**The Gospel of John:**

**Jesus Calling out Hypocrisy**

*John 7:53-8:11*

**Context**

Although there is serious speculation on this portion of scripture originally being in John’s gospel account, there seems to be enough historical evidence through oral tradition that the account did happen. “It is beyond doubt an authentic fragment of apostolic tradition that describes an actual historical event from Christ’s life.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

Additionally, it contains nothing that would contradict the rest of Scripture. It does give us another glimpse of a Savior who is wise, discerning, loving, and forgiving. The central and preeminent character is all of John’s account is the Lord Jesus Himself. This account is no different. It’s not about the woman caught in a sinful act, nor even the hypocrisy of the religious leaders who indict her; it’s about the mercy, grace and forgiveness of our Lord who not only forgives her (which only God can do), but instructs her to “sin no more.” Thankfully, He does the same thing for us.

**John 7:53-8:11**—**53**[Everyone went to his home. **1**But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. **2**Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and *began* to teach them. **3**The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center *of the court*, **4**they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. **5**Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?” **6**They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. **7**But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him *be the* first to throw a stone at her.” **8**Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. **9**When they heard it, they *began* to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center *of the court*. **10**Straightening up, Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” **11**She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.”]

4 characteristics of the Savior

1. **Jesus is meek, vv7:53-8:2**
2. He had no home

**Philippians 2:7-8***—but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.****8****Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

**Luke 2:7***—And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*

**Matthew 8:20***—Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”*

1. The Creator has no place of His own
2. He returns to the temple early
3. The crowd is drawn to Him

**John 7:46***—The officers answered, “Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks.”*

**Matthew 7:28-29***—When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching;****29****for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.*

**Mark 2:13***—And He went out again by the seashore; and all the people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them.*

**Luke 21:38***—And all the people would get up early in the morning to come to Him in the temple to listen to Him.*

1. As was customary for rabbis, he sat down and started teaching
2. Sidebar: His second coming will be notably different than His first

**Matthew 24:30***—And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.*

**Matthew16:27***—For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds.***Mark 8:38***—For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.*

**Matthew 26:64***—**Jesus said to him, “You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”*

**Revelation 19:15***—From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.*

1. **Jesus is wise, vv3-8**
2. An interruption from the religious leaders—always hostile and contentious

*Scribes*—(lawyers) experts in interpreting the law

*Pharisees*—sometimes lawyers, were strict adherents to the Mosaic Law and tradition; roughly 6,000 during this period of history

1. Brining a woman caught in a serious violation of the Law demanding a ruling

**Exodus 20:14**—*You shall not commit adultery.*

**Leviticus 20:10**—‘*If there is a man who commits adultery with another man’s wife, one who commits adultery with his friend’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.* 

**Matthew 5:28**—*but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

1. They are not incorrect in their assessment, but where is the guy? There are two guilty parties  
   1. If they were serious about the violation of the Law, they would have addressed both guilty parties.
   2. If they were serious about “justice,” why would they bring her to Jesus at all? Try her in their own courts.
   3. If she was “caught in the act” there would be no need to get an option from a rabbi.
2. They were testing Jesus so as to trip Him up  
   1. That is nothing new—**Mathew 12:10; 16:1; 19:3; 22:34-40; Mark 8:11; Luke 10:25; 11:53-54; 20:20-40**.)

Matthew 12:10—And a man *was there* whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”—so that they might accuse Him.

* 1. The dilemma
  2. If no stoning occurred, then it would be opposing the Mosaic Law (He could not be the Messiah)
  3. If He agreed with them, His association as a “Friend of sinners” would be lost

**Matthew 9:11**—*When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, “Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?”* 

**Luke 7:34**—*When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, “Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?”*

**Luke 15:2**—*Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.” (*cf. **Luke 19:7**)

* 1. They could likewise accuse Jesus to defying Roman authority by putting her to death (**John 18:31**)
  2. How do you reconcile God’s justice with His mercy?  
     1. His holiness (and commandments) are righteous, good and true (**Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15-16; Romans 7:12**)
     2. The Law knows nothing of forgiveness [[2]](#footnote-2) (**Romans 3:20; 8:3; Galatians 2:16; 3:11; James 2:10**)
     3. The soul who sins shall die (**Ezekiel 18:4**)
     4. How then does God forgive sinners without violating His holy law?
     5. ANSWER: the GOSPEL! The atoning work of Jesus Christ on behalf of the sinners—the Just for the unjust; the Righteous for the unrighteous; vicarious substitutionary atonement

**Romans 8:3**— *For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh***Romans 3:26***—* *for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

1. Jesus writes on the ground
2. They persist in asking  
     
   Always the master of the moment, Jesus remains silent.[[3]](#footnote-3)
3. A simple, yet profound response from the Lord   
     
   **Deuteronomy 17:7**—*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.* (Cf. **Deuteronomy 13:9**)

They would have been culpable of their part of the execution to Rome.

1. **Jesus makes an claim, v9a**
2. They were just as guilty of adultery (either physically or lust in their heart)
3. They begin leaving—older to younger
4. They come to Jesus to shame Him; they leave shamed by their own sin
5. They leave with equally hard hearts as when they came
6. **Jesus extends forgiveness, vv9b-11**
7. Jesus is left alone with the women in the center of the court
8. He addresses the woman—first time anyone asks her a question

*Woman*—not a derisive term but one of respect and being polite (**Matthew 15:18; Luke 13:12; 22:57; John 2:4; 4:21; 20:13, 15**)

1. None of her accusers remain
2. Jesus profound words to her  
   1. *Neither do I commend you.*  
      Only God has the right to forgive sins. He exercises that Divine prerogative.
   2. *Go. From now on sin no more.*Forgiveness in no way advocates nor promotes additional sin. God does not save us from our sins to have us continue in it. **Romans 6:1-2***—What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?****2****May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?*

**Romans 6:11***—Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

That repentance which consists in nothing more than feeling, talking, professing, wishing, meaning, hoping, and resolving, is worthless in God’s sight. Action is the very life or ‘repentance unto salvation not to be repented of.’ Till a man ceases to do evil and turns from his sins, he does not really repent. Would we know whether we are truly converted to   
God, and know anything of godly sorrow for sin and repentance such as causes ‘joy in heaven?’ Let us search and see whether we forsake sin. Let us not rest till we can say, as in God’s sight, ‘I hate all sin, and desire to sin no more.’”[[4]](#footnote-4)

1. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, John 1-11*, John MacArthur, p. 323. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid, p. 327. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid, p. 328. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, John, Vol 2, JC Ryle, p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)