

Romans 2:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?

Analysis

Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery?—ο λέγων μὴ μοιχεύειν μοιχεύεις (ho legōn mē moicheuein moicheueis). The seventh commandment, violated by those who proclaim it. Μοιχεύω (moicheuō, "commit adultery") could be literal sexual infidelity or the spiritual adultery Israel committed through idolatry (Jeremiah 3:8-9, Ezekiel 16, Hosea). Jesus expanded adultery to include lustful looking (Matthew 5:27-28), making this commandment's violation nearly universal.

Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?—ο βδελυσσόμενος τὰ εἴδωλα ιεροσυλεῖς (ho bdelyssomenos ta eidōla hierosyleis). Βδελύσσομαι (bdelyssomai, "abhor/detest") describes visceral revulsion—Jews rightly despised idolatry. But ιεροσυλέω (hierosyleō, "commit sacrilege/rob temples") could mean literally plundering pagan temples (acquiring idols or valuables) or metaphorically defiling God's temple (the people, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17) through sin.

The irony is thick: those who abhor idols engage in temple robbery—either literal (acquiring pagan artifacts for profit, Acts 19:37 mentions this accusation) or spiritual (robbing God of glory due to Him by hypocritical living). Some Jews may have trafficked in idols they claimed to detest, profiting from Gentile idolatry while condemning it. Deeper still, hypocrisy itself is sacrilege—profaning God's name and temple (His people) while claiming to honor Him.

Historical Context

Jewish abhorrence of idolatry was fundamental identity marker, distinguishing them from pagan neighbors. The Maccabean revolt began over forced idol worship. By Paul's era, Jews refused even to handle coins with Caesar's image or enter buildings with statues. However, some Jews evidently engaged in temple robbery—perhaps acquiring valuable pagan artifacts to sell, or trafficking in idol paraphernalia. Acts 19:37 shows Paul's companions were accused of being "robbers of temples," an accusation he denies, suggesting this was known Jewish practice.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What 'adultery' might I commit while condemning sexual immorality—lustful thoughts, emotional affairs, pornography?
2. Do I 'abhor idols' (materialism, success, comfort) publicly while secretly serving them?
3. How do I commit 'sacrilege'—robbing God of glory, profaning His name through hypocrisy, defiling the temple (my body, the church)?

Interlinear Text

ὁ λέγων μὴ μοιχεύεις μοιχεύεις ὁ
G3588 **Thou that sayest** not **a man should** **a man should** G3588
G3004 G3361 G3431 G3431

βδελυσσόμενος τὰ εἴδωλα ιεροσυλεῖς
thou that abhorrest G3588 **idols** dost thou commit sacrilege
G948 G1497 G2416

Additional Cross-References

Malachi 3:8 (Parallel theme): Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

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