **the woman**, nor **her** seven husbands. So **Yeshua** focused on the central issue of **the resurrection** itself. In the spirit of the true rabbinic *pilpul reasoning*, **He** asked **them**: **But about the resurrection of the dead - have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the account of the burning bush, how God showed that the dead rise when He said to him, "I AM the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Ex 3:6-7; Mt 22:31; Mk 12:26; Lk 20:37).** The present tense of the verb **I AM** highlights the fact of **the resurrection**. **Jesus** taught **them** *why* **the resurrection** would take place. The principle was that if **ADONAI** makes a promise to an individual and that person dies before that promise is fulfilled, **the LORD** is obligated to bring that person back to life (**Hebrews 11:17-19**).

The Sadducees knew that in **Genesis**, **Ha'Shem** appeared to **Abraham** and said to him: **To your offspring I will give this Land** (see my commentary on **Genesis Du - Abram Left Haran, He Took His Wife Sari and His Nephew Lot**). This was also promised personally to both **Isaac** (**Genesis 26:1-5**) and **Jacob** (**Genesis 28:10-22**). But **they** had never realized it. All they owned was a little parcel of **land and the cave of Machpelah** in which to bury **their** dead (see my commentary on **Genesis Fu - Abraham said: I am an Alien Among You, Sell Me some Property So I Can Bury My Dead**), and a few wells. However, **they** would indeed inherit **the** entire **Land** promised to them at **the resurrection**, because **the Good Shepherd** is **the Promise Keeper**.

Jesus concluded **His** argument by saying: **He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for to Him all three patriarchs are alive. God** has a living relationship with **Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**. Therefore, **He** cannot leave them **dead**. In the last analysis, **He** declared: **You are badly mistaken** (Mt 22:32; Mk 12:27; Lk 20:38)!

Once again, **Yeshua's** critics were humiliated in front of the crowd that had gathered. Trying to make **Christ** look stupid with **their** religious riddle proved futile. **The resurrection of the dead** was taught in **the Torah**, and **the Sadducees** had erred. Even **the Pharisees** were impressed. **Some of them responded, "Well said, rabbi." And no one dared to ask him any more questions. When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at how He responded to such tests (Matthew 22:33; Luke 20:39-40).**

What about us? Do we believe in **the resurrection**? Is that the goal for which we are striving? In order for the resurrection to be a living truth giving us hope, we, too, must know the Scriptures and the power of **God**. This is what affirms in our hearts and minds the truth of **the resurrection**. If we favor the "truth" of this world and ignore the truth of Scripture and the testimony of **the power of ADONAI** we will not open up to **the Ruach** to teaching us the ways of **Ha'Shem**. Therefore, our ministry and testimony will be diminished or eliminated.

Rabbi Sha'ul wrote: **And if the Spirit of the One who raised Yeshua from the dead is living in you, then the One who raised the Messiah Yeshua from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit living in you (Romans 8:11).** We will only know the fullness of **the resurrection** after we join **Jesus** in heaven, but we can - through faith, enlightened by **the Holy Spirit**- live with a growing expectation **while we wait for the blessed hope - the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13).**

Let us pray with Paul: **I want to know Christ - yes, to know the power of His resurrection and participation in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead (Philippians 3:10-11).**¹²⁹⁰