

Bite Size Bible Study

Caught in Adultery pt 1 #179

By Pastor Lee

¹ but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.
² At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts; where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ⁶ 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. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

⁹ 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. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

¹¹ "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." John 8 NIV

This is a familiar story we have heard many times before, but it brings up many questions that various people have tried to answer.

Where was the male adulterer (It takes two to tango)?
What was Jesus writing on the ground?
Why did His writing send the accusers away?
Why was it the older men that went away first?
What does John expect us to learn from this story?

The general explanation goes something like this:
We will gloss over the fact that the man is not accused and Jesus wrote the sins of the accusers in the dirt. The older men probably had more sins than the younger but all were sinners and should not cast stones at others for their sins (the penalty for adultery was stoning). Finally Jesus did not condemn her, but gave her warning to not continue in sin.

All of these points have validity and it would be good to put them into action, but John may have been telling this story with deeper levels of understanding than we get from this general explanation. In this two-part study, I hope to bring you some other possibilities that may not be obvious at first reading.

First let's look at verse one. Notice that it doesn't start with a capital letter, meaning that it is a continuation of a thought from chapter 7. There is much to learn from chapter 7, but what is important to this discussion is verses 37-39.

On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

This reference to water and drinking has behind it a tradition that occurred during the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*). Water (rain) for the next year's crops was a matter of life and death – no crops, no food.

The great climax of the entire Festival (*Sukkot*) is called *Hoshana Rabbah* (which literally means "on the last day of the great festival). Throughout the seven days a special priest (*cohen*) had carried water in a gold pitcher from the Pool of Siloam which was poured into a basin at the foot of the alter by the chief priest (*cohen hagadol*). This was to symbolize a prayer for rain as well as pointing to the future time when the Holy Spirit (*Ruach HaKodesh*) would be poured out on the people of Israel. On this last day the water pouring was accompanied by the priests blowing golden trumpets, the Levites singing sacred songs and the ordinary people waving palm branches and chanting the *Hillel* (Psalms 113-118).

In the *Hillel*, the words "please save us" led to the day be called *Hoshana Rabbah* or the Great Hosanna. This prayer has Messianic overtones. It was a prayer for salvation from sin, because this was considered to be the absolute final day when one could have their sins forgiven and be prepared for the new year.

It was in the midst of this water pouring, trumpets blasting, palm waving, psalm chanting and ecstatic joy on the part of the people seeking forgiveness, and the presence of all 24 divisions of the priesthood that Jesus made His proclamation in the Temple courts. *If anyone is thirsty, let him keep coming to me and drinking! Whoever puts his trust in me, as the Scripture says, rivers of living water will flow from his inmost being!* In this statement Jesus was declaring the He was the answer to their prayers.

Next time we will see that water was not the only liquid flowing freely during the Feast of Tabernacles and what is the importance of writing in the dirt?

Cornerstone Community Church

PO Box 654 Lemon Grove, CA 91945-0654 – www.cornerstonecommunityonline.org