

The Word Became Flesh
Week 23
John 8:2-11
“Written In The Dust”

Introduction

LORD, the hope of Israel, all who abandon You will be put to shame. All who turn away from Me will be written in the dirt, for they have abandoned The LORD, the fountain of living water.
Jeremiah 17:13

The passage beginning in **John 7:53** and ending with **John 8:11** has for centuries been the subject of much controversy. For you see, the earliest manuscripts of John's gospel do not include this particular passage. Other manuscripts have placed it at the end of the book as a kind of addendum to the writing. Many say that this passage should not have been added to the text at all, claiming that John didn't write it.

When considering these questions of authorship, it would be prudent for us to consider two important truths. First, no one has John's original written gospel, and therefore, it is quite possible that this story is, in fact, included in it and has been subsequently left out of the manuscripts that were copied from it. Perhaps there were scribes who did not like the passage, or perhaps they thought it was too lenient on the subject of adultery. We may never know this side of glory the exact reasons why this passage is in some of the text, but absent from others.

Secondly, I believe in the all powerful, all knowing Holy Spirit of God. And if He did not wish for this passage to be included in the canon of scripture, it would not have been. Therefore, I believe that not only did this event occur, I believe that it occurred the day after the Feast of Tabernacles just as *The Bible* records it.

The story of the woman caught in adultery is a picture of both righteousness and grace. It teaches us that Christ is the only righteous judge of our sin, and yet, He offers us His grace, rather than the judgment that we deserve. No wonder this story is a beloved favorite of so many believers! It should serve as a reminder to us all that what we deserve and what He offers us are two vastly different things. Thank God for sending His One and Only Son to die in our place. For you see, this is the only way that the wrath of a just and righteous God could ever be satisfied. His righteousness had to be reconciled with mercy in order for us to be saved. This miracle of grace was accomplished upon the cross of Christ.

Faithful love and truth will join together; righteousness and peace will embrace.
Psalms 85:10

We can clearly see both righteousness and peace in this wonderful story. I have always felt so very sorry for the poor woman in this story. The humiliation she must have felt that day, being dragged into the temple and put upon public display as she was. How horrible she must have felt knowing that not only was she guilty of sin, but that everyone in Jerusalem that day was not only aware, but judging her with all their condemning stares. I image it will be much the same for those who one day stand before the Great White Throne of Judgment. When all of the sins of this world are exposed before all creation.

Then I saw a great white throne and One seated on it. Earth and heaven fled from His presence, and no place was found for them. I also saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged according to their works by what was written in the books.
Revelation 20:11-12

As we read this story today, place yourself in this woman's sandals, as we can see her pass quite literally from death unto life.

From Death

At dawn He went to the temple again, and all the people were coming to Him. He sat down and began to teach them. Then the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, making her stand in the center. "Teacher" they said to Him, "This woman was caught in the act of committing adultery. In the law Moses commanded us to stone such a woman. So what do you say?" They asked this to trap Him, in order that they might have evidence to accuse Him. John 8:2-6a

First of all, we must keep in mind that while all those Pharisees were at home asleep in their beds the night before, Jesus spent the night out in the cold upon the Mount of Olives. He returned to the temple at dawn to resume His teaching, and was immediately surrounded by a crowd of listeners. I have no doubt that He also spent a great deal of time that night in prayer, for His Father knew exactly what He would face with the coming dawn. Can you imagine the sheer arrogance of someone trying to "trap" Almighty God? These scribes (lawyers) and Pharisees really thought they had Him this time. They had planned it out all so perfectly. Unfortunately for them, man plans, and God laughs.

The callousness of these men is sickening. They had no regard for this poor woman caught in adultery. She, to them, was simply a means to an end. If they had truly been so righteously indignant over her sin, then why didn't they bring the man she had been with to Jesus as well? I'm no real expert on adultery, but I'm pretty sure there has to be at least two people involved. These self-righteous Pharisees brought this woman in order to use her. Period. She meant less than nothing to them.

It is also important to note that these religious zealots brought along their legal defense team, the scribes. They wanted to make sure and catch Jesus in something that was against either the Law of Moses, or the laws of Rome. For you see, if Jesus had told them to release the woman, then He would have been going against The Law of Moses. But if He had said they should stone her, He would have been breaking Roman law, for Israel was subject to Rome, and none but Rome could execute a prisoner. Not to mention the fact that if Jesus had called for her execution, what would that say to all the sinners in the crowd to which He continually offered forgiveness? It would say to them that some sins just cannot be forgiven, and that The Father wasn't quite as merciful as The Son had led them to believe. Yes, these wicked Pharisees must have thought that they really had Jesus this time. They had presented Him (or so they thought) with a "no win" situation.

I absolutely LOVE His initial response to these religious fanatics. He doesn't even answer them.

Jesus stooped down and started writing on the ground with His finger. John 8:6b

Now, we have no idea what He was writing for the Scripture does not tell us. We can only speculate (And I will do that momentarily). But for a brief moment the Pharisees must have thought they had him completely where they wanted Him. Why, He couldn't even look them in the eye and answer a simple question. No doubt, they thought that He was stalling for time as He stooped down to write in the dust with His finger. They were about to learn a most valuable lesson. You cannot catch God off-guard or unawares!

Now, I imagine that in this moment that the silence was deafening. Everyone was waiting for His reply; the Pharisees, the lawyers, and the people, not to mention this poor creature standing in the midst of all of them quivering with fear and with utter humiliation. We mustn't ever forget about her. As a people who have experienced the amazing grace of God, our hearts must always go out to a sinner in need of saving. I have learned that it often helps to put myself in another's shoes, if I can simply be reminded of what I was myself before Christ found me. Remembering what sinners that we were will certainly help us to have compassion for those who are lost in sin.

Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or males who have sex with males, no thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God's kingdom. And SOME OF YOU USED TO BE LIKE THIS. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in The Name of The LORD Jesus Christ and by The Spirit of our God. **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**
(emphasis added)

Yes, we know full well that the wages of sin is death (**Romans 6:23a**). Did this Woman deserve to die for her sins? Absolutely. Everyone there that day knew the Law, and they knew what it said. She had not been brought to this place because of speculation. For she had been caught in the very act (**vs.4**). No doubt she would have longed for some degree of mercy, but she knew full well that she did not deserve it. After all, The Law was The Law. But let us never forget the remainder of that powerful verse in Romans:

...but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our LORD! **Romans 6:23b**

To Life

When they persisted in questioning Him, He stood up and said to them, "The one without sin among you should be the first to throw a stone at her." Then he stooped down again and continued writing on the ground. When they heard this, they left one by one, starting with the older men. Only He was left, with the woman in the center. When Jesus stood up, He said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, LORD" she answered. "Neither do I condemn you," said Jesus. "Go, and from now on do not sin anymore." **John 8:7-11**

As I said before, we have no idea what Jesus wrote in the dust that day, but I'd like to think that when He stooped down the first time, He wrote the names of this woman's accusers. And when He started writing again, He began to list the sins of each man under his name. I don't know if this is true, but wouldn't it be great if it were? Whatever He wrote, combined with the words that He spoke to them, "Let the one without sin cast the first stone," was all that it took for them to go away. How sad it must have been for them. They had thought that they would be able to trap Him, and He ensnared them with their own net! "So you want to discuss this woman's sin do you? Well, let Me write a few of yours down for all to see, so that you will be just as embarrassed as she is right now."

The older men started walking away first. Obviously they had lived longer and therefore had a greater list of sins! Can you imagine what it would be like to have everything you've ever done exposed for all of creation to view? Well, that is exactly what will happen at The Great White Throne of Judgment. I believe that Jesus gave these men a sneak preview of their final judgment day, and NONE of them were able to stand. The biggest difference between that day and the day of final judgment is that no one will walk away from The Great White Throne. The righteous judgment handed out at the Great White Throne will be inescapable.

After these cowardly men all slithered away in silence, only the woman was left standing there with The Savior. He looked her in the eyes and asked where her accusers were. "They are no more," she replied. Then an amazing thing happened. She was forgiven! I would have liked to have seen the look upon her face, when she realized that she had just literally passed from death unto life. She deserved to die for her sin, and she knew full well that she did, but she was given a gift that day that she had not expected... namely her very life. Remember what Jesus said back in Chapter Five?

"Truly I tell you, anyone who hears My word and believes in Him Who sent Me has eternal life and will not come under judgment but has passed from death to life." **John 5:24**

As I am writing this, I can't help but think about the significance of the timing. It is the Thanksgiving weekend. And all around us, most of the news that we hear these days is bad. But never forget this truth: if you have placed your faith in Jesus, then you too have passed from death unto life. And there is no longer anything to fear. If you cannot think of anything to be thankful for in these troubled times, pause and give God thanks for your salvation. For in the end, this is all that truly matters!

The woman in this story, in all her guilt and shame, is a picture of us. We too were dead in our trespasses and sin, *But God* came to our rescue and brought us from death unto life (**Ephesians 2:1-5**). This is why we are commanded as believers to be ever thankful.

See to it that no one repays evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good for one another and for all. Rejoice always, pray constantly, and give thanks in everything; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:15-18

So be thankful! For in Christ Jesus, what we deserve and what we receive are two completely different things! Thanks to Him, we have been delivered from death unto life!

Do not reject the salvation that He offers. The Pharisees walked away from Him in shame that morning, but the sinful woman remained before Him until she accepted the forgiveness that He offered. He commanded her to turn away from her life of sin. This is what He demands from each of us, to turn away from our sins and turn to Him for forgiveness. And when we do so, we are never the same. So do what the Psalmist has said today:

Let the whole earth shout triumphantly to The LORD! Serve The LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs. Acknowledge that The LORD is God. He made us, and we are His — His people, the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him and bless His Name. For The LORD is good, and His faithful love endures forever: His faithfulness through all generations. Psalm 100

Pretty much says it all doesn't it? Happy Thanksgiving!! For if you are in Christ, then you are passed from death unto life everlasting!

And let all those who are alive in Him say... TRUTH!!!