

THAT FRIGHTFUL PASSAGE, MARK 10:11!

by Bill Reeves

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

According to the passage at hand, a woman has a case of adultery committed against her if her husband puts her away for just any cause and marries again. But some of our erring brethren can't stand the thought of a put-away woman (who to them is one divorced in the courts of unbelievers) having the cause of fornication against her husband. That would sound too much like what Jesus' words in Matt. 19:9a imply; that is, that with that cause she may put away her husband for fornication and remarry.

So this passage has to be explained away. How do it? Well the best that our erring brethren can come up with is to claim that some (they won't say: very few) translate the phrase "against her" as "with her" (which has to mean "with the second woman in the case").

During the debate with Bro. Joel Gwin in 2003, at Hopkinsville, KY, my brother cited Marshall's Interlinear on Mk. 10:11, which reads: "with her." He tried to leave the impression that since some learned men claim that the correct translation is "with her," that we can't be sure, and certainly cannot insist, that "against her" is the correct translation. He did not take a stand on the issue (of course, he couldn't afford to do so!).

I asked the audience to look at the versions of the Bible, or New Testament, in their hands that night to see if any one of them had a version that said "with her," and if so, to let me know. It won't surprise you to learn that no one afterward came to show me a version in his hands that said "with her." I had checked all of the versions of the Bible / New Testament in English that I had, and the some twenty-seven versions in Spanish that I have, and without exception **all** say "against her."

A New Testament Interlinear is not a version of the New Testament! It contains a version, but the work itself is not a version. An interlinear has three parts: (1) the Greek text, (2) between the lines of the Greek text a word-for-word, literal translation of the Greek words by the author himself, and (3) in the margin a version of the New Testament. In the case of the Marshall's Interlinear which I possess, the version used is the King James Version. So, in Mk. 10:11 in Marshall's Interlinear one reads that version in the margin, and it says "against her," not "with her."

I began preaching in 1943, and the first interlinear that I came to possess was an edition of Berry's, which came out in 1946. For years preachers of my acquaintance were using the only interlinear that was common among us, that of Berry's. (It reads in Mk. 10:11, "against her," in both the literal translation and the version in the margin).

In 1975 Zondervan first printed Marshall's work and preachers of a later generation from me began to use it commonly. Today I hear very little of Berry's Interlinear. Many younger preachers today probably are not acquainted with it.

But an interlinear has a one-man translation between the lines of the Greek text! Bro. Joel, or those who prepared his charts, chose Marshall's Interlinear, not Berry's, and for a purpose, of course.

Bro. Joel's chart left the matter as if it were without solution. His point was that no one can insist that "against her" (that is, against the original wife) is the correct translation, and why? Because one man, Marshall, says "with her" (that is, with the second woman that the husband marries). Joel could find a few others repeating the claim of Marshall's translation, but he couldn't find a Bible version so stating.

Bro. Joel and his supporters need to tell us just which of the two translations, Marshall's or Berry's, is the correct one. They need to take a stand! Are all of the versions (Catholic and non-catholic), in different languages, wrong that together give the translation of "epi" (the Greek preposition under consideration here) as "against?" Have the untold number of Greek scholars behind these numerous translations made a mistake here? Can anyone find a Bible version of repute that says anything except "against?" That holds no weight at all? All we can do is doubt about the matter, because Marshall and a few others say "with?"

Taking the position of "with her" in Mark 10:11 puts the person in trouble with the following verse 12, if the ASV and NASV are followed. The phrase "she herself" (found in the ASV and the NASV) then has to refer to the second woman "with" whom adultery was committed, verse 11. That makes the teaching of verse 12 ridiculous. The man who married the second woman is still bound to his original wife, because God does not loose from the marriage vows except on the cause of fornication. This second woman is living in adultery with him! So, is verse 12 saying that this adulterous woman commits adultery if she divorces this man, who unscripturally married her (thus committing adultery "with her"), and then marries another? Is Jesus saying that an adulteress is committing adultery if she does such and such? Such a treatment of the Scriptures is certainly not expected of brethren in Christ.

Jesus is talking about the matter of which he was questioned: Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause. He is saying that both the husband and his wife commit adultery upon putting away one's mate for every cause (excepting fornication), and marrying again. The "her" and the "she herself" (ASV, NASV) of verses 11 and 12 refer to the **wife** of the husband who commits adultery **against her** when he puts her away for just any cause and marries again. (The same is true of "her" and "a woman," per the NKJV, and of "her" and "she" of other versions).

It is not difficult at all to understand these two verses. Here I, and a host of others, readily take our stand, but some other brethren refuse to do so (with few exceptions--I know of one who claims that the only correct translation here in verse 11 is "with" -- at least he takes a stand!) because they have a false position to defend and taking a stand here for the word "against" would greatly expose the falsity of that position. So, they simply plant doubt in brethren's minds and avoid a commitment on the Mk. 10:11, "against her." But what else can they do as long as they ignore the obvious as set forth in the context?