

## John 7:53-8:11

### II. Jesus Reveals Himself to the World (1:19-12:50)

#### L. The Fourth Discourse – The Bread of Life (6:22-71)

#### M. Trouble at Tabernacles, Part One (7:1-52)

#### N. The Woman Caught on Adultery (7:53-8:11)

After the drama at the Feast of Tabernacles, we read in v. 53 that *everyone went to his own house*. The Feast of Tabernacles is now over, people are going home, but Jesus is going to remain in the area. In fact, He's just going to go a half mile east to the Mount of Olives for the time being, although He'll return to the city the next morning.

When He arrives at the Temple, He once again gathers a crowd who has come to listen to Him teach. In the middle of His lesson, *the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery* (v. 3). John will add in v. 6 that this is a fishing expedition, trying to trap Jesus into saying something that would incriminate Him. With that in mind, it seems like the woman was set up in the whole scenario, a pawn to be used for their evil purposes. After all, where is the offending man on this occasion? She wasn't committing adultery alone!

The scribes and Pharisees bring the woman to Jesus, encircling them both. They want Jesus to tell them what to do, seeing as though the Law of Moses commanded that she be stoned (cf. Lev 20:10; Deut 22:23-24). Jesus *stooped down and wrote on the ground, as though He did not hear* (v. 6). There is much speculation about what He was writing, and it isn't profitable, because we aren't told! But John does present Jesus as essentially ignoring what the men are saying.

When they continue to badger Him in order to get Him to respond, He finally stands up, turns to them, and says: *He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first* (v. 7). This phrase is often abused (along with others like Matt 7:5) by those that wish to take sin lightly. Consider the context! First, Jesus is being asked about whether or not the Law of Moses should be followed (cf. Deut 22:23-24). Second, we also read in the Law, in Deuteronomy 17:6-7:

*Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death. . . The hands of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall put away the evil from among you.*

According to the Mosaic Law, those who bear witness to the sin are the ones to throw the first stone. At the same time, the witness can't be a participant in the sin, for they are just as guilty! Presumably, these scribes and Pharisees are in on the entrapment. They likely set the whole thing up to happen to be in the right place at the right time in order to catch the couple in the act. (Again, where's the male participant, though?) They are not blameless in this situation. They weren't witnesses, they were the perpetrators and initiators!

In v. 7, Jesus is saying that, since all of them are equally guilty in the offense, they are prohibited by the Law of Moses from throwing those first stones! Instead of seeing Jesus' statement in context, we instead want to use it as an excuse to not have people point out our wrong-doings. We don't want to be held accountable! How dare someone tell us that what we're doing is sinful and wrong. Yet, as believers, we should welcome correction, as painful as it often is. If someone sees us doing something wrong, or ungodly, or bringing reproach upon Jesus or His Church, we should be ready to hear them out, that we would repent and be restored.

People find church discipline judgmental and harsh. Granted, there are churches and church attenders that set out on sin-finding missions. That's also not okay. But when something arises, we ought to go to one another in love, and with an eye towards repentance, so that the brother or sister can be restored to fellowship with God and with one another. Let's use Jesus' sayings wisely!

With Jesus' words, the crowd begins to disperse in v. 9. This leaves Jesus *alone, and the woman standing in the midst*. Seeing no one else around, He asks the woman where her accusers went? Who is left to condemn her? When the woman answers that everyone has left and no one is accusing her any longer, we have Jesus' well-known response in v. 11:

*Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.*

Here is the second phrase in this short passage that people repeat without regard to the context. Usually, it is quoted to make the point that Jesus isn't about condemning people in their sin. In a way, that is true because, as we saw in 3:17, He didn't come *into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved*. But to that end, we note two things. First, let's go back to Deuteronomy 17:6, and look at the part I left out earlier:

*Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness.*

How many witnesses remained? The Jews who set this woman up from the beginning not only left, but they were a party to her sin! With them gone, no one was left to accuse her, and the Law required two or three witnesses. Even if Jesus in His divine omniscience could condemn her, yet she still couldn't have been guilty under the Law, for there wasn't a second or third witness!

Not only that, but there's a second reason why we know Jesus is not dismissing or excusing her sin. He tells her *go and sin no more*. Jesus doesn't ignore her unrighteousness. He assigns blame to her, either refusing or unable to condemn her in this instance, and tells her to act accordingly going forward.

Does Jesus extend grace to this woman? Absolutely. Does Jesus find fault with the scribes and Pharisees for their role in this debacle? Also yes. Does this minimize or trivialize her sin? Does this mean that we shouldn't confront people in their sin in order to bring them to repentance? Is Jesus unconcerned about her actions? The answer to those three questions is a resounding "no." We ought to live righteously and judge righteously, that we would honor and glorify our Righteous Savior.