

#68 “THE WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY”

John 7:53-8:11

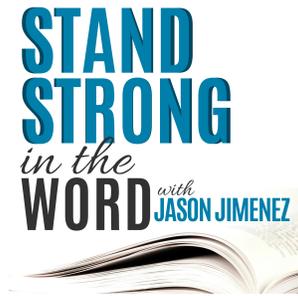
(Disclaimer: Most early manuscripts omit this text. However, it is reasonable to conclude it was a matter of composition in the book of John; not a matter of conflation.)

The Feast of Tabernacles/Booths just ended and Jesus proceeds to the Mount of Olives. He, then, returns to the temple to teach the people. The Pharisees and scribes were still angry over the fact Jesus wasn't arrested (see John 7:44-48), and that many in the crowd believed He could be the Messiah (see John 7:40-41). This attempt with the adulteress woman was a ploy to get Jesus to break the law, and therefore, have Him arrested (and eventually executed).

JOHN 7:53-8:11

8 ⁵³ They went each to his own house, ¹ but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. ³ The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst ⁴ they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” ⁶ This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷ And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸ And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰ Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” ¹¹ She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”

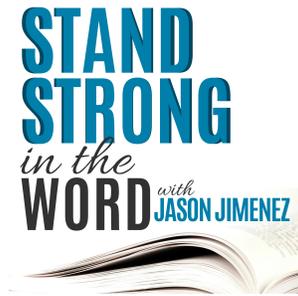
- 1. *They went each to his own house, ¹ but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.*** This is in reference to the crowd that contemplated if Jesus was the Messiah or not (see 7:11-52). After the long week of celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles and debating over the identity of Jesus; the people eventually disbanded—and went home.
- 2. *² Early in the morning*** (at daybreak) ***he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down*** (position of authority; as a teacher) ***and taught them.*** Despite the attempts to have Jesus arrested; He still returns to the temple to teach. This shows the boldness and relentless nature of Jesus.
- 3. *³ The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught*** (seized in her shame) ***in adultery, and placing her in the midst ⁴ they said to him,***



“Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” ⁶ This they said to test (trying to trip him up) ***him, that they might have some charge to bring against him.*** The scribes and Pharisees either concocted the story or they setup the whole thing to get the woman to commit adultery. It’s interesting that the man the woman was with is never mentioned and brought before Jesus. Furthermore, according to the law, there had to be two eyewitnesses that saw the crime being committed. ***Scribes and Pharisees***—“foiled in their yesterday’s attempt, and hoping to succeed better in this.” ***Moses commanded us to stone such women***—In the middle of the Feast of Tabernacles (just a few days prior to this)—Jesus responded to the religious leaders in the temple courts, ***“The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood. Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me (John 7:18-19)?”*** Now, all of a sudden, the scribes and Pharisees bring up Moses as a way to pretend they follow the laws of Moses (see Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22).

- A. David Guzik writes, “It is true that adultery was a capital offense under Jewish law, but the rules for evidence in capital cases were extremely strict. The actual act had to be observed by multiple witnesses who agreed exactly in their testimony. As a practical matter, virtually no one was executed for adultery, since this was a relatively private sin.”
 - B. ***So what do you say***—Another ploy to try and get Jesus to break the law. If Jesus said to release her—He would be undermining the law and condoning adultery. If Jesus said to execute her by stoning—then He would be perceived as cruel; and would be breaking Roman law (who had final execution rights).
 - C. ***This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him***—The scribes and Pharisees were breaking the law the whole time in efforts to get Jesus to break the law so that way they could indict Him as a lawbreaker. Not only that, but they also publicly exposed a woman’s sin; all the while ignoring their own sin.
4. ***Jesus bent*** (stooped) ***down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷ And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸ And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground.***
- A. ***Jesus bent down***—A lowly posture. Jesus was probably attempting to identify or relate with the woman brought before Him in her shame.

¹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 143.



- B. **Wrote with his finger on the ground**—Perhaps Jesus was writing the sins of the accusers.
 - C. **He who is without sin**—Jesus was not implying sinlessness (only He is sinless); but a person who consciously acquits him/herself of any such sin. Through this whole ordeal, the scribes and Pharisees committed a greater sin by setting up this whole elaborate scheme at the expense of this woman. Jesus' response cuts directly to their hearts and exposes their harsh judgment.
 - D. **Be the first to throw a stone**—Jesus was calling out the actual eyewitnesses to the crime. If this really happened (as they say), then they were to step up and initiate the stoning. But where's the man she was caught with? What would it look like for only the woman to be stoned and not the man? Jesus flips the situation against the religious leaders. He took a legal issue and turned it into a moral one.
 - 1) **Deuteronomy 17:7**, "The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst."
 - E. **Bent down and wrote on the ground**—Perhaps Jesus' way to allow the accusers to leave unobserved in their shame.
5. ⁹ **But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.** ¹⁰ **Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned (to render a verdict of guilt) you?"** ¹¹ **She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."**
- A. **Neither do I condemn you**—The religious leaders abused the law; while Jesus extended mercy and grace.
 - B. **Go, and from now on sin no more**—Jesus didn't grant permission or evade adultery. He forgave her and challenged her not to continue in that lifestyle.