

# The Gospel of St. John

John 7:53 - 8:11

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John 7:53 - 8:11

## The Adulterous Woman

*I prefer...*

The Coolest Text, The Most Wonderful Savior, and  
The Dumbest Bad Guys

- Most Bibles have some sort of footnote about this text not being in the earliest and most reliable manuscripts. Fair enough...
- Several ways to examine a text for authenticity.
  - Internal evidence - what it says.
  - External evidence - Greek text, early manuscripts, church fathers.
  - Internally
    - It disrupts the flow of John (water - light).
    - Doesn't seem to fit anywhere - scribes moved it all over.
    - Vocabulary and style indicate John did not write it: never uses "Scribes and Pharisees" or "Mount of Olives" elsewhere.

## – Externally

- Not in earliest and most reliable manuscripts.
- None of the early church fathers expounded on it's teachings until the 12th century, and even then stated it wasn't in early manuscripts.
- Some say it was cut because of it's leniency on adultery. Doesn't match with John 4 and the Samaritan woman.

- Yet... here it is.
  - Most likely a piece of oral tradition preserved.
  - Doubtless a part of apostolic tradition.
  - Describes an actual historic event.
  - Doesn't contradict any other Scriptures.
  - Paints a beautiful picture of Jesus!
  - Why would anyone put this story in the Bible extraneously that seems so mild on adultery - especially a monk!?
  - God in His sovereignty preserved it for us.

- Humble Christ (7:53-8:2)

- They went home, He went to the Mount of Olives.
- Did Jesus ever sleep?
- Phil 2 {5} Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, {6} who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, {7} but [a]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.

- Humble Christ (cont'd)

- 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.
- Matt 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.”
- Yet in the morning, early, He came to the temple to teach.
- Simply sat and taught - no fan fare, no razzmatazz.
- Humble servant.

- Wise Christ (8:3-9a)
  - Know 2 famous Pharisee Christians?
  - 7th commandment forbids adultery (Exo 20:14)
  - Lev 20:10 prescribes death sentence - imagine today?
  - Jesus firm on Law:
    - Matt 5 {27} “You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’; {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.”
  - Legally, these men were dead on!
  - Obvious questions:
    - Where was the man?
    - Why bring her to Jesus if they sought justice?

- Wise Christ (cont'd)
  - Their motives are transparent: trap Jesus.
    - Opposing Mosaic Law - bad!
    - Execute here - bad! (destroys reputation for compassion; instigates defiance of Roman authority)
  - What to do? This is a huge question for us and why we struggle with these verses.
    - How do we reconcile divine justice and divine mercy?
    - How does God forgive sinners without violating His holy law?
    - Children's Sunday School: "Jesus" is always the right answer!

- Wise Christ (cont'd)
  - His sacrificial death satisfied 100% the demands of God's justice and shows us divine mercy. This is where they harmonize!
  - God poured out His wrath on Jesus so He could pour out His mercy on me/us.
  - Rom 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.
  - Psa 85 {10} Lovingkindness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

- Wise Christ (cont'd)

- Rev 13 {8} And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (KJV, NKJV, NIV similar) - Jesus' atonement applies future and past...

– So, the scene has reached it's climax.

- The woman is exposed, humiliated, terrified.
- The leaders were jubilant thinking they caught Jesus in this dilemma.
- Everyone (including us) was watching intently to see what Christ would do, and...
- ... He does nothing! He stoops to scribble on the ground.

- Wise Christ (cont'd)

- What did He write?

- Jer 17 {13} O LORD, the hope of Israel, All who forsake You shall be ashamed. “Those who depart from Me Shall be written in the earth, Because they have forsaken the LORD, The fountain of living waters.” (NKJV)

- What He would say in v.7.

- The sins of here accusers.

- Tic-tac-toe, doodling?

- Not an essential part of the story!

- Scribes and Pharisees were persistent in asking, and remained silent.

- Wise Christ (cont'd)

- Jesus straightens up and makes a tremendously simple yet profound statement: “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” Then stoops back down.
- WHAT?! The answer was perfect!
  - Upheld the Law.
  - Did not deny her guilt.
  - Avoided charge of instigating violation of Roman authority.
  - Spared the woman.

- Wise Christ (cont'd)

- Jesus puts the onus right back on the accusers.

- “Ok. Let’s get on with it. BTW, the Law also says that you witnesses are to cast the first stones.” (Deut 13:9, 17:7 imply such)
    - Deut 13 {9} “But you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people.”
    - Deut 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.”
    - Jesus was not making sinlessness a requirement for judgment, else it would never happen.

- Wise Christ (cont'd)
  - No, He exposed their false motives for seeking justice
    - Rom 2 { 1 } Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.
  - Maybe they were indeed guilty of the same sins.
    - So, they left... “beginning with the older ones”
  - Why does it say that? They knew their hypocrisy; more keenly aware of their sins; more sin to remember; more reflective.
  - Devastated, they came to shame Jesus, but left ashamed.

- Wise Christ (cont'd)
  - Instead of turning to Jesus with their sin and guilt for forgiveness, they hardened their hearts and turned away - sad.
- Forgiving Christ (8:9b-11)
  - Original crowd gone? Don't know.
  - The accused is addressed for the first time.
  - “Woman”? John 2:4 (mother); John 4:21 (Samaritan woman); John 20:13,15 (Mary Magdalene)
    - A polite and respectful address.
  - Jesus exercises His divine prerogative to forgive sin!
  - Not condemned. Go. Sin no more.

- Forgiving Christ (cont'd)
  - Key: FORGIVENESS IS NOT A LICENSE TO SIN!
    - Abandon you sin.
  - Encountering Jesus demands a transformation.
    - Not in our strength...
    - “... but by my Spirit says the Lord of hosts.”
    - Rom 6 {1} 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?

- Summary

- Academic weenies and trouble makers love these battleground texts.
- Christians should be grateful God sovereignly preserved them because:
  - They paint a marvelous picture of Jesus' humility, infinite wisdom, tender forgiveness, and how He alone is the masterful answer to harmonizing God's justice and His mercy for us. Amen!

Almost exclusive source: MacArthur, John Jr., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, John 1-11*, copyright 2006, chapter 27.