

2.21.18 ~ **John 7:53-8:11**,
"Jesus Exposes the Hypocrisy of the Pharisees."

First of all, I want to make the point that most of the earliest and most reliable manuscripts omit John 7:53-8:11; those that do include it mark it, in some way, so as to indicate that John's authorship is in question.

You may have this section of Scripture bracketed in your Bible, with a statement something like, *Later manuscripts add the story of the adulterous woman, numbering it as John 7:53-8:11*, or perhaps, it may simply say, *this section is not found in the earliest manuscripts*.

Many scholars believe this section was not an original part of John's gospel, even though, they would probably say they believe the story is true and it really happened, but that it was added later and John didn't write it.

Some of the later manuscripts insert the story of the adulterous woman in a variety of locations, some placing it immediately after John 7:36, or John 7:44, or John 21:25, and some placing it in Luke's gospel, after Luke 21:37-38.

The consensus is, if the story was originally written by John and placed between John 7:52 and John 8:12, it wouldn't be found transcribed in different locations in the various manuscripts.

There are a few issues with vocabulary and style that are not common to John's writings, e.g., **John 8:1-2** suggests that Jesus went out to the Mount of Olives for the night; but the Synoptic Gospels [Matthew, Mark, Luke] record that this only happened once, during Passion Week (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26; Luke 22:39), after the evening Jesus spent with His disciples, when Jesus changed the Passover meal to the Lord's Supper, declaring that the New Covenant was made effectual through the shedding of His own blood for our sins.

Also, it is worth noting that although the Synoptics refer to the Mount of Olives many times (Matthew 21:1; 24:3; Mark 11:1; 13:3; Luke 19:29, 37; 21:37), John doesn't refer to it anywhere except in John 8:1, which may not have been written by John.

Another vocabulary issue is that the Synoptics [Matthew, Mark, Luke] record many times that the scribes and Pharisees were paired together when confronting Jesus (Matthew 5:20; 12:38; 15:1; 23:2, 13-15, 23-29; Mark 2:16; 7:1, 5; Luke 5:21, 30; 6:7; 11:53; 15:2); but John's gospel doesn't put them together anywhere except in John 8:3, where it says the teachers of the law [scribes] and the Pharisees came together to bring an adulterous woman before Jesus.

Many scholars believe the text of John 7 should end at verse 52, and then begin again with what is recorded as John 8:12 (more on that next week).

Although John 7:53-8:11 is most likely not part of John's original text, it is well accepted by the majority of scholars that this was an authentic historical event from Christ's life, and it is possible that it was perhaps passed on by way of oral tradition. This section contains nothing that contradicts the rest of Scripture, while at the same time it presents a narrative of the Lord that is totally consistent with the character of the Son of God, who was also the Son of Man.

Read John 7:53-8:2... Luke 21:37-38, "Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening He went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives, and all the people came early in the morning to hear him at the temple." You can see how close these passages (Luke and John) parallel one another.

Jesus was in Jerusalem and when evening came He went to the Mount of Olives; then the next morning, early, He went to the temple and many people came to hear Him teach, so He sat down to do so.

Read John 8:3-6a... The Lord's teaching is interrupted by the scribes [lawyers, experts at interpreting the Law] and the Pharisees. The Pharisees held great influence over the Jewish people concerning all things God and religious rituals. The Pharisees were always hostile toward Jesus, except for Nicodemus (cf. **John 3:1-2; 7:50-51; 19:39-40**).

In this narrative, the religious leaders bring a woman before Jesus, and the crowd listening to Him, she had been caught in the act of adultery. The Pharisees mockingly call Him "Teacher," as they seek to have Him render a judgement, knowing that the Law (Exodus 20:14) states she is to be stoned to death, even though they don't have the authority to carry out the death penalty under Roman rule.

Do you sense something is missing here? What about the man that was caught in the act with her? Why didn't they bring him also? The Law demanded both the man and woman guilty of adultery to be put to death, and clearly the guilty man was known to them; since the woman was caught in the act, the man would have been there also.

This whole bringing it to Jesus thing seems staged and suspect, in that, normally the guilty parties would be tried in the Jewish courts and Jesus was neither a judge nor a member of the Sanhedrin [ruling court of Israel].

Clearly the Pharisees are trying to trap Jesus into going against the Law of Moses, rendering a judgment that would circumvent Roman rule, or perhaps they just hope to turn the people against Him.

These hypocritical Pharisees were continually coming to Jesus ill-equipped, but then, as we already studied so thoroughly, these guys just don't get it! They think they are the premier authorities and rulers when it comes to all things God, boy are they mistaken.

Look, God is Holy and His Law is Holy, but where the Law is ineffective at showing mercy or granting forgiveness, God is sovereign and omnipotent.

Ezekiel 18:4, *"For every living soul belongs to Me, the father as well as the son - both alike belong to Me. The soul who sins is the one who will die."*

Romans 2:12, *"all who sin under the law will be judged by the law,"*

Romans 4:15, *"because law brings wrath."*

The religious leaders seem unwilling to understand that God is able to forgive sinners who violate His holy law, this was accomplished through the sacrificial death

of His own Son, through whom God's justice is fully satisfied and therefore sinners can be made righteous in God's sight.

Romans 3:22-26, *"This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood. He did this to demonstrate His justice, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished - He did it to demonstrate His justice at the present time, so as to be just and the One who justifies those who have faith in Jesus."*

Hebrews 9:27-28, *"Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him."*

1Peter 2:24, *"He himself [Christ] bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed."*

Read John 8:6b-8... The Religious Leaders of Israel were about to be confronted with their own hypocrisy. These guys were incapable of mercy and they were unwilling to acknowledge that they themselves were sinners, their misplaced self-righteousness had seared their consciences and hardened their hearts.

Think about it, these religious leaders had arrested a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery, and they were now publicly exposing her sin to a crowd, ridiculing and humiliating her; she must have been terrified, thinking that she was about to be stoned.

At this point, Jesus begins to write something in the dirt with His finger. The Pharisees continue to pressure Jesus, but He pays them no attention. He then stands up and basically says to them, "if there is even one of you who is sinless, let that man pick up a stone and throw it at the woman." Immediately Jesus bends over again and begins to write in the dirt.

How would you like it, if the next time you are pointing out someone else's sin, Jesus shows up and starts writing down your sins, for everyone to see?

Read John 8:9-11... Jesus was unwilling to be used by or assist these hypocritical religious leaders. It would seem that they got the point, for they began to leave from that place, oldest to youngest [common sense tells us, the older men probably had more sins written in the dirt]. None of the Pharisees and scribes were without sin, and therefore none of them were qualified to pick up, let alone to throw, a rock, at the woman.

Notice (**John 8:10**), Jesus now stands up, the religious leaders evidently departed while He was still bent over, writing in the dirt. We don't know if the crowd of people was still there or not, but the woman hadn't moved, she was standing there; and now, for the first time in this narrative, Jesus speaks to the woman (**John 8:11a**) saying, *"where did all your accusers go? Who is here to condemn you?"* The woman replied, *"no one Lord."*

If you were brought into court for a crime you allegedly committed, and there is no one there to accuse you, you would be acquitted of the crime, free to go.

Jesus had told the Pharisees who had brought the woman to Him, that if any one of them was without sin, he should pick up a rock and throw it, basically an act of condemning her, for she was indeed guilty of adultery and must be punished.

Romans 2:1, *"You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things."*

Paul is writing in that verse exactly what Jesus is saying in John 8. No one can serve as judge or executioner unless they are without sin, and no one is without sin (**1John 1:8**), *"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us"* (cf. **Romans 3:23**). But there is one who is without sin, Jesus Christ the Lord (**Hebrews 4:14-15**), *"Jesus the Son of God... has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin."*

God is not just a Loving God; He is a Just and Loving God, and therefore all sin must be punished. Jesus tells this adulterous woman, who is, without a doubt, guilty of sin (**John 8:11b**), *"I don't condemn you."*

The only one there that day who was qualified to pick up a stone and throw it at her, did not. This woman was forgiven by God's Son, God's Sacrificial Lamb, and although He had not yet gone to the cross, she had received forgiveness, she was acquitted and free to go. But notice, Jesus tells her, "Go now and leave your life of sin," i.e., she is to live differently, as one who has received forgiveness.

Only God can forgive, Jesus is God; He came to die [to make full payment for] our sins, that we might live for Him (**2Corinthians 5:15**), *"He [Jesus] died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again,"* (**2Corinthians 5:21**), *"God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."*

Don't be like the Pharisees who thought they were without sin, with no need for forgiveness. Instead, be honest with yourself, you are a sinner, I am a sinner, we are all sinners destined to be eternally judged and condemned to hell, apart from the salvation that comes through Christ.

The good news is, everyone who confesses Jesus as Lord, repenting of their sins and believing in Him for salvation, is acquitted of all sins (past, present, future), and will live forever in heaven with God, where (**Revelation 21:4**), *"There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."* The closing two verses in the Book of Revelation declares (**22:20-21**), *"He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen."*

Pastor Mike

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