

Mark 10:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

Analysis

Jesus intensified His teaching: 'Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her' (ος ἀν ἀπολύσῃ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ καὶ γαμήσῃ ἄλλην μοιχᾶται ἐπ' αὐτήν). In Jewish law, only wives committed adultery against husbands; husbands could divorce wives and remarry without adultery charge. Jesus revolutionized this—husbands who divorce and remarry commit adultery 'against her' (the divorced wife). This established marital symmetry and women's personhood. The phrase 'committeth adultery' (moichatai, μοιχᾶται) indicates that remarriage after unlawful divorce is ongoing adultery, not single sinful act. Reformed theology debated whether such remarriage requires dissolution or whether repentance allows continuation. The principle is clear: divorce doesn't dissolve one-flesh union before God; remarriage after unlawful divorce constitutes adultery.

Historical Context

Jewish law allowed men to divorce wives but not vice versa (except in extreme cases in later rabbinic tradition). Men could remarry without any stigma; divorced women faced severe social and economic disadvantage. Jesus' teaching that men commit adultery by divorcing and remarrying was revolutionary—it established mutual fidelity and equal moral standards. Greco-Roman culture similarly had double standards. Jesus elevated women's status, treating marriage as mutual covenant, not male prerogative. Paul echoed this (1 Cor 7:10-11), forbidding divorce or requiring celibacy/reconciliation if divorce occurs. Early church fathers

(Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Augustine) universally interpreted Jesus' teaching as forbidding remarriage after divorce except for adultery or death.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' teaching that men commit adultery against their wives challenge patriarchal double standards in marriage?
2. What does Jesus' statement that remarriage after unlawful divorce is adultery teach about marriage's permanence before God?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	λέγει	αὐτήν·	“Ος	ἐὰν	ἀπολύσῃ	τὴν	γυναῖκα
And	he saith	her	G3739	Whosoever	shall put away	G3588	wife
G2532	G3004	G846		G1437		G630	G1135

αὐτήν·	καὶ	γαμήσῃ	ἄλλην	μοιχᾶται	ἐπ'	αὐτήν·
her	And	marry	another	committeth adultery	against	her
G846	G2532	G1060	G243	G3429	G1909	G846

Additional Cross-References

Romans 7:3 (Parallel theme): So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

Matthew 19:9 (Parallel theme): And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

Luke 16:18 (Parallel theme): Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

1 Corinthians 7:4 (Parallel theme): The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

Hebrews 13:4 (Parallel theme): Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

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