

September 24, 2023

“Jesus Prevents Two Stonings”

John 8:1-11, 56-59

Lesson 4

Intro

Today's text follows Jesus into the temple again. It is the day after the events we covered last week in John chapter 7. The lesson is set up to cover two potential stonings which Jesus prevents. The verses between these events record further conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders.

Read John 8:1-2

1. vs. 1: A night spent alone
Jesus had gone up to the Mount of Olives the night before when others had gone home. He often went away by Himself like this to pray (Luke 5:16, 6:12, 9:18)
This hill offered an elevated view back toward the temple
2. vs. 2: Returning to teach again
Jesus goes back to the temple early in the morning and prepares to begin teaching again. People gathered to listen to Him again.

Read John 8:3-6

1. vs. 3: Interruption
The teaching session is interrupted by Jewish leaders bringing a woman into the middle of the crowd.
She had been caught in adultery (sex that violated a marriage covenant)
People teaching from this passage often make much of the fact that the woman was brought in but the man she was with wasn't. Scripture doesn't dwell on this at all. If some important point needed to be made, Jesus likely would have made it. We will choose to emphasize what God has chosen to emphasize.
2. vs. 4: The accusation
The Jewish leaders announce the charge against her.
She was caught in the act of adultery.
It doesn't appear there was any doubt of her guilt
3. vs. 5: Legal question
The leaders point out what everyone likely knew; the Law of Moses commanded that anyone who committed adultery be stoned to death.
Their question to Jesus is, “What do you say?” The reason for the question is revealed in the next verse
4. vs. 6: The set up
The whole purpose was to trap Jesus. They appeared to think He either had to confirm that they were right or contradict the Law. Either way it would give them an advantage. Their concern doesn't seem to be with the woman or her situation, but simply to find a way to have an accusation against Jesus.

Even though Jesus demonstrated many times that He knew their thoughts, the leaders never seemed to take that fact into account when they plotted against Him.

Read John 8:7-11

1. vs. 7-8: Jesus responds
Jesus first simply writes on the ground with His finger. What He wrote isn't recorded, so that must not have been all that important.
When they keep asking, Jesus gives them an answer they hadn't anticipated. Whoever is without sin can throw the first stone at her.
After giving this answer, He goes back to writing on the ground
2. vs 9: Walking away
The accusers begin to leave, starting with the oldest. People have put forward many theories on why it happened in this order. Scripture doesn't see fit to explain it any further.
Eventually only the woman and Jesus are left.
3. vs 10-11: Jesus asks a rather obvious question
Jesus knows the answer to His question. He is simply asking it for emphasis. She answers with respect. She uses a title of respect that can be translated as either sir or lord.
Jesus says He doesn't condemn her either, but He does tell her to stop this sin. He never questions what she deserves, but He does choose to give her mercy instead.
He didn't violate the requirement of the Law. He just put it off until He gave His own life to satisfy the penalty she deserved.

Read John 8:56-59

1. vs. 56: Jesus challenges their thinking about Abraham
Jesus told them that Abraham rejoiced at seeing His day.
He knew fully how this would confuse and even anger them
2. vs 57: Completely missing the point
Instead of picking up on the fact that Jesus is showing them further evidence He is the Messiah, they instead try to make Him sound unreasonable
Jesus mentioned Abraham seeing His day (seeing what would come) and instead they make it into a question about Jesus seeing Abraham.
3. vs. 58: Jesus answers honestly
Even though they were just trying to find a way to make Jesus look bad, He answered them honestly regarding whether or not He had seen Abraham.
Jesus goes beyond just answering and chooses an answer they won't accept.
"I am" is the answer God gave when Moses asked for God's name (Exodus 3:14)
4. vs. 59 Things get rocky
Rather than actually weighing the validity of Jesus' statement, they just react
They had seen Him perform miracles. That should have made them listen to His teaching and claims.
Jesus doesn't allow them to stone Him. It wasn't the right time or the right mode of death.
He just slips away from them.

Application: Jesus often emphasized mercy over judgment. He could have condemned the woman caught in adultery and could have identified and condemned the man she had been with as well. He didn't. We can be quick to condemn sin in others while excusing our own. We should focus on ourselves first instead. It is also worth noting that Jesus didn't excuse her sin. He didn't brush it off. He told her that her lifestyle needed to change. He called it sin.

From the second section where Jesus avoids being stoned, we can see that Jesus had the power to escape when He chose to. He did the same thing in Luke 4:28-30. He could have done the same thing when He was arrested before He was crucified. He could have fought back at any time He chose (Matt 26:53).

In fact, He knew when He spoke to the woman caught in adultery that He would soon die to pay the due penalty for her sin. Jesus went to the cross willingly, out of love for all of us. That is something we should never forget.

Prayer:

Precious Father, thank you for your mercy toward us. We confess that we are guilty and we don't deserve it. Thank you for the sacrifice Jesus made to pay the penalty for our sins. Help us to remember to be just as gracious and merciful to others around us. Help us to see and make the most of the opportunities you give us to share this good news with them as well. In Jesus' precious name, amen.