

The Man Caught in Adultery

John 8:4 ... this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

But wait! *Where is the man???*

John 8:1-11

1 Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.

2 And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.

3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,

4 They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

6 This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

8 And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

9 And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

This account of the woman taken in adultery is a very instructive passage... if rightly understood... by rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15), comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Corinthians 2:13). To understand the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:10) from this passage, we need go to ... the law, to which the scribes and Pharisees were referring in their accusation against the woman...

The starting point, of course, is the “ten commandments” – the seventh being the one that plainly forbids adultery:

Exodus 20:14 Thou shalt not commit adultery. (& Deuteronomy 5:18)

But the “ten commandments” are by no means the sum total of the law. The first five books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) are often called “the law of Moses,” and in John 8:5 the scribes and Pharisees said “Moses in the law commanded us...” So, beyond just the “ten commandments” in which adultery is forbidden, the law also identifies what adultery is, and what the penalty is for anyone that commits adultery:

Leviticus 20:10 And the man that committeth adultery with another man’s wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

Deuteronomy 22:22 If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel.

The law also makes it clear what it means to be “**found**” (in the very act, of a sin, that is worthy of death):

Numbers 35:30 ...but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die.

Deuteronomy 17:6 At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.

Deuteronomy 19:15 One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.

And upon conviction – upon the matter being established at the mouth of two or three witnesses – the law furthermore identifies who is to be the first to begin to execute the death sentence:

Deuteronomy 17:7 The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.

But beware: the ninth of the “ten commandments” plainly forbids bearing *false* witness:

Exodus 20:16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. (& Deuteronomy 5:20)

A witness had *better* be a *true* witness and not a *false* witness; for the penalty against a *false* witness is equal to the penalty for the sin that the false witness brings before the court:

Exodus 23:1 Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.

Deuteronomy 19:16-20 If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.

Jesus reiterated the requirement for witnesses:

Matthew 18:15-17 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

Jesus himself endured the testimony of false witnesses against him:

Matthew 18:15-17 Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;

Let it not be lost upon us, that the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, in *seeking false witness* against Jesus, were themselves deserving of the death that they sentenced upon Jesus (“crucify him!”). Yet Jesus... “humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8) ...in their stead, and in the woman’s stead, and in our stead also ... and, in fact, in the stead of the whole world: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

So let’s return now to the passage and read it with the law in view: the law to which the scribes and Pharisees were referring... maybe with more of the law in view than the scribes and Pharisees actually knew??? ... or with more of the law in view than they *thought* Jesus would know...

John 8	Observations
1 Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.	“...as he was wont...” (Luke 22:39) “to pray” (Matthew 14:23) Jesus often resorted unto a mountain to pray.
2 And early in the morning he came again <u>into the temple</u> , and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and <u>taught them</u> .	[See the study notes “Introduction to the Early Church”] Jesus came to the temple, to visit the church which met there and to teach those that came. Much had gone wrong with his church, and he sat down to teach how to set it right. Jesus was already “building” his church – now in person – which he had already established with Israel, and which can be seen as “the church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38). Jesus was beginning to “repair the breaches” (2 Kings 12:5) – the spiritual breaches – of his church, before ordaining Peter and the apostles, and those who would follow, to the continuation of the work. So, this was a local church gathering.
3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a <u>woman</u> taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,	The scribes and Pharisees intruded into the midst of a church gathering of believers. Notice well, that they brought the woman only... But the law (Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22) requires <u>both</u> .
4 They say unto him, Master, <u>this woman</u> was taken in adultery, in the very act.	Where, oh where, is the <u>man</u> , that was <u>also</u> caught, in the <u>very same</u> act ?????
5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?	The law states that <u>both</u> should be stoned, not just the <u>woman</u> !!!!! Did they really think Jesus knew not the law? Or was it actually <u>they</u> that knew not the law ???
6 This they said, <u>tempting</u> him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with <i>his</i> finger <u>wrote</u> on the ground, <i>as though he heard them not</i> .	The scriptures do not tell us what Jesus wrote on the ground. But speculations certainly do abound. Instead of speculating, let us compare spiritual things with spiritual... by comparing <i>this</i> with Jesus’ response to a <i>previous</i> temptation... <u>Matthew 4:1-11</u> 1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be <u>tempted</u> of the devil. 2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. 3 And when the <u>tempter</u> came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. 4 But he answered and said, <u>It is written</u> , Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (<u>Deuteronomy 8:3</u>) 5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, 6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. (<u>Psalms 91:12</u>) <i>(Notice the comparison to the scribes telling Jesus what is written in the law of Moses.</i> 7 Jesus said unto him, <u>It is written again</u> , Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. (<u>Deuteronomy 6:16</u>) 8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; 9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. 10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for <u>it is written</u> , Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. (<u>Deuteronomy 6:13, 10:20</u>) 11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him. When tempted by <u>Satan</u> in the wilderness, Jesus’ response was, “ <u>It is written</u> .” When Jesus was tempted by <u>Satan’s scribes</u> and Pharisees, would his response have been any different? Here, the only difference we see is that Jesus responded silently in writing, not in spoken words. When he stooped down and <u>wrote</u> on the ground, what would he have written? That which <u>is</u> written of course. And note well that he wrote with his finger: the finger of God (Exodus 31:18), writing the words of God.

<p>7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.</p>	<p>It is most likely that Jesus began by writing Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22, causing the scribes and Pharisees to be reminded that both the woman and the man were required to be accused and sentenced together.</p> <p>NOTE WELL: Jesus was not saying that only someone who is without sin absolutely is permitted to cast the first stone, for that would have been a negation of the law. Nobody could carry out the death penalty, ever, if that were the requirement. NO, Jesus was saying, <i>in the context of the situation</i>, that he who is without sin <u>as a witness</u> – he that is a <u>righteous witness in the matter that has been brought before the Lord</u> – let <u>him</u> first cast a stone at her. He was referring directly his own written word in the law of Moses: Exodus 23:1 and Deuteronomy 19:16-20, pertaining to false witnesses.</p> <p>Then after lifting up himself and saying, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her...</p>
<p>8 And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.</p>	<p>...Jesus most likely then wrote that <i>very scripture</i> (Deuteronomy 19:16-20), defining exactly what he meant by the words “without sin,” and in doing so, indicating with those very words who it <u>really</u> was that the law of Moses said should be put to death (the false/unrighteous witnesses).</p>
<p>9 And they which heard <i>it</i>, being convicted by <i>their own</i> conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, <i>even</i> unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.</p>	<p>Their witness was false/unrighteous because they did not bring the man also. The man was either let go, or was part of a plot to catch the woman in the act. As will be seen shortly, the woman (though a sinner, like us <u>all</u>) was also a <i>believer</i>. It is possible that she was targeted by the scribes and Pharisees for this temptation specifically <u>because</u> she was a believer, and had already been seen following Jesus. The false/unrighteous witnesses, being convicted of their own false/unrighteous testimony (and realizing they were the ones worthy of being stoned), could say nothing further, and left (one by one) in the shame of having been caught in their <u>own very act</u> – of having “put [their own] hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.” (Exodus 23:1)</p>
<p>10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?</p>	<p>All her accusers (false/unrighteous witnesses) had gone away, leaving none to accuse her. Now that the unrighteous unbelievers were gone, Jesus dealt with the woman “in the midst” of the remaining believers (the local church assembly) that he was teaching before they were so rudely interrupted.</p>
<p>11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.</p>	<p>The woman called him Lord, indicating she was a believer in Jesus.</p> <p><u>John 3:18</u> He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.</p> <p><u>Romans 8:1</u> There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus...</p> <p>According to Deuteronomy 17:6, even if she was worthy of death, it would be against the law for Jesus alone (one witness) to condemn her. But Jesus did call sin sin... “go, and sin no more.” She was forgiven, but was not given liberty to continue in her sin. She would still have to deal with the consequences (shame, at the least). But Jesus did that which he has told us to do ...</p> <p><u>Galatians 6:1</u> Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, <u>ye which are spiritual, restore</u> such an one <u>in the spirit of meekness</u>; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.</p> <p>Jesus, in whom “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9),</p>

knew all things, and as such (“these **three** are one” - 1 John 5:7) Jesus *could* have taken upon himself the role of the (two or) **three** righteous witnesses, and condemned the woman to be put to death. But he came as a man, and “being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself...” (Philippians 2:8) ...and instead of condemning her, Jesus **restored** her, in the spirit of **meekness**,

Matthew 11:28-29

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are **heavy laden**, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for **I am meek and lowly in heart**: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

And in restoring her (rather than condemning her), Jesus was perfectly in line with his written word:

Exodus 34:6-7

And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and **gracious, longsuffering**, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping **mercy** for thousands, **forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin**, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

Note well, that along with being gracious, longsuffering, good, merciful, forgiving... he does indeed say that he will by no means clear the guilty. We are **all** guilty before him – God... the LORD... Jesus Christ – and to save us from condemnation, he laid upon himself (God the Father laid upon Jesus Christ his only begotten Son) the iniquity of us all. Our guilt was not cleared: it was punished – Jesus took upon himself our guilt, being made to be sin for us (he who knew no sin, and who therefore was qualified to bear our sin because he had no sin of his own to bear).

But we have to accept his free gift of eternal salvation, by doing the one (and only) thing that he tells us to do. We must come unto him his way (“I am the way...”) not our way. We must humble ourselves and admit that we need to be saved, and call upon Jesus Christ to ask him to save us from the condemnation that he paid for on our behalf. Until (or unless) we do, we are still condemned...

John 3:18

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Again, the woman caught in adultery was a believer, calling Jesus “Lord,” and since she was a believer, Jesus did not condemn her, but restored her in the spirit of meekness, being not ashamed to call her one of his brethren...

Hebrews 2:11

For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

Are you one of Jesus Christ's "brethren"? Have you called upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved from the condemnation (the "damnation") of hell that Jesus Christ suffered and died and descended into - to pay the price to deliver you from it?

If not, then "Ye are (still) of your father the Devil" (John 8:44). But being yet in the land of the living (hearing or reading this very study)... according to the longsuffering of the Lord the call to salvation is yet offered to you: "behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

If so, then you are one of his brethren, and are of "Our Father which art in heaven..." (Matthew 6:9). And Jesus Christ is not ashamed to call you (us) his brethren, but instead is ... "at the right hand of God" and "maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:34).

... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:6)

... whosoever shall call upon the name of **the Lord** shall be saved. (Romans 10:13)

... Christ **Jesus**: (Philippians 2:5-11):

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

That at **the name of Jesus** every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that **Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father.

Additional thoughts on Matthew 4:1-11 and John 8:1-11

Beyond the comparison in verse numbers (verses 1-11), consider the following:

Matthew 4:1-11	John 8:1-11
Satan came to Jesus to tempt him	Satan's scribes came to Jesus to tempt him
Satan tempted Jesus to agree with the use of stones for life	Satan's scribes tempted Jesus to agree with the use of stones for death
Satan (mis)used scripture in his tempting of Jesus	Satan's scribes (mis)used scripture in their tempting of Jesus
Jesus used scripture to resist Satan's temptation, saying, "It is written..."	Jesus resisted Satan's scribes' temptation, by stooping down and writing on the ground...
Jesus spoke with his mouth what is written in the law of Moses (mainly, Deuteronomy)	Jesus wrote on the ground what is written in the law of Moses (mainly, Deuteronomy)
The word of the Lord, from the mouth of God	The word of the Lord from the finger of God
Satan left Jesus, after failing to get something from Jesus with which to accuse him	Satan's scribes left Jesus, after failing to get something from him with which to accuse him