

John 8:1-11

This story in the Bible is referred to as the *pericope adulterae*. Early manuscripts do not have this account, but later manuscripts have this story of the adulterous woman at various places in the gospel according to John and even in the gospel according to Luke.

Verses 1-2

The mention of Him sitting down to teach is consistent with how the rabbis would teach. They would not stand up and teach like modern day preachers and teachers. There are many verses in the Bible that show that Jesus being a rabbi sat down to teach including the sermon on the mount ([Matthew 5:1](#)) and in the synagogue ([Luke 4:16-21](#)).

Verse 3

As Jesus was in the middle of teaching at the temple the scribes and Pharisees interrupt Him by bring a woman who had been caught in adultery to Him in the center of the court. The question that must be asked is “where is the man that was involved in this act?” Although we do not know the reason the man is not present, one can speculate that he could have been in their group or someone of a high rank/status that they were trying to protect. They were not concerned about this woman in any regard, but rather were willing to bring her to public shame and humiliation to trap Jesus. This was a set up.

Verses 4-5

The trap is the set for Jesus is to make Him choose between the Law/Jews and the Romans. The Mosaic law indicates that the penalty for adultery was death for both involved. The fact that the man is not brought indicates that they are not really concerned about the Law as they claim or concerned about the people they are to be the religious leaders to, but rather are only concerned about trapping Jesus not matter the cost.

- [Leviticus 20:10](#) ‘If *there is* a man who commits adultery with another man’s wife, one who commits adultery with his friend’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.
- [Deuteronomy 22:22](#) “If a man is found sleeping with a married woman, then both of them shall die, the man who slept with the woman, and the woman; so you shall eliminate the evil from Israel.
- [Deuteronomy 22:24](#) then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city and you shall stone them ^[a]to death: the girl, because she did not cry out for help *though she was* in the city, and the man, because he has violated his neighbor’s wife. So you shall eliminate the evil from among you.

The Romans gave the territories they conquered some freedom in regards to how they governed and how they worshipped to a certain extent. The Jews were allowed to bring about judgment and punishment among themselves, but they were not permitted to execute and put someone to death. The permission and act to have someone killed via capital punishment must come via the Romans. That is why Jesus was sentenced to death by Pontius Pilate and Caiaphas. The scribes and Pharisees are aware of this, and they think they have Jesus is an unescapable dilemma. If Jesus agrees with the Law and says she should be stoned, the scribes and Pharisees will go the Roman authorities and report that Jesus is bypassing Roman authority by stating this woman should be killed. They would also slander Him by saying He has not compassion or kindness toward this woman. If He says that she should not be stoned, they will then accuse Him of not holding to the Law and as a result cannot be the Messiah.

Verses 6-9

This verse confirms that this is a test as to have grounds to accuse Him. This is the only place in the Bible that we have record of Jesus writing anything. However, there is great mystery and speculation as to what He wrote in the sand. He doesn’t answer their question immediately, but rather stoops down and writes on the ground. They become impatient by His lack of immediate answer and continue to ask Him for His answer while He is writing in the sand. He straightens up and states “he who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” He then stoops back down and continues to write on the ground. The mystery that people have speculated on what He wrote on the ground. We will never know what He wrote, but we can still speculate. Some believe (including myself) that He wrote sins of those who were accusing this woman that they thought no one knew about (maybe women’s names as

they were guilty of this very sin they were accusing her of). When they see what He is writing they begin to leave one by one starting the eldest. Jesus had showed they were disqualified from judging.

- **Deuteronomy 17:6-7** On the ^[a]testimony of two witnesses or three witnesses, the ^[a]condemned shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the ^[b]testimony of *only* one witness. ⁷The hands of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall eliminate the evil from your midst.

The only one who stood qualified to judge and throw the stones was left with her. Jesus was the only who met the criteria of being without sin as He was perfect, fulfilling all righteousness. If He would have stoned her to death, He would have been just in doing so. God gave the Law and it was perfect and just.

- **Romans 7:12** So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

Verse 10

- This woman was guilty of sin and deserved death as this was justice according to the Law.
- This woman was standing in front of the only One who met the criteria to judge and condemn as she was standing before the Righteous Judge of all the earth.
 - **Acts 17:31** because He has set a day on which He will judge ^[a]the world in righteousness ^[b]through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all people ^[c]by raising Him from the dead.”
 - **John 5:22** For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son
 - **2 Timothy 4:1-2** I solemnly exhort *you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: ²preach the word; be ready ^[a]in season *and* out of season; correct, rebuke, *and* ^[b]exhort, with ^[c]great patience and instruction.
- Jesus, the righteous judge who has the authority to condemn, sovereignly had mercy on this woman who deserved justice because of her actions and sin. She deserved justice, she received mercy and compassion.
- Let us as Christians imitate our Lord as we are to be compassionate people.

Verse 11

- She heard the most amazing words she could ever hear: “I do not condemn you.”
 - **Romans 8:1-4** Therefore there is now no condemnation at all for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life ^[a]in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³For what the Law could not do, ^[b]weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of ^[c]sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk ^[d]according to the flesh but ^[e]according to the Spirit.
- She is then instructed to go and sin no more. He is telling her to not continue in the same lifestyle and in the same sin. This is the instruction and exhortation He gives Christians regarding our sanctification. We are to walk in newness of life (**Romans 6:4**) as we are new creatures in Christ (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). We predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ (**Romans 8:29**) and are to grow in sanctification.

As Christians we were like this woman as we came before Christ naked, guilty, and deserving of death. He would have been perfect not just to stone us, but much worse by sending us to the lake of fire for all eternity. Although we were guilty and deserving of justice, He had compassion and showed us mercy. Those who have forgiven and by faith alone been justified have been clothed in the righteousness of the Righteous judge of the world. And we like this woman heard the most beautiful and life changing words that could ever be spoken by Jesus “I do not condemn you, from now on sin no more!”

