

The Gospel of John

Cast the First Stone

John 8:1-11

Christ's enemies are not going to let an opportunity to trap Christ in front of a large crowd. Using the opportunity of the feast, they set a seemingly perfect trap. With no apparent way out, Christ turns the tables on them.

The Setting

- Immediately following the events of Chapter 7 and the Feast of Tabernacles
- Takes place in the Temple courtyards as Christ teaches the gathered crowds.
- The religious leaders are going to set a trap for Christ

The Story

- Jesus stays at the Mount of Olives overnight – vs. 1
 - This avoided crowds and danger
 - There is no record of Christ ever staying in Jerusalem overnight until His arrest
- Jesus taught the people in the outer courts of the Temple - vs. 2
- The trap is set – vs. 3-5
 - The penalty in the Old Testament was death for both adulterers – Deuteronomy 22:22
 - Problem – Where was the man? Didn't they catch them in the act?
 - Any answer would seem fatal to Christ's ministry:
 - Affirming the Mosaic death penalty would break Roman law
 - Disregarding Mosaic Law would discredit Him with Jews
 - To dodge the question would make Him seem weak and indecisive
 - “They were hoping that He would explain away the seventh commandment [adultery], in order that they themselves might break the sixth [murder].” – Alfred Plummer
- Jesus does not answer immediately and instead writes in the dust – vs. 6
 - This action is slight at the accusers by ignoring them.
 - Scripture does not tell us what He wrote, but some theories include:
 - Sins of the accusers
 - Something like was written by God in Daniel 5:5
 - Their names – Jeremiah 17:1,13
 - Note – that same finger wrote the Ten Commandments – Exodus 31:18, 32:16
- After being prodded, Christ speaks in response to their question – vs. 7

- “The lesson of this incident is the rebuke of the censorious spirit of this woman’s accusers. Christ did not mean here that the woman was not guilty of sin, but that she was no more guilty than her accusers.” – B.H. Carroll
- Jesus continues to write, and the many accusers leave – vs. 8-9
- Jesus sees no man left to accuse her – vs. 10
 - There cannot be condemnation under the Mosaic Law without witnesses – Deuteronomy 19:15
- Christ does not condemn her either and she leaves – vs. 11
 - He is in no way condoning adultery here.
 - Christ’s mission was to save, not condemn – John 3:17