

## Section 97

### The Strange Case of the Woman Caught in Adultery

## A Major Textual Question

- The oldest copies available on the Gospel of John *do not* contain this story
  - 7:52 flows naturally into 8:12
- When this story does appear, it shows up in different places
  - Some place it at the end of the gospel
  - Others place it after Luke 21:38
  - How should we handle this kind of issue?

## Conclusions

- My own conclusions regarding this passage . . .
  - It was not a part of the original text of John
  - The pericope is based on a genuine historical incident and is accurately portrayed
    - It matches the personality of Christ
    - It's style and form are clearly 1<sup>st</sup> century
    - It was thought authentic enough to preserve, even though there was no consensus on where it should appear
  - I would teach or preach from the passage

### John 8:1-11

**B**ut Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?"

### John 8:1-11

They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."

Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.

### John 8:1-11

Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

"No one, sir," she said.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

## What is this teaching?

- Should the woman have been stoned?
  - **Deuteronomy 22:22-24**  
If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel. If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death—the girl because she was in a town and did not scream for help, and the man because he violated another man's wife. You must purge the evil from among you.

## However

- Extralegal
  - No trial or appropriate authority present
  - Male offender not present
    - Leviticus 20:10
  - Jews were not permitted to execute criminals under Roman Law
    - John 18:31

## The Writing in the Sand

- There is much conjecture and little certainty – but the specific mention of Jesus doing this two separate times seems to hint at its importance
  - It could have been meaningless marks
  - It could have been names
    - Of those present?
    - Of individuals with whom some of those present had secretly committed adultery?
    - Of other sins (greed, deception, etc.)?

## Those Without Sin

- Is Jesus speaking of sins related to this incident
  - Normally, there would have been no witnesses. That there are so many suggests either those present passively condoned, or perhaps even created, the situation they observed

## Those Without Sin

- Is this suggesting anyone who has sinned cannot participate in legal proceedings against a criminal?

## What is this teaching?

- Are Christian ethics ever "situational"?  
That is, do we adjust ethical or moral actions based on the unique circumstances of an individual
  - **Yes?**
    - Can lead to moral ambiguity
    - Where do you draw the line? Any line?
    - Where is "justice"?
  - **No?**
    - Can lead to rigid legalism
    - Where is compassion, grace, or mercy?