“Who can Cast the First Stone?”



John 8:1-11
11-17-2024

Introduction: vv.1-2

- John 8:7 – ***“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.”***

I. The Pharisees’ Accusation & Question (v.3-6a)

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Conclusion: You who judge others, do you judge yourself? (Romans 2:1-f)
You who see sawdust in the eyes of others, do you see the beam in your own eye? (Matthew 7:3-5)

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In this story of the adulterous woman, we see a story contrasting Law with grace, hard-nosed punishment with forgiving mercy.

It’s easy to see sawdust in others’ eyes and to miss the logs or planks in our own.

Matthew 7:3-5
And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? [4] Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? [5] Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

> The interrogatives "why" (Mt.7:3) and "how" (v. 4) are employed by Jesus to quicken the conscience. Questions have a way of probing deeper than any statement ever could.
> What Jesus is saying is this: "What you see in others would require a pair of tweezers to remove; whereas, what you fail to see in yourself requires a hydraulic fork-lift tractor!
>
> It's so easy to detect a mouse living in someone else's home, but to forget a rat lives in your own.
>
> It's so easy to sense pride in someone else's life and to forget that your head is so big it won't fit in the mirror.
>
> It's so easy to criticize a brother/sister or a church for not caring enough about you, but to fail to see how little you have done to show your love for them.
>
> Husbands, it's easy to see how your wife does not submit to your headship, but difficult to see how you don't love her as your should (you see insubordination on her part, but it never crosses your mind how loveless and apathetic you are at home).
>
> Wives, it's easy to see how unloving he is and yet fail to recognize how rebellious you are.
>
> Wives, it's hypocrisy to demand that your children respect you, if you don't respect the authority of your husband.
>
> Husbands, it's hypocrisy to demand that your children obey you, if you don't obey Christ and love your wife!

If we spent half the time looking at our own faults that we spend looking at the faults of others (EX: our spouse, co-worker, classmate, brother, parent, etc.), we would be revolutionized, revitalized, and revived!

Although some early manuscripts do not contain John 7:53 through 8:11, there is no other good reason to doubt the authenticity of this account.

Here are some reasons to validate this text as original and accurate:

1) If 7:53 through 8:11 was not part of the original text, 8:12 would make a rough transition from 7:52.

2) It seems unlikely that such a story would have been invented and added to the text of John (the theme and style of expression suit John's theme and style of writing perfectly)

3) Evidently, this passage was deliberately omitted from some manuscripts because it was liable to be understood in a sense too indulgent to adultery (it would therefore make more sense that some copyists would exclude it than it would for others to include it).

4) The account has all the earmarks of historical veracity.

5) This story "fits" (makes perfect sense in this context).

> "To many of us, the story fits right here! In fact, the development of the entire chapter can easily be seen to grow out of this striking even in the temple. Our Lord's declaration on His being the Light of the world (Jn. 8:12) certainly fits, and so do His words about true and false judgment (Jn. 8:15-16, 26). The repeated phrase 'die in your sins' (Jn. 8:21, 24) would clearly relate tot he judgment of the woman; and the fact that the chapter ends with an attempt to stone Jesus shows a perfect parallel to the opening story. The transition from John 7:52 to 8:12 would be too abrupt without a transitional section." (Wiersbe, p. 319)

6) For other supporting arguments for the authenticity of John 7:53 through 8:11, see: Zane Hodges, Bib Sac 136, 1979, pp. 318-372, and Bib Sac 137, 1980, pp. 41-53.

v. 2

"Early in the morning" – Christ was an early riser, in no way lazy (cp. Mk. 1:35).

"Into the temple" – The place of sacrifice and worship, the place which anticipated the arrival of Jesus who would fulfill all of the typology found in the Temple and its ceremonies.

"All the people" – Not meaning every single individual, but all kinds of people (including Jew and Gentile, male and female, young and old, slave and free, religious and non-religious).

"He sat down" – Such a teaching posture points to a relaxed, informal, close, casual and personable style of teaching.

- John 8:7 – ***"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."***

I. THE PHARISEES' ACCUSATION & QUESTION (V.3-6A)

A. The Harsh Accusation against the Woman (v.3-4)

v. 3
"Scribes and Pharisees" – Jewish religious leaders who were hypocritical legalists who looked holy on the outside but were wicked on the inside (See: Matthew 23)

(v.13) They teach of Heaven, but slam the Door in people's faces

(v.14) They serve the needy, but rob for their services

(v. 15) They diligently make converts, but mold them for hell

(v. 16-22) They make promises to God, but plan "loopholes" to get out of them

(v. 23-24) They give money, but omit ethical and moral values

(v. 25-28) They are clean on the outside, but corrupt on the inside

(v. 29-36) They venerate dead saints, but persecute living ones

'A woman taken in adultery" – the fact that only the adulterous woman was brought to Jesus and not the adulterous man, shows how they perverted the Law and did not themselves seek to carry out the details of it. The Law actually required the stoning of both.

"In the midst" – This crowd interrupts Jesus' lesson at the Temple by setting an adulterous woman right in between Jesus and the crowd He was teaching. This, of course, would provide Him with another teaching opportunity.

v. 4
"Master" – Rabbi or authoritative teacher. They said this with hypocritical, underlying motives.

"In the very act" – What exactly occasioned some of them to witness "the very act" is uncertain. In those days, seclusion and privacy would be painstakingly sought, especially due to the embarrassing nature of this sin. It was not as "in the open" as it so often is today.

B. The Hypocritical <u>Question</u> to Jesus (v.5-6a)

v. 5

At this point the Pharisees are correct in their understanding of Moses' command regarding adultery.

God's whole reason for stoning and for capital offense was to provide a legal deterrent to Israelites committing such actions again. "So shalt thou put away evil from Israel." (Dt. 22:22) (cp. Dt. 13:11, 19:20, 21:21 – "All Israel shall hear and fear").

Stiffer penalties today against adultery would also to a greater degree curb this sin (1 Tim. 1:9-10), and make people more aware of adultery's wrongness.

Many today seek to justify grounds for divorce by interpreting "fornication" in Mt. 5:32 and 19:9 as "adultery." However, the penalty for adultery was not divorce but death!

The very fact that they question Jesus about such a clear command shows that they had ulterior motives – they were up to something.

v. 6

"Tempting Him" – on other occasions the Pharisees sought to entrap Jesus by "tempting Him" (or put Him to a test) (EX: Mt. 19:3; Mk. 10:2 – over the divorce issue; Mt. 22:35 – over whether or not He knew the greatest commandment; Mk. 8:11 & Lk. 11:16 – over a requested sign miracle; and the most obvious occasion of a "catch 22" test was their question over whether or not they should pay taxes to Caesar (Mt. 22:15-22).

"That they might have to accuse" – The religious leaders question Jesus regarding the Law that they might find a reason to judge Him guilty of violating the Law.

They, recognizing the compassionate heart of Jesus (cp. Lk. 9:56) sensed that He would not be part of a stoning, so they seek to trap Him by forcing Him to either uphold the Mosaic Law or violate it (by failing to fulfill it).

Note: The Pharisees desire in bringing the woman to Jesus was not to uphold the Mosaic Law themselves, but to have a reason to trap Jesus in whatever decision He made!

Here, Jesus is placed in the middle of an issue of faithfulness to God's Law or compassionate mercy. Either way He goes, they feel they will catch Him.

"The Jewish leaders, of course, were trying to pin Jesus on the horns of a dilemma. If He said, 'Yes, the woman must be stoned!' then what would happen to His reputation as the 'friend of publicans and sinners'? The common people would no doubt have abandoned Him and would never have accepted His gracious message of forgiveness.

"But, if He said, 'No, the woman should not be stoned!' then He was openly breaking the Law and subject to arrest. On more than one occasion, the religious leaders had tried to pit Jesus against Moses, and now they seemed to have the perfect challenge (See John 5:39-47, 6:32ff, 7:40ff)." (Wiersbe, p. 319).

On the one hand, Jesus came not to "destroy the Law" (Mt. 5:17), but on the other hand, He came not "to destroy men's lives" (Lk. 9:56) nor "to condemn the world" (Jn. 3:17).

II. CHRIST'S ANSWER & PARDON (V.6B-11)

A. The Convicting <u>Answer</u> of Jesus (v.6b-9)

v. 6
Jesus' action of stooping down and remaining silent during their question, gave them time to examine the situation and their own hearts.

It also shows that love is not quick and anxious to condemn.

"Writing with the finger was symbolic of divine legislation" (Reinecker, p. 237). Was it the deeper meaning of the Law of adultery that Jesus was writing down?

"With His finger wrong on the ground" – Everyone who reads this text wonders what Jesus wrote on the ground.

--Was He just writing down anything to "buy some time" before responding?

--Was He writing the Law as He had done on stone tablets at Mt. Sinai?

--Was He writing down the sins that those condemners were guilty of?

No one knows for sure what He wrote.

However, the best answer can be found by comparing Jeremiah 17:13.

Remember that in John 7:37-38, Jesus had offered living water to those who came to Him to drink. He was that living water.

But now, these who rejected Him as the living water are having their <u>names</u> written on the ground.

Jeremiah 17:13
O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters.

v. 7
For quite some time Jesus wrote on the ground as the bloodthirsty mob questioned Him as to what should be done with this woman.

After their relentless interrogation, Jesus finally stands up and makes a clear, concise, and powerful statement. **"Let him who is sinless be the first one to throw a stone at her."**

Of course, no one could even cast a pebble after that. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

SEE: Romans 3:10ff

Note the universality or all-inclusiveness of sin. In these verses: "all" (v. 9); "non" (v. 10); "none...none" (v. 11); "all...together...none...not one" (v. 12).

Total depravity -

Eccl. 9:3 - This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead."

Is. 1:5-6 - "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it: but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: and they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

God speaks of unsaved man as being "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1; cp. Col. 2:13).

Man's heart is blind and he exists in spiritual darkness (Eph. 4:18; 5:8; Col. 1:13).

The question is asked in Job 14:4 - "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" No one.

A sinner from conception: "Behold I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5).

A sinner at birth: "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies" (Ps. 58:3; cp. Is. 48:8).

"The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8:21; cp. Gen. 6:5).

"He who doubts total depravity had better study himself" –Spurgeon

In Romans 3:

1. Man's Character Proves His Depravity (v. 10-12) (What he is is corrupt)
2. Man's Speech Proves His Depravity (v. 13-14) (What he says is corrupt)
3. Man's Action Proves His Depravity (v. 15-18) (What he does is corrupt)

For such capitol offenses, the Law required that the witnesses of the crime be the first to throw the stones (Dt. 13:9, 17:7; Lev. 24:14), and then the other assembled people. It is obvious that the ones who would throw the stones must not be participants guilty of the same crime themselves (Carson, p. 336).

"It was required by Jewish Law that the accusers cast the first stones (Dt. 17:7). Jesus was not asking that sinless men judge the woman, for He was the only sinless Person present. If our judges today had to be perfect, judicial benches would be empty. He was referring to *the particular sin of the woman,* a sin that can be committed in the heart as well as the body (Mt. 5:27-30)." (Wiersbe, p. 319).

Lust and adultery are the moral equivalent in God's sight.

Matthew 5:28
But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

v. 8
After His "to the point" statement, Jesus resumes His writing to let His statement sink in and bring conviction. The silence would cause the hearers to ponder the statement and examine their own hearts.

v. 9
"Those who had come to shame Jesus now leave in shame" (ashamed of their own sin) (Carson, p. 336).

Interesting phrase: **'Beginning at the eldest"** - The older (eldest) accusers were the first to leave. Why? The older one gets the more chances he has had to be tempted and to sin. Those who are older have had more time to think about the wickedness of their own hearts, motives and inner desires, if not their actions.

The older ones gets, the more set in their ways they get, yet (whether they will admit it or not) the more vile they have seen themselves.

The only one who had a the moral right to throw the stones was Jesus Himself . Why? He was without sin (Heb. 4:15). He was the only one who didn't need to leave the scene in shame and guilt, because He is the only one who never, ever sinned (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26; Jn 8:46).

"Jesus was left alone" – The bottom line to all of us is that our sin is ultimately between us and God Himself (Ps. 51:4).

B. The Gracious <u>Pardon</u> of the Woman (v.10-11)

v. 10
The woman does not deny her sin, nor does she justify it. She simply stands there in front of Jesus speechless until he asks her the question: **"Woman, where are those thine accusers"**

v. 11
Jesus, being the ultimate author of the Mosaic Law reserves the right to suspend the penalty of the Law to anyone He chooses. Just as God chose to not require the death penalty for David and Bathsheba in the Old Testament, so Jesus does so here.

However, the norm should have been (to those Israelites living under the theocracy and the Law) the death penalty for such a crime.

The seriousness of adultery is evidenced by the seriousness of the normal penalty for adulterous, namely death.

"Neither do I condemn thee" – If God does not condemn us , who else really can? (Rom. 8:1).

"Go and sin no more" – Jesus did not excuse sin or justify sin or give people license to sin, but rather He said, "Go and sin no more." "Go now, and leave your life of sin."

Jesus does not simply say "Go," but "Go and sin no more."

Forgiveness and salvation in Christ is not liberty to sin but liberty from sin.

Conclusion: You who judge others, do you judge yourself? (Romans 2:1-f)
You who see sawdust in the eyes of others, do you see the beam in your own eye? (Matthew 7:3-5)

SEE: Rom. 2:17-22

"For Jesus to forgive this woman meant that He had to one day die for her sins. Forgiveness is free but it is not cheap" (Wiersbe, p. 320).

"But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared" (Ps. 130:4).