

John 8 – Part 1

December 17, 2017

John 7:53-8:11 They went each to his own house, ¹ but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. ³ The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst ⁴ they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” ⁶ This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷ And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸ And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰ Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” ¹¹ She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”

Possible Meanings –

- Jesus showed compassion while the Pharisees did not
- Jesus disapproves of capital punishment
- Jesus approves of capital punishment because he didn't say you can't stone her
- Jesus was showing his new law vs. the old law of Moses
- Jesus said not to judge others
- Jesus said sin no more
- We can judge others but we are not perfect and you can't criticize us for it
- Jesus was standing up for women because the man was not there
- Jesus was a chauvinist because the man was not there
- Jesus did not condemn adultery
- Jesus condemns adultery because he calls it a sin
- Jesus is demonstrating forgiveness

Questions Requiring an Answer (In order of Importance)

1. What was the test (trap)?
2. How did Jesus pass the test (escape the trap)?
3. Why did the Pharisees, particularly the older ones, leave?
4. What was the significance, if any, of Jesus writing with his finger on the ground?
5. Why was this written and why was it inserted at this point in John?

Is the Story Authentic? Is this part of the book of John or the inspired word of God? Did the event happen?

- Most Bible scholars agree that this is not part of the gospel of John. The earliest versions do not include it and the writing style does not fit John.
- Most Bible scholars agree that the event actually happened and was inserted later. The story is documented back to the first century and is considered part of the Jesus story. It is specifically documented by Papias, a follower of John (c. 60-130).
- This is a common example to disprove the Bible or New Testament.

- Its insertion is documented in most (if not all) Bibles and the discussion goes back at least to St. Jerome (c. 347-420) who felt it would wrong to omit.

So what is the story trying to tell us? (From Aaron Budjen of LivingGodMinistries.net)

The woman was not about to be stoned. This was a purely academic exercise

John 18:31 Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.” The Jews said to him, “It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death.”

The man should have been there with the woman

Leviticus 20:10 “If a man commits adultery with the wife of a neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.”

Two or more witnesses are required. Witnesses were much more important than they are today. If the accused is acquitted, the punishment was given to the witnesses. If a conviction was had, the witnesses were the first to put the convicted to death (throw the first stone).

Deuteronomy 17:6-7 "On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness. "The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

This is the trap. If Jesus says to release the woman, HE is not following the law of Moses, exactly what he has been accusing the Pharisees of. However, if he says to stone her, he is acting as a witness and following a mob to convict and punish her. This is prohibited in Exodus 23:

Exodus 23:1-3 “You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. You shall not fall in with the many to do evil, nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit, siding with the many, so as to pervert justice, nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit.”

How does Jesus turn the trap back on them? Jesus implies three things in his response: 1) If the Pharisee model worked, they would all be sinless. So Jesus calls them on it. Since no one was sinless, Jesus shows their model to be a house of cards. 2) Even in this instance, for them to be sinless they would have to have followed the law of Moses to the letter – including having the man present and the witnesses ready to throw the first stones. Since they had neither, the whole trap fell apart. 3) This would have not been obvious to anyone except Jesus but there was one who was sinless in the crowd – Jesus himself.

At the end of the story, when Jesus asks “Has no one condemned you?” and later “Neither do I condemn you.” He is not saying he does not condemn adultery or sin but is underscoring what has just happened – they were not able to produce witnesses/accusers and he also wanted to make sure everyone understands that he is not a witness contrary to Exodus 23. If there are no witnesses, she is free to go (which Jesus says).

Why did the older ones leave first? It was the tradition for members of the Sanhedrin to vote from youngest to oldest so they would not be influenced by older members. The fact the older ones left first shows that they considered this as “case closed.”

Exodus 31:18 When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant law, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.

The Story So Far

(Italics mine)

John 5:14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! *Sin no more*, that nothing worse may happen to you.”

John 5:22-23 *For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father.*

John 5:27 *And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.*

John 5:30-37 *“I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me. If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me.*

John 5:45-47 Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?”

John 7:19-24 ¹⁹*Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law.* Why are you trying to kill me?” ²⁰“You are demon-possessed,” the crowd answered. “Who is trying to kill you?” ²¹Jesus said to them, “I did one miracle, and you are all amazed. ²²Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a boy on the Sabbath. ²³Now if a boy can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing a man’s whole body on the Sabbath? ²⁴*Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly.*”

I Am the Light of the World

John 8:12-20 ¹²Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” ¹³So the Pharisees said to him, “You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true.” ¹⁴Jesus answered, “Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. ¹⁵You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. ¹⁶Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father[a] who sent me. ¹⁷In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. ¹⁸I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.” ¹⁹They said to him therefore, “Where is your Father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither me nor my

Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.”²⁰ These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

Answers to Questions

What was the test (trap)? The trap is complicated (as good traps are). Jesus had always accused the Pharisees of ignoring the Mosaic law in favor of their own. If Jesus says to free the woman, HE is disobeying the Mosaic law which calls for her death. If he condemns the woman, he is still disobeying the law because the man is not present, and he is acting as a witness against her and siding with the many (contrary to Numbers 21). Lose/lose.

How did Jesus pass the test (escape the trap)? He turned it back on them. He showed that THEY were not obeying the law because they did not produce a witness to throw the first stones. Also, they were not sinless in this instance as was the goal of the Pharisaical law.

Why did the Pharisees, particularly the older ones, leave? It was the custom of the Sanhedrin to vote from youngest to oldest with the thought that the older members might influence the younger ones. If the oldest leave first, they are saying that the court is over, the verdict is obvious and they did not want to be part of the verdict. It shows that it was a kangaroo court.

What was the significance, if any, of Jesus writing with his finger on the ground? We don't know but, according to Aaron Budjen, the emphasis should not be on the words but the finger. It fits that while people were discussing the law of Moses, Jesus was writing with his finger. The law of Moses was written with the finger of God so Jesus, who KNEW he was God, was demonstrating how the law came to be in the first place!

Why was this written and why was it inserted at this point in John? It is a story that should not be lost and John 8 is the perfect place. It is after the discussions of John 5 and John 7 regarding the law of Moses and witnesses and just before Jesus explains the witnesses to his divinity.