



**Schemes and Dreams**  
**Jesus In a Battle of Wits With Unarmed Men**  
**John 7:53 – 8:12**

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When we were last together Jesus had just given a defining moment announcement that He is the source of living water, that He is Messiah. That everything the Feast of Tabernacles points to is fulfilled in Him. And the religious leadership feel threatened, again.

He is not done with the Pharisees yet and they are far from done with Jesus. These political maneuverers have another surprise up their sleeve in case Jesus stays in town for the 8th day. Which He will do.

Remember, all they want to do is retain power at all costs. There is no limit to the lengths they will go to to provide a pretext for the arrest and murder of Jesus.

The level of hatred that we have seen being displayed in our culture recently is not a new phenomenon. This has been a part of Satan's playbook since Genesis 3 and on full display here in John.



We lament the cancel culture of today, but it existed in Israel and Judah. Jesus will talk about the number of prophets who were murdered by the people. That was how folks used to be canceled. Today we simply keep them in court until they have no more resources left to defend themselves driving them to bankruptcy.

I find it interesting that as the Priests wanted to cancel Jesus, those who have aligned with the enemy today want to cancel His followers.

A common factor then and now, is to try and create stereotypes of those you wish to cancel. We see the Pharisees doing that with Jesus, or at least trying to do so.

The enemy is busy doing the same to all believers today in our culture.

George Yancey did research into Christianophobia here in the US and discovered that the stereotypes being used "characterized Christians as intolerant, bigoted, stupid, insane, evil, claiming victimhood, backward, violent, immoral, hypocritical, sexist, homophobic, racist, xenophobic, wanting to take over society, hostile, childish, like sheep, rude, mean, arrogant, proselytizers, dangerous, manipulative, dishonest, noisy, irrational, antiscientific, not able to critically think and more. (Yancey 2015, 32-33)

We currently live on the mission field. And that is exciting.

John 15:20

"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you as well; if they followed My word, they will follow yours also." (NASB 2020)

We are here to make disciples and the field we are in, is ripe unto harvest. Back to Jerusalem. There are still many Jews who have stayed in town staying for the 8th day, the special Sabbath day holiday provided for in the Torah at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles. Many of them have decided about Jesus but others are on the fence.

Jesus intends to knock many of them off that fence and decide.

Some of your Bibles may have marks around 7:53 - 8:11 or some other notice. Even though this is in over 900 various manuscripts, there are some scholars who believe this was added in later. I am simply letting you know that, as I consider it to be part of the text.

The Greek sentence though does start in verse 53 so we will pick from there. John 7:53.

John 7:53–8:2

"And everyone went to his home. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. And early in the morning He came again into the temple area, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began teaching them." (NASB 2020)

The events of the prior day had ended with a rather protracted night business meeting taking place among the Pharisees. Being the 7th day of the Feast, this would not be unusual due to the Illumination Ceremony taking place after dark.

We see that a small crack has appeared in the previous uniform decision making. This crack is Nicodemus, obviously no longer part of the group think involving the rest of the elites.

They were obviously flustered over the events of the day as well as the inability of the Temple Police to be able to perform the arrest that they wanted. This is reflected in some of the overly broad and inaccurate



statements that they were making in order to defend their position. We conclude the day with them all going to their homes.

But we see that Jesus goes across the Kidron Valley to the Mount of Olives and there He spends much of the evening praying. Because of the Illumination Ceremony, it is not dark like normal.

Not all the Pharisees went home though. They had another plan in place to provide evidence, which they needed to contrive, to arrest and have Jesus killed. Or so they believed.

Jesus, after spending the evening with the Father, returns to the Temple and as soon as He enters the courtyard, He has a crowd begin to gather around Him, so He finds the right place there to teach, sits down and begins to do so. Some of them may have been there all night. Unlike today, where the students sit and the teacher stands to teach, in the Jewish culture of the day, the teacher would be seated, and the students would stand.

For those pharisees who were instrumental behind what takes place next, they had guessed correctly and were able to implement their scheme.

John 8:3–5

“Now the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in the act of adultery, and after placing her in the center of the courtyard, they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?”” (NASB 2020)

Jesus is seated teaching and there is a group around Him listening then in comes this group of officials, obvious from their attire, with Temple Police and they are dragging or carrying a woman who is either naked or possibly only covered in a blanket. Remember, He is teaching a large group of people.

Let’s consider this for a moment, the leadership hated Jesus so much, that they were willing to publicly embarrass and possibly cause the death of someone else. They did not know how He would react, but their hope was He would exercise mercy and give them something to nail Him with regarding not following the letter of the law. Having the scribes or rather the teachers of the law involved in this ensures that the appropriate interpretation will be brought to light.

So, before we go any further into the motives and techniques obviously used by the religious leadership, what does the law actually say. This is a violation of the 7th commandment by the way (Deuteronomy 5:18). Beyond that, there are instructions.

Leviticus 20:10

“If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.” (ESV)

Ok, that seems to be pretty clear. After a trial with the right number of witnesses and conviction, we see the punishment. This topic of adultery also gets reflected in one of Moses’ sermons too.

Deuteronomy 22:22

“If a man is found lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman. So you shall purge the evil from Israel.” (ESV)

So, the penalty, if caught, is death for both. If that were still the case today, it would seriously thin out the herd rather quickly.



Obviously, we can see why the unbelieving world dislikes the scriptures. “The requirement that both parties be caught in the act (found sleeping) is a protection against unfounded accusations, in light of the severity of the death sentence. The status of the man is not identified (whether married or unmarried), but the woman is described as another man’s wife, which makes it clear that the offence relates to the violation of the husband’s rights to procreate, endangering the orderly transmission of his estate to his heirs (Walton and Matthews 1997: 252).” (Woods 2011, 241)

What are the problems with the case that has been presented to Jesus? There are several glaring ones. Where is the man? I smell set up. This woman may have had a reputation and was enticed possibly to engage in this activity. Was the man an undercover Pharisee? We are not told who he is or where he is, but this is the first problem with the case.

Caught in the act means, they were, well in the act when the raid took place. In other words, this was a deliberately set trap. In other words, Exodus 23:1 “You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness.” (ESV) has just been violated.

There had been no trial, no warning of the penalty. On top of that, they no longer had the authority of the use of the death penalty without Roman approval.

This was all a set up. “Jesus faced a charge under either Roman law or the law of Moses. If he said “Stone her,” he would lay himself open to the charge of counseling action contrary to Roman law, which did not provide for a death penalty in such cases. If he said “Do not stone her,” he could be charged with offending against the law of God. The question was a loaded one.” (Morris 1995, 782) They knew His views and anticipated grace which they would then attack. He will surprise them.

One other thing, Rome could care less about anyone being punished for adultery since if that was enforced, it would mean many Romans facing the death penalty. This was engineered to place Jesus into a no-win situation and publicly embarrass Him. I love it when unbelievers think they can pull a fast one on God.

This poor woman has been illegally apprehended and summarily placed into the middle of a lynch mob so that the ring leaders could publicly embarrass Jesus and damage His reputation. Good luck with that.

They have decided on a war of wits with God while being totally and completely unarmed.

John 8:6

“Now they were saying this to test Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground.” (NASB 2020)

In the middle of the allegations being thrown out about this poor woman, Jesus starts writing on the ground. We are not told what it is He is writing, but I can make some guesses.

Perhaps He simply started writing out Exodus 23:1. Or perhaps He started writing down the names of all those involved in this illegal plot, to include the undercover pharisee.

Or maybe He began by writing down the name of each accuser. In the middle of this, He responds. They are watching Him write, as is the crowd.

John 8:7–9

“When they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.



Now when they heard this, they began leaving, one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman where she was, in the center of the courtyard.” (NASB 2020)

They simply will not let the matter drop. They want to engage Jesus in a discussion about alleged sin on their terms, not His. Not a really good place to be. The entire Jewish nation tried to engage with God in the past on their own terms and it did not end well for them as they went into exile in Assyria and Babylon. Jesus stands up and simply tells them, let the ones who are among you without sin, throw the first stone.

But if He has been writing Exodus 23:1 in the dirt, they then start wondering what He will say next about them being guilty of what He has written. Jesus does not say don't do it; He just says that the one who starts it must be without sin themselves.

In reality, it could possibly be even worse than that. He is not saying they need to be sinless, just free from sin as it pertains to the case as presented. The law requires that they must not be involved in the sin of the accused and Jesus has just made that crystal clear.

That means free from the sin of adultery. Free from the sin of setting the whole thing up. Free from the sin of being malicious witnesses. Free from plotting the murder of this woman as well as the murder of Jesus.

And Jesus has made His statement publicly in front of the people He was teaching.

That is the real problem here. They are all guilty of several sins simply to have reached this point with the accusations. Lying, deception, adultery, being a false witness, oppression all for just starters.

Then what if Jesus, when He goes back to His writing, begins writing down the various sins next to each name of those men standing in front of Him. Worse yet, He starts writing down the names of those women they have either been involved with in the past or lusted after. We just don't know. But whatever it was, coupled with what He said, hit. The eldest were the first to get it. They were now the ones in the no win situation.

For someone looking on, they see this woman forcibly brought in front of Jesus and hear all of the accusations being made. He listens, then stoops over and begins to write on the ground.

Those religious leaders who brought her in are insistent, what should we do with her. Jesus simply says that if anyone is without sin, then let them cast the first stone. But no one is without sin, because they all leave. Wow, the Pharisees and Scribes are sinners.

They always were, they only acted like they weren't. They were hypocrites and they have now been exposed to the entire crowd as such.

I have seen this same scene played out multiple times in churches around the country. The issue is not always immorality. As Pastor Chuck always said, beware of the three G's. Gold, glory, or gals/guys depending on who it is.

When the hammer falls, and it always will, it winds up being very public and many times hits the news. The local church is embarrassed, the cause of Christ is disparaged and those involved must walk away from the ministry they were involved in.

I have had folks ask that if they had been married by a disgraced pastor before exposure, was it valid? Yes, it is.



That is a good question though because in many cases, the ordination is rescinded as part of the fall out post discovery and dismissal.

The opportunity to repent is always there, but the trust has been broken.

For those watching this scene take place with Jesus, they have just had their preconceived notions about the Pharisees and the Scribes shaken to the core. They are sinners just like everyone else. They were placed, by Jesus, into the position of having to judge themselves.

Within a few minutes, all that is left is Jesus, the crowd, and this poor woman.

John 8:10–11

“And straightening up, Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on do not sin any longer.”” (NASB 2020)

Jesus, hearing the silence, straightens up, possibly erasing His writing exercise in the process and asks the woman “where did the accusers go?”

They had run in to Jesus convinced of their cause and proclaimed the guilt of this woman. But then after having the tables turned, wound up proclaiming their own guilt and as a result dropped the charges by leaving. That all escalated rather quickly, didn't it?

Jesus did not ask if she was guilty, she probably was. He just wanted to know where the prosecutors had gone. No prosecutor, no case. No witnesses, no case. Not having the required number of witnesses, no case.

Without any prosecutors, Jesus dismissed the case. This was His prerogative as her acting judge (and her future Judge). He only issued her a warning. She would have to stand before Him again in the future, but this was not the time that He wanted to pass judgment on her (cf. 3:17). He gave her mercy and time to change her ways (cf. 1:14). Thus He was not easy on sin. The ultimate reason that He could exempt her from condemnation is that He would take her condemnation on Himself and die in her place (cf. Rom. 8:1). (Constable 2003, Jn 8:10)

Jesus did say to stone her, but He also qualified the witnesses, as the law requires, and they were forced to recuse themselves leaving no other witnesses to remain for the trial. Jesus was there, but the law requires two witnesses. There was just one.

As the church, we need to remember this example of Jesus dealing with allegations and witnesses. In the church, because it is filled with sinners, there will be those situations from time to time where church discipline must be conducted.

Our culture loves to cancel folks on the first inkling of a charge, whether founded or not. That can make fact finding difficult.

As believers, we simply cannot be that way. Paul tells us “Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.” (1 Timothy 5:19, ESV)

In an era of social media, agendas, destruction by innuendo, gas lighting and at times, good old slander and lying, this has become hard to enforce. I used to work in the business of discovering and obtaining witnesses to an event. Three people can see and hear the same event and tell you three stories about it that do not even sound remotely the same, but in there exists a thread of truth that is the only common



factor. Yes, the accident did indeed happen in this manner. And you cannot, must not lead the witness. Ever.

One traffic accident I investigated was a simple turn and hit, but with a twist. The so-called cause of the accident, told me that she was turning from the west bound lane into the Dairy Queen when suddenly she was struck from behind by the truck that was in the other driveway of the Dairy Queen just a little further to the west. She was alleging that the driver had turned west bound but did so in the east bound lane hitting her from behind and from the left as she crossed the east bound lanes which had no traffic in them where she was looking, to the right.

I interviewed the other driver who said, "I was west bound in the east bound lane and this lady made an illegal turn in front of me." Did you pull out the second driveway after she started the turn? Yes.

The gentleman then signed the statement and then demanded what I was going to do about it. Since I was representing her insurance company, I told him. "We are going to sue you for all damages."

This is a lot along the lines of what the Pharisees have just done, only very publicly. All who were being taught had heard...everything.

The important thing though when collecting evidence is getting the witness testimony down as early as possible before they begin to embellish the facts, or others have suggested things or interpretations that have the same impact.

I discovered that if someone gets to the witness first and tells them what they saw and think they saw, then you may never get to the truth. Physical evidence does not lie, people do though. And this is the problem we face today in our current cancel culture.

Social media tells you what you heard or saw or what you thought you heard or saw. Then when you add a bit of gas lighting on top of it questioning the veracity of those who will not agree with the accepted narrative, then viola, you have someone canceled when they have in reality not done anything.

We cannot and must not be part of that.

The temptation to "like" something or agree with it, without having or knowing the real facts, is very real.

Back to the Pharisees, they realized what it was they were doing, and stopped. But those looking on did not have all of the facts and very well could also come up with a false conclusion that perhaps they too were involved in adultery. Probably not. But I can already visualize at least three tweets to the contrary resulting in headaches for all around.

So there are two messages here, the judgment heaped on those who are unforgiving and unrepentant and the forgiveness available to those who will stand before God with heads bowed and seek his mercy. A third message is also critical—when we are forgiven we are responsible before God to change our sinful ways and live righteous lives from that point on. (Osborne 2018, 207)

That did not finish the teaching taking place there in the Temple. Remember, the folks there have been there for all 7 days of the Feast of Tabernacles, and it is the morning of day 8.

As Jesus goes back to His teaching, He is going to once again, be making use of the events from the festival and some of the props associated with it that still might be standing.



There is one more event we need to be made aware of because Jesus is going to allude to it. That is the illumination ceremony, “the illumination ceremony, began on the second night and continued every evening through the rest of the feast. In Hebrew it was called Simhat Beit ha-Sho’eva, which loosely translated means, “the rejoicing at the place of water drawing.” Interestingly, it didn’t occur where the water was drawn, but rather in the Temple itself, in the area called the Court of the Women.” (Brickner 2006, 82)

This lighting ceremony was also something added after the nation returned from exile. It was to reflect the coming of and filling of the Temple with the shekinah glory as well as the departure of the Spirit which was written about in Ezekiel just prior to the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar.

“At the close of the first day of the feast the worshippers descended to the Court of the Women, where great preparations had been made. Four golden candelabras were there, each with four golden bowls, and against them rested four ladders; and four youths of priestly descent held, each a pitcher of oil, capable of holding one hundred and twenty log, from which they filled each bowl. The old, worn breeches and girdles of the priests served for wicks to these lamps. There was not a court in Jerusalem that was not lit up by the light of ‘the house of water-pouring.’” (Edersheim 1959, 283)

The dancing and singing would take up most of the night. At the conclusion of the evening, at the first crowing of a rooster, with great ceremony and singing they would head to the eastern gate.

Many are carrying torches as they do this. This is the path taken by the shekinah glory as He departed the Temple. “As they came to the eastern gate, they turned round towards the west (to face the Holy Place), and said: ‘Our fathers who were in this place, they turned their back upon the Sanctuary of Jehovah, and their faces toward the east, and they worshipped towards the rising sun; but as for us, our eyes are towards the Lord.’” (Edersheim 1959, 284)

The people longed for the day that the Glory would return. They were pointing to the day Messiah would come and God’s glory would once again fill His house. Little did they know what was about to take place. The Court of the Women was a wide, open space. In the center stood four giant candelabras, which, according to the Talmud, were approximately 50 cubits high (approximately 73 feet). Atop each candelabra were four bowls for lamps, a total of sixteen giant bowls, each to be filled with oil. (Brickner 2006, 83)

This ceremony, which took place each evening, pointed not only to the initial dedication of the Temple and coming of the glory under Solomon (2 Chronicles 7:1 – 3), it also pointed to the departure of the glory seen by Ezekiel (Ezekiel 10:18 – 19, 11:22 – 23) and then the return, also seen by Ezekiel, Zechariah and others (Ezekiel 43:1 - 5, Zechariah 14:3 – 4) into the millennial temple.

Here is Jesus, on the morning of the 8th day, these 4 large lamps still burning from the night before and some of those listening to Him were there. The entire event with the woman has taken place, and now Jesus returns to teaching. Once again, He will use what is around Him.

John 8:12

“Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; the one who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”” (NASB 2020)

Just as Jesus fulfilled the water libation ceremony as He is the source of living water. Once filled with the Holy Spirit, the light He provides is able to shine. Here Jesus says a familiar phrase. He says, I am. In the Greek text Jesus says I am the light of the cosmos.





With the statement I am, Jesus is identifying as being the one in the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). He will make this clear and very definitive here in chapter 8.

Jesus is the I am, He is God. When He says I am the Light, we lose a lot in the English translation. As we unpack this, we see the following:

- I am – the same one who was in the burning bush, God.
- The Light – This is singular. There is no other source of light possible. GO dis it, He alone and no one else is the source of light for the one who is seeking the truth. Jesus says I am the light.
- Of the world – in Greek the word used is cosmos. When Jesus says I am the light of the cosmos, He is 1) claiming to be God 2) asserting there is only one God and there is no other source of light anywhere and 3) as such He is the only source of light for all of creation. He is the source of light for all created life. We are told this up front by John.

When Jesus makes this statement, His listeners know what He is saying and claiming.

- He is the Servant of Isaiah 49:6 and 60:6 who will be a light to the Gentile nations providing salvation for the entire planet.
- He is the Word (John 1:1) and as such, He is also light to guide the path of those who follow (Psalm 119:105).
- He is the source of light at the end of the age (Zechariah 14:6 – 7).

Light denotes a relation, not being. Light is a term for life in the absolute sense, not as mere existence, but as possibility. It thus denotes salvation, cf. light and life in Ps. 36:9; 56:13. To see light (→ 313, 6 ff.) is to live, Job 3:16; 33:28, 30. Part of salvation is to be in the light. In the OT, too, light means self-understanding and freedom from care: "Light streams on the righteous and joy on the upright in heart," Ps. 97:11. (Conzelmann 1964-, 319-320)

Everything that the Illumination Ceremony pointed to, past and future, is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He is identifying with the cloud by day and fire by night.

When He came into the Temple compound that morning, He came through the eastern gate, the same gate the glory departed from.

The ceremony reflects a longing for the glory to return, the Glory is standing in the Court of the Women (John 8:20) telling them He is the light.

He is claiming to be God with His people, the source of protection, and the one who guides.

...when he claimed to be the light of the world in clear reference to the cloud of Israel's wandering, he was claiming not only that he was God with his people, or that he was the one who would protect them, but also that he is the one who gives guidance. Thus, when Jesus moves before us we are to move. When he abides in one place we, too, are to remain there. (Boice 2005, 617)

But this is a promise be made for those who are following Him. As we follow Him, the cloud, He is with us, we are protected, and He guides.

How do we become followers of Jesus Christ.

Since chapter 6 Jesus has claimed to be or provide:

- The bread of life for the one who comes to Him (John 6:35).
- Those who believe will never be thirsty (John 6:35).



- He has claimed to be the source of living water for those who come to Him. (John 7:37).
- He promises the Holy Spirit without measure to those who believe, (John 7:38)
- God. (John 8:12)
- The Light of the World (John 8:12)
- Keep us from darkness. (John 8:12)
- Light, Salvation, as a personal possession. (John 8:12)

And Jesus has said all of this is possible just by following Him.

Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

### **ABC’s of Salvation**

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.



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