



Reading the writing in the dirt

What can we learn
from Jesus and the
adulterous woman

John 8:2-11



Worldly applications

- Jesus downplayed the importance of the transgression
- Jesus did not approve of the death penalty
- Jesus believed that no one could condemn sin who was not already sinless
- “Let he that is without sin” = “don’t judge me!”



The passage

- Not included in oldest manuscripts
 - Was this added in by a scribe at a later date?
 - Was it excluded because of a resistance to its teaching?
 - Its teachings and description of Jesus are in keeping with the rest of scripture
- Jesus does not elaborate on his actions, nor does the writer
 - “What did he write on the ground”?
 - “Why did the men leave after being challenged?”



What do we know?

- The intent of the scribes and Pharisees
 - The author depicts their hearts, “so that they might have grounds for accusing him”
 - “Master”, “teacher”
 - Sought to kill him, 7:25, 32
 - John 7:45-52 – “The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, ‘Why did you not bring Him?’ The officers answered, ‘Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks.’ The Pharisees then answered them, ‘You have not also been led astray, have you? No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he? But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed.’ Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) said to them, ‘Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?’ They answered him, ‘You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee.’”
 - When we are outraged over a crime, what is our first priority?



What do we know?

- What did the law require?
 - Not stoning, but certainly death, Lev. 20:10 (adulterer AND adulteress), Deut. 22:22
 - Deut 19:15-20 – “A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed. If a malicious witness rises up against a man to accuse him of wrongdoing, then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges who will be *in office* in those days. The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness is a false witness *and* he has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you.”
 - The accuser was to be the first to lay hands on the guilty, Deut. 17:7, 19:2



What do we learn about Jesus?



Jesus' respect for the law

- The disciples and the Sabbath
 - Matt 12:3-7 – “But He said to them, ‘Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent? But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, ‘*I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE,*’ **you would not have condemned the innocent.**”
 - Jesus' argument not that the law was too strict or should be ignored, *but that it did not apply!*
 - Heb. 5:15 – can a man keep a law perfectly when he does not regard it?



Jesus' respect for the law

- Was Jesus for the death penalty?
 - Matt 5:17-20 – “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. **For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that of the scribes and Pharisees*, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”**
 - It was the scribes and Pharisees that selected the parts of the law they would and would not honor! Mark 7:11
 - Jesus was not a judge, an accuser or a witness! “Neither do I condemn” – refers to legal ruling, not a forgiveness or acceptance of the person’s innocence!



Jesus' respect for the law

- Was Jesus “soft” on adultery?
 - Mark 8:38 – “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” – Spiritually AND physically true of the people
 - Jesus claimed that the law didn’t go far enough! Matt. 5:28, Mtt. 19:9
- Matt 23:1-3 – “Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, saying: ‘The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say *things* and do not do *them*.’”
- Why didn’t Jesus condemn the sin publicly? Because that was the purpose of the Pharisees in bringing her!



Jesus' respect for the law

- “Let he who is without sin”
 - One who is free of adultery?
 - One who is perfect?
 - One who is acting according to the law?
- Jesus' refusal to pass sentencing was a condemnation of mob rule and hypocrisy, not of justice or following the law



Jesus' desire for mercy

- John 12:46-48 – “I have come *as* Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness. If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.”
- John 3:17-18 – “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”



Jesus' desire for mercy

- Luke 15:3-7 – “So He told them this parable, saying, ‘What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ I tell you that in the same way, there will be *more* joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”
 - Where the Pharisees saw an opportunity to trap, Jesus saw an opportunity to save!



Jesus' desire for mercy

- Which one of us doesn't also stand with the woman accused of sin?
 - Rom 6:20-23 – “For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- Jesus' message to us – “Go and sin no more”