

# The Gospel of John

## Chapter 8:1-20

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- **The Gospel of John Outline:**

- Chapter 1 Our Lord is the Word, the Light and the Life
- Chapter 2 The Lord of the Wedding Feast; Zeal for the purity of the temple
- Chapter 3 Spiritual Birth, Belief and Salvation vs. Unbelief and Condemnation
- Chapter 4 The Ministry in Samaria, The Harvest, The Faith of the Nobleman
- Chapter 5 Paralytic man healed on the Sabbath, Unity of The Father and Son
- Chapter 6 The Bread of Life
- Chapter 7 The public debates about Jesus during the Feast of Tabernacles
- Chapter 8 Public debates: Woman caught in adultery

- **Review and Introduction**

In the previous chapter, Jesus incited the Jewish leaders even further past the point of seeking to kill Him. The exchange between Jesus and the Jewish leaders took place on the final day of the Feast of Tabernacles and these verses that we will consider today begin the next day.

There has been much speculation about the authenticity of these verses for there are some manuscripts that do not contain the story of the woman caught in adultery. However, the story is plausible and edifying for study and the church has generally accepted the verses as canonical.

- **Exposition of John 8:1-20**

*But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.<sup>2</sup> Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them.*

- In contrast with those who returned to their homes Jesus once again returns to the Mount of Olives for His customary purpose of prayer. The following day Jesus returns to instruct the people after speaking with the Father. It is very instructional for us to consider how central prayer was in the life of our Lord and to consider how much more it is for us.

*3 Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst,<sup>4</sup> they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act."<sup>5</sup> "Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"<sup>6</sup> This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him.*

- The Jewish leaders interrupt Jesus' teaching to present Him with a woman caught in the very act of adultery. We are told by John that the motive for their actions is that they want to trap Him or test Him. The dilemma is that if Jesus declares that she is guilty and should be stoned then He is not only violating the law of Romans over the nation of Israel, He is somehow denying His teaching of mercy and forbearance with one another. If He declares that she should not be stoned then He violates the law of Moses and it becomes easy to accuse Him of insurrection.
- It is not explained here how they were able to catch the woman in the act of adultery. Given the motive, it could be that they set the whole situation up for the sole purpose of testing Jesus. It is also interesting to note that they did not bring the man caught in the act. Their double standard intentions are evident in their failure to charge both the man and woman as the law required. (Lev. 20:10, Deut. 22:22)

*But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.<sup>7</sup> So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."<sup>8</sup> And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.*

- Much conjecture has been offered as an explanation for what Jesus wrote on the ground. But John does not provide the content of His writing but does teach us His purpose—"...as though He did not hear." Jesus antagonizes them as He disregards their demands for an answer.
- There are at least two ways to understand Jesus' response, either He is simply reminding the accusers of their own general sinfulness to shame them into not being so hungry for her death or He is reminding them of their own sin of the same nature as the woman and disqualifying them as witnesses. In either case, He is not establishing a new standard of sinless perfection for being a witness in criminal or capital cases. He is upholding the importance of a sober and upright testimony that anyone should have (which they didn't) who seeks to be a witness. (Deut 17:6)

*9 Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And*

*Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.*

- The older accusers whose longer lives made their sin more obvious acknowledged their sin first and the younger accusers were apparently more reluctant to admit their spiritual condition.

*10 When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"<sup>11</sup> She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."*

- Once all of the accusers had departed, there were no witnesses available to try the woman. Jesus makes this declaration and pronounces that she is condemned by no one—not even Him. Many have wrongly taken these verses and attempted to say that there should be no capital punishment but that we should just all forgive those who commit such things just as Jesus did. However, the state is God's deacon of wrath upon the wrongdoer and the state carries the sword as lethal punishment so as to enforce righteous laws. The state is not in a position, as Jesus was, to forgive sin on behalf of God. Notice that Jesus did not say that she should not be stoned. He just demonstrated that the witnesses in this case were disqualified from being a case against the woman.
- It is also crucial for us to remember the difference between sins and crimes. Some sins are also crimes. Some sins should not be crimes and some crimes are not sins. This is such an important point in order for us to not only understand these verses but to understand the proper role of the state in punishing wrongdoers.

*12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."*

- Jesus has just demonstrated the effect of Him being the Light—light reveals and drives away the darkness of sin. As Christians our goal is not to sit and stare at the light but rather to observe those things around us in the light that our Lord provides. This way we are able to see and understand many things that darkened hearts and minds cannot see.

*13 The Pharisees therefore said to Him, "You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true."<sup>14</sup> Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going."*

- Contrasting these verses with those in chapter 5:31 where He says exactly the opposite. In the first verses He is declaring that His testimony by itself does not constitute a legal testimony and then goes on to show that He has other witnesses to substantiate His testimony. In these verses He is declaring that His witness is true and reliable because of who He is and because He is with the Father.

*15 "You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one."<sup>16</sup> "And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me."<sup>17</sup> "It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true."<sup>18</sup> "I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me."*

- Jesus contrasts the manner in which He judges with the manner in which His listeners judged. We can see in John 5:22 that the Father has given all judgement to the Son and He alone as a sinless, faithful witness is all that will be necessary to judge the people. But Jesus' response here about Him judging no one should be understood to say that He judges no one on His own, that is to say, apart from His Father. Note the unity in verses 16, 18 and 26.

*19 Then they said to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also."<sup>20</sup> These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come. NKJV*

- He continues to incite the crowd by declaring that they do not know who He is and therefore they do not know His Father. It should be so obvious to us to see that Jesus proclaimed His divinity all throughout His ministry and it is this testimony combined with His revealing and forgiving of sin that provoked the Jews to execute Him for blasphemy.