



The Gospel of John: *Know Jesus and Live*

Part 24

John 7:53-8:11

Scripture?

This story “represents a floating narrative in search of a gospel home, whether Luke or John, but which was almost certainly not part of Johns’ original gospel.”¹

Reasons to not accept the narrative²

1. There are fourteen words not found elsewhere in John.
2. Standard vocabulary found in John not found.
3. Not found in any pre-fifth-century manuscripts.
4. Appears in a least five different places in early manuscripts.
5. Not referenced by any writing until the fourth century AD.
6. There is evidence that it was moved from the gospel according to the Hebrews.

There are a few things that point to the story being in John’s gospel then being removed.³

1. Papias, a disciple of the apostle John, seems to have known this story and to have expounded it. Says Eusebius: “The same writer (Papias) has expounded another *story about a woman who was accused before the Lord of many sins*, which the Gospel according to the Hebrews contains” (*Ecclesiastical History* III, xxxix, 17). It would seem, therefore, that Papias already knew this story, that he regarded it of sufficient importance for exposition, but that he did not find it in *John’s Gospel*. Was it never there, or had it been removed for certain reasons?
2. Augustine has stated definitely that certain individuals had removed from their codices the section regarding the adulteress, because they feared that women would appeal to this story as an excuse for their infidelity (*De adulterinis conjugii* II, vii). Closely connected with this is the fact that asceticism played an important role in the sub-apostolic age. Hence, the suggestion that the section (7:53-8:11) was at one time actually part of John’s Gospel but had been removed from it cannot be entirely dismissed.

John Calvin - It is plain enough that this passage was unknown anciently to the Greek Churches; and some conjecture that it has been brought from some other place and inserted here. But as it has always been received by the Latin Churches, and is found in many old Greek manuscripts, and

¹ Andreas J. Kostenberger, *A Theology of John’s Gospel and Letters*, 1957- (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 148.

² Kostenberger, 148.

³ William Hendriksen, *The Gospel According to John*, vol II, 1900-1982 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1953), 34-35.



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contains nothing unworthy of an Apostolic Spirit, there is no reason why we should refuse to apply it to our advantage.⁴

There is considerable doubt that this story is part of John's original Gospel, for it is absent from all of the oldest manuscripts. But there is nothing in it unworthy of sound doctrine. It seems best to view the story as something that probably happened during Jesus' ministry but that was not originally part of what John wrote in his Gospel. Therefore it should not be considered as part of Scripture and should not be used as the basis for building any point of doctrine unless confirmed in Scripture.⁵

Scenario

Jesus There to Teach

According to Luke 21:38 it was common for Jesus to go the temple early in the morning to teach.

And every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet. And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him. (Luke 21:37-38, ESV)

Pharisees There to Test

One of many occasions the religious leaders wanted to trap Jesus.

And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. (Matthew 16:1, ESV)

And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" (Matthew 19:3, ESV)

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25, ESV)

Test him – If Jesus told them to stone the woman he would be violating Roman law. Only the Romans could sentence a person to death. If Jesus let the woman go he would appear to be violating the Law.

The Accusation

The Law penalized the man and the woman caught in adultery. Where is the man?

⁴ John Calvin, Commentary on John – Volume 1, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom34.xiv.i.html> (December 23, 2013)

⁵ *The ESV Study Bible*, English Standard Version (ESV), Copyright © 2008 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. All rights reserved.



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If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. (Leviticus 20:10, ESV)

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. If there is a betrothed virgin, and a man meets her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry for help though she was in the city, and the man because he violated his neighbor's wife. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. (Deuteronomy 22:22-24, ESV)

Jesus' Response

He Writes

What did Jesus write? Why did Jesus write?

Any answers are pure speculation and should be dismissed.

He Speaks

Who is without sin?

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23, ESV)

Who can say, "I have made my heart pure; I am clean from my sin"?' (Proverbs 20:9, ESV)

Verse 7 along with Matthew 7:1 is referred to over and over to prohibit moral judgments.

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." (Matthew 7:1-5, ESV)

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? (Romans 2:1-3, ESV)

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs



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from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. (Matthew 7:15-20, ESV)

Jesus was saying he who is without sin in this situation cast the first stone. He was not saying that you must be without sin in order to make a moral judgment.

He Forgives

Condemn – A legal term that indicates a sentence of judgment by a lawfully constituted court.⁶

When Jesus admonishes her to sin no more he acknowledges that she did sin. This is similar to what Jesus said to the man he healed at the pool of Bethesda.

Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you." (John 5:14, ESV)

How could Jesus ignore the punishment specified by the Law?

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:17-20, ESV)

Jesus can forgive because he takes our sin and its condemnation and gives us his righteousness.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. (John 3:17-18, ESV)

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement

⁶ NIV Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible, Copyright © 2003 by Zondervan



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of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:1-4, ESV)

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:21-26, ESV)

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21, ESV)