

John – An In-Depth Study

[Part 11]

John 8:1-11 [NIV] *“But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered round 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?’ 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. 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.’”*

Again the scribes and Pharisees were seeking to discredit Jesus, in this incident they thought they had Him inescapably on the horns of a dilemma.

The law was very clear on this matter of adultery. [**Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:13-24**]

From a perfect legal point of view the scribes and the Pharisees were perfectly correct.

If Jesus agreed to what the law stated two things would have happened.

Jesus would lose the reputation He had for love and mercy.

Also, if Jesus recommended death He would immediately come into collision with Roman law, for the Jews had **no** power to pass or carry out the death sentence on anyone.

Also, if Jesus’ decision was to pardon the woman He would be said to be teaching people to break the law given by God through Moses.

But Jesus turned this trap of the scribes and Pharisees into trap for them.

What was Jesus writing in the dust?

We don’t really need to know the answer to this.

The pause allowed the Pharisees and scribes time to state and re-state their case.

What they were actually doing was digging a larger pit for them to fall into.

Jesus’ simple response hit the mark, the Greek word translated “sin” is “*anamartētōs*” meaning without even the desire to sin.

Undoubtedly there was silence following this remark, and gradually the woman’s accusers left the scene.

Jesus did **not** condemn the woman accused of adultery but neither did He ignore or condone her sin.

Jesus told her to leave this life of sin, make a new start to your life.

This incident shows the contrasting attitude of the law-based Pharisees and Jesus Christ.

Scribes and Pharisees – they were the legal experts of the day.

Problems were taken for decision to them.

Their whole attitude was critical, censorious and condemnatory.

Matthew 23:23 [NIV] *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices, mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law, justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practised the latter, without neglecting the former.”*

This was the major problem that these experts of the law had, **no** mercy.

The scribes and Pharisees conceived their function was to descend on any breach of the law with savage and unforgiving punishment, they never dreamed of their function as to help a sinner to repent of their sin.

Romans 7:7 [NIV] *“What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, ‘Do not covet.’”*

This was the reason for the law to show us what sin is.

1 Timothy 1:8-10 [NIV] *“We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers, and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine”*

This is the right use of the law, such a concept was far from the minds of the scribes and Pharisees.

This incident shows vividly the attitude the scribes and Pharisees had towards people.

This woman was **not** in their eyes a person only a thing they were using for their own purpose to destroy Jesus Christ who did not bow to their authority.

God uses His authority to love people into goodness, to God **no** person is ever looked upon as a thing.

Jesus Christ’s attitude –

Matthew 7:3-5 [NIV] *“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”*

One of the commonest faults in life is that so many of us demand of others that which we never even try to fulfil ourselves, condemn faults in others which are glaringly obvious in our own lives.

Matthew 7:1 [NIV] *“Do not judge, or you too will be judged.”*

This is why we should **not** judge others, we do **not** ever have all the facts, nor do we know the motives behind the actions of another person.

Jesus gave this woman a second chance, Jesus is always intensely interested in **not** only what a person has been but what they could become.

Jesus confronted this woman with a challenge, that of a sinless life.

This woman knew what she had done was wrong, the Pharisees had left her in no doubt of this, what was very new to her was the pity that Jesus had shown to her.

This was **no** easy forgiveness but the woman was being pointed by Jesus to a life of goodness of which she had never dreamed.

This incident showed Jesus' belief that human nature can change with His help.

This incident involves a warning, unspoken but implied, Jesus confronted this woman with a choice that we all face, an eternal choice, go back to your old ways or reach out to a new way with Him.

This is an unfinished story, for every life is unfinished until we stand before Jesus Christ and His future judgement. [**2 Corinthians 5:10**]

John 8:12-20 [NIV] *“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’ The Pharisees challenged him, ‘Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.’ Jesus answered, ‘Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no-one. But if I do judge, my decisions are right, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two men is valid. I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me.’ Then they asked him, ‘Where is your father?’ ‘You do not know me or my Father,’ Jesus replied. ‘If you knew me, you would know my Father also.’ He spoke these words while teaching in the temple area near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no-one seized him, because his time had not yet come.”*

The part of the temple where Jesus was making this statement, was where offerings were made. [**v20**] From dusk to dawn this court was ablaze with great candelabra symbolising the pillar of fire that led the people of Israel through the desert. [**Exodus 13:21-22**]

In this context Jesus called Himself the Light of the World.

The pillar of fire represented God's presence, protection and guidance.

Is Jesus the light of our world?

What does it mean to follow Jesus Christ?

As a soldier follows his captain and commander.

As a slave that follows the master we love.

As a child that follows our elder brother who is our hero and saviour.

When Jesus claimed to be the Light of the World the Pharisees reacted with hostility.

The Pharisees argued that Jesus' claim was legally invalid, because He had no other witnesses.

Jesus responded that His confirming witness was God the Father Himself.

Jesus and the Father made two witnesses, the number required by the law. [**Deuteronomy 19:15**]

This claim of Jesus would sound to the Jewish authorities even more astonishing than it sounds to us.

To the Jews it would sound like a claim, as indeed it was, that Christ was the Messiah and doing the work that only God could do.

To the Jewish mind light and God were specially associated.

[Psalms 27:1; Isaiah 60:19; Job 29:3; Micah 7:8]

This association caused the Jewish rabbis to declare that the name of the Messiah is light.

The first argument of the Pharisees was a lack of witnesses.

The second argument of the Pharisees was Jesus' right to judge.

Human judgement never sees below the surface of things, this was the judgement of the scribes and Pharisees.

God's judgement is based on all the facts, hidden facts of motive and heart that are only seen by God. **[Psalms 139:1-13]**

Jesus tells the crowd and the scribes and Pharisees that He was **not** here to judge but to show God's Love for all human beings.

Jesus comes again at the Last Day as King of kings and the perfect judgement of God. **[2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 15:4]**

Finally Jesus bluntly told the scribes and Pharisees that they had no real knowledge of God. The fact that they did not recognise Jesus for Who He was is proof of this.

John 8:21-30 [NIV] *“Once more Jesus said to them, ‘I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come.’ This made the Jews ask, ‘Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, “Where I go, you cannot come”?’ But he continued, ‘You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am [the one I claim to be], you will indeed die in your sins.’ ‘Who are you?’ they asked. ‘Just what I have been claiming all along,’ Jesus replied. ‘I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world.’ They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father. So Jesus said, ‘When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am [the one I claim to be] and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.’ Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him.”*

Jesus is telling those who don't accept Him that He is going away, and when He has gone they will realise what they have missed, but it will be too late.

Implicit in this argument of Jesus is the truth that our time and life is limited and certain opportunities which come do not always return.

Because of this every opportunity is also a judgement on our lives.

When Jesus spoke of going away He was referring to His return to God the Father's throne.

That was precisely where other people could not follow Him.

To continue to refuse to accept Jesus Christ as the Son of God and our Only Saviour will cause us to *“die in our sins.”* **[Ezekiel 3:18; Ezekiel 18:18]**

The Greek word used for sin is *“hamartia”* which means literally *“to miss the mark.”*

We come across the word world [Greek *“kosmos”*] often in John's gospel message, and he uses it in different ways.

1) World is opposite of heaven –

Jesus sent into world by God the Father. [John 1:9; John 3:17]

Jesus is **not** part of this world. [John 8:23]

The world is changing, passing, transient life we live, all that is human as opposed to all that is divine.

2) Yet the world is not separated from God –

Created by God. [John 1:10; Colossians 1:16]

Sustained by God. [Colossians 1:17]

3) The world is the object of God's Love. [John 3:16]

4) There are things wrong in the world –

Blindness in the world. [John 1:10]

World does not recognise their Creator. [John 1:10]

World does not know God the Father. [John 17:25]

The world hates followers of Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ. [John 15:18-19]

The world brings trouble and lack of peace to the followers of Jesus Christ. [John 16:33]

Yet there is good news for the world, the love that Jesus Christ has for the world, has and will overcome all the problems the world has. [John 16:33] The Greek word translated “*overcome*” is “*nikaō*” meaning to subdue, prevail over or conquer.

Jesus Christ came into the world with a cure for all its ills but if the world rejects His treatment the world will die as a result of its disease, sin.

John 8:31-32 [NIV] *“To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’”*

We have in these two verses the complete picture of true discipleship.

a) Discipleship begins with faith in Jesus Christ –

Faith in what Jesus Christ says is true, accepts what Jesus says about the love of God, accepts what Jesus says about the terror of sin.

Accepts in faith what Jesus Christ tells us about the meaning and reason for human life.

b) Discipleship means constantly remaining in the word of Jesus –

Listening to it preached, reading it in the Christian Bible, not just once but again and again, meditating on what we read and hear.

To shut our minds to the Word of God, the Christian Bible, means the end of our discipleship.

c) Discipleship involves obedience to the Word of God. We read the Christian Bible to find out what God wants us to do in our lives.

d) Such an approach to God's Word, the Christian Bible, will by the power of the Holy Spirit working in us, lead us to understand the real values of life. [John 16:13]

e) Discipleship brings us freedom –

Freedom from sin by accepting the sacrifice of our Master, Teacher and Saviour as a substitute for our deserved death.

Freedom from fear of death. [**Hebrews 2:14**]

Freedom from the influence of Satan and the deception with which he blinds this world to the gospel message. [**Revelation 12:9; 1 John 5:19**]

Freedom from influence of other people, a disciple of Jesus Christ ceases to care what people say and think of us, only cares of what God thinks of us.

John 8:33-37 [NIV] *“They answered him, ‘We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?’ Jesus replied, ‘I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it for ever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know you are Abraham’s descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word.’”*

This claim, that is still made by the Jewish nation, is almost ludicrous considering their bondage in Egypt, Babylon and present Roman yoke.

Jesus although He knew what slaves they had been and were still shows a more devastating bondage that they with their ritualistic background little dreamt of, slavery to sin that leads to death.

The physical example of slavery would be well known it was the son who could set the slaves of the father free after his father’s death, or cause them to remain in slavery to him.

The only way they could be truly free from slavery is through the words of the Son, but they were not accepting His words.

John 8:38-47 [NIV] *“I am telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence, and you do what you have heard from your father.’ ‘Abraham is our father,’ they answered. ‘If you were Abraham’s children,’ said Jesus, ‘then you would do the things Abraham did. As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. You are doing the things your own father does.’ ‘We are not illegitimate children,’ they protested. ‘The only Father we have is God himself.’ Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me? He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.’”*

These statements of Jesus were dealing a death blow to the claim that is all-important to the Jewish nation.

Jesus made a distinction between hereditary children and true children of God.

No person, church or nation can live on the achievements of the past, this is what the Jews were trying to do.

Matthew 3:9-10 [NIV] *“And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”*

John the Baptist had already given a similar warning to the Pharisees and Sadducees. [**Luke 3:8-9**]

The fact that the Jewish religious leaders were trying to kill Jesus was proof that they were not acting as Abraham would have acted.

When a messenger from God visited Abraham, he welcomed him with all eagerness and all reverence. [**Genesis 18:1-8**]

The fundamental thing about Jesus is that He brought a message from God the Father, **not** His own opinions.

The actions of the Jewish religious leaders was showing just who their “*father*” was, a spirit being who murdered and lied, Satan.

The reaction to this statement still further showed what spirit was influencing them.

The test of any human being is how they react to Jesus and His words.

In the final analysis a person will only hear what they wish to hear.

The first recorded murdered, Cain, was inspired by Satan. [**Genesis 4:6-8**]

Through Satan who tempted Eve, sin entered into the world of humanity and with it death.

Satan loves falsehood [**Revelation 12:9**] and falsehood hates the truth, this is why the Jewish authorities hated Jesus and what He was preaching.

Jesus’ claim to be sin-free was **not** challenged by the Pharisees.

John 8:48-58 [NIV] *“The Jews answered him, ‘Aren’t we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?’ ‘I am not possessed by a demon,’ said Jesus, ‘but I honour my Father and you dishonour me. I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge. I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.’ At this the Jews exclaimed, ‘Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that if anyone keeps your word, he will never taste death. Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?’ Jesus replied, ‘If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.’ ‘You are not yet fifty years old,’ the Jews said to him, ‘and you have seen Abraham!’ ‘I tell you the truth,’ Jesus answered, ‘before Abraham was born, I am!’”*

Jesus did **not** challenge to being a Samaritan for He had already been accepted by some of the Samaritans. [**John 4:7-42**]

Jesus did challenge being demon-possessed, for His whole life was to fulfil the will of God His Father and bring honour to Him.

Abraham was told by God that all nations [all humanity] would be blessed. [**Genesis 12:1-7; Genesis 15:1-2**]

Abraham had been able to see this through the eyes of faith.

Jesus, a descendant of Abraham, blessing all humanity through His death, resurrection and now rules as our High Priest, bringing the offer of salvation from eternal death.

The final statement by Jesus in this encounter with the Jewish authorities was a powerful claim to His divinity.

Not only did Jesus claim to have lived before Abraham but undeniably claimed His divinity by applying God's holy name to Himself.

Exodus 3:13-15 [NIV] *“Moses said to God, ‘Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?’ God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” God also said to Moses, ‘Say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name for ever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.’”*

Because of this claim that Jesus made, the Jews in accordance to the law [**Leviticus 24:16**] for blasphemy, were about to stone him to death.

It is ironic that they were really the blasphemers, cursing and attacking the very God they claimed to be serving.