



Metro Calvary – Roseville CA  
Richard Cimino  
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# The Gospel of John

## The Woman Caught in Adultery

John 7:53-8:11

**Related Topics:** Inspiration of Scripture; Transmission of Scripture; Translation of Scripture; Application of Scripture; Jerome; Augustine; Scribes; Pharisees; Attempting To Trap Jesus; Adultery; Law of Moses; Destructiveness of Adultery; Punishment for Adultery; The Wisdom of Jesus; The Tenderness of Jesus; The Basis of Forgiveness; Jesus the Friend of Sinners;

This morning we pick up in our study of the Gospel of John in Chapter 8. We are going to look at the Verses 1-11 in which we have the record of a Woman caught in the act of adultery and brought before Jesus. This account actually begins back in Chapter 7, verse 53.

Some of you might see in your Bibles a footnote at Chapter 7, verse 53, that says that the oldest manuscripts do not include John 7:53-8:11. I think that it is worth taking time to explain that a little bit before we get to the text itself.

We need to begin with the fact that the True and Living God has REVEALED Himself to fallen man — SPOKEN to fallen man. **(For a detailed study on the subject of Divine Revelation and the Inspiration of Scripture please see the resource from the CREDO Series — REVELATION: God Speaks)**

Apart from this divine REVELATION fallen man would be left to SPECULATION as to the nature of God and the way to God. God does not leave us to human speculation. God desires to reveal himself to us — and He has done that through scripture. Here's how we got the Bible. God would inspire individuals to write portions of the Bible. God did not inspire them to record ideas — but He inspired the very words of the Scripture. We believe this because Jesus Himself referenced the smallest markings of the Scriptures (the crossing of

a t – the dotting of an i) were inspired. That's the concept we get from **2 Timothy 3:16** where it says that *all scripture is God breathed — inspired by God*. It says in **2 Peter 1:20-21** that no one who wrote scripture wrote it from their own vantage point or their own self interest — but rather they were *carried along by the Spirit of God*. So God reveals himself — inspires someone to write a portion of the Scriptures.

Once that Word of God was written down there was a desire among a great number of people to read what God has communicated. That brought the necessity of **transmission** — meaning that someone had to sit and hand copy what God had inspired the author to write. This would happen over and over and over. Lots of manuscripts — or lots of copies — get distributed to lots of people so that they can read it.

Over time — people in other languages wanted to read the Word of God as well — but they didn't have access to it because it was originally written in a language that is foreign to them. So what happens at that point is **translation** occurs. People sat down and translated the Scriptures from one language to another. The Bible we hold in our hands this morning is a translation. Originally the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek, and some smaller sections in Aramaic. Men and women DIED so that we could read the Bible in English.

Once we have a copy of the Scriptures in our hands we can sit down with that translation and we **interpret** it and make **application**. We open it up to figure out what it means. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would lead us into truth — and as we are instructed by the Holy Spirit — we then apply it to our lives.

All of this begins with God's thoughts being **revealed** — God's thoughts being **revealed** — God **inspiring** people to write them down. Then people make copies. Then other translations are made from those copies. Finally you and I read them and with the help of the Holy Spirit we interpret what they say — and then apply them to our life.

Some have suggested that maybe we shouldn't trust the manuscripts or the copies that we have. But that is patently false because throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament and the teaching of Jesus, we see men and women being taught from **manuscripts**. A great example of this is Ezra in the book of Nehemiah.

***Nehemiah 8:4-8** <sup>4</sup>And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. . . . <sup>5</sup>And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. . . . <sup>7</sup>the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places. <sup>8</sup>They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.*

Another is Josiah

***2 Kings 22:8-11** And Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord." And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. . . .<sup>10</sup>Then Shaphan the secretary told the king, "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it before the king. <sup>11</sup>When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes.*

Most importantly — Jesus treated those manuscripts as authoritative — and so should we.

***Luke 4:16-17** And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. <sup>17</sup>And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,*

The section that he read was a copy, handed down over the course of hundreds of years.

All that to say that the section that we're going to study tonight in John's gospel does not appear in the earlier manuscripts. It shows up 300+ years later in church history. So people are wondering — *should that be there? Why do the early copies not have the story and the later copies do? How do we explain that?*

FIRST — For someone to say that these passages are not in the original manuscripts is intellectually dishonest — because nobody's ever seen the originals — nor have they seen the copies that predate the earliest extant copies. The academic discipline of textual criticism is not free from theological presuppositions and predispositions.

SECOND — A man named Jerome (late 4<sup>th</sup> century – early 5<sup>th</sup> century) took the Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament and translated them into Latin. His translation is called the Vulgate. Jerome included this section of John’s gospel. Jerome made that inclusion because he believed that it was an accurate, truthful portrayal of an actual event.

THIRD — One of the early church fathers named Augustine — Augustine says in the third century the reason that this part was taken out of John is because so many men were afraid that their wives would think they could commit adultery and Jesus would just forgive them and no big deal. So what **may have happened** in the early church was they took this section out of John’s gospel because people were abusing and misusing it — and at a later date the Church realized that they didn’t have any right to be messing with scripture in that way — and so it was re-introduced in the manuscripts as we have it in its present form.

All that said — It still is in complete agreement with all the rest of scripture. And in addition to that there’s no debated doctrine.

**QUOTE: F.B. Meyer** — *It reveals in our Saviour's character a wisdom so profound, a tenderness to sinners so delicate, a hatred of sin so intense, an insight into human hearts so searching, that it is impossible to suppose the mind of man could have conceived, or the hand of man invented, this most pathetic story.*

All that is said so that you know what that little footnote in your Bible means.

So here we go.

<sup>53</sup> [They went each to his own house, <sup>1</sup>but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. <sup>2</sup>Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them.

Now that was the practice in the day of Jesus — the teacher SAT and the students STOOD!

<sup>3</sup>The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst <sup>4</sup>they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery.

FIRST — Just try to imagine THAT kind of an interruption! This was not the first time for Jesus. Once (**Mark 2; Luke 5**), when He was teaching in a house in Capernaum the roof starts to tear apart and dust and stuff starts falling down — and right in front of him a man is lowered down on a stretcher from the ceiling!

But this would have been pretty crazy. The Pharisees have caught this woman in the very act of adultery. They didn't say — *Well we caught you. How about we go up to the temple and let everybody know?* And she didn't say — *That would be a great idea. Let's go on up there and just tell everybody I was committing adultery this morning.* No. They drag her up there to the temple court where Jesus is by the treasury (**v.20**) teaching. Everybody's listening. And here comes this big ruckus! They're dragging this woman — kicking and screaming — scratching — a wreck from the struggle. The crowd must have parted as they brought her in. And it says they bring her right into the midst of the Bible study. Imagine that happening here this morning.

**<sup>5</sup>Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?** **<sup>6</sup>This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. <sup>7</sup>And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” <sup>8</sup>And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. <sup>9</sup>But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. <sup>10</sup>Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” <sup>11</sup>She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”**]

## **THEOLOGICAL, HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT**

**We NEED SOME very important THEOLOGICAL, HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT** — Without which we will never get the intensity of this moment. The huge impact of this event can easily be lost on us because adultery is so commonplace in our culture. In fact, in our culture adultery is practically viewed as a virtue; it is a form of self-expression and freedom and liberation. Just this week the series TV series “HOUSE” involved the practice of

“open marriage.” In our culture — Adultery is NO BIG DEAL! It was a HUGE THING to these people.

HISTORICALLY — Israel had a very clear understanding of the severity with which God viewed adultery. In Biblical understanding it is a grievous sin, the wage for which can only be death.

THEOLOGICALLY — Adultery is such a significant issue that God includes it as one of the Ten Commandments (7<sup>th</sup>)

*Exodus 20:14 “You shall not commit adultery.*

Also in the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment

*Exodus 20:17 “.....you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife*

In the Old Testament adultery was a capital offense. Adultery is as grievous to God as premeditated murder! Adultery robs God of His glory!

It’s an offense to God because in marriage a man and a woman come into covenant relationship before God and with one to another. Adultery is the most severe breach of that covenant possible.

It’s an offense to God because of the devastating impact of adultery on society. **The wages of ANY sin is death.** And though all sin is equal — not all sin is equally devastating in its effects. Adultery destroys families — it destroys your spouse — it destroys your children. And in destroying families it also rips away at the fabric and the foundation of the people of God and of the society that is built on those families.

It’s an offense to God because it destroys the person committing the sin. In the first place all adulterers are liars because they have to lie to themselves to commit the sin. The person committing the sin KNOWS they shouldn’t be doing it — so they lie to themselves about why they can and should. Having lied to themselves they then have to live a lie. It destroys your character — it destroys the image of God in which you were made!

It’s an offense to God because it robs Him of His glory in the Church. The pastor, the deacon, the usher, the known Christian commits adultery and people say — *Why shouldn’t I? I trusted them. They were my mentors, my mom, it was my dad. I*

*looked up to them and they said Jesus this, and Jesus, Jesus that — and then they did this! Why shouldn't I do it? It's just damaging.*

Adultery is damaging to the Church when the pastor commits that sin. I assume that no one here wants me to commit adultery on my Valerie. I've seen churches where the pastor or church leaders fall into sin and then so many people become mistrusting. They feel like kids that have gone through divorce — *I'll never trust again. Why should I ever trust anybody? The Church is full of phonies.* That's what you get. It's damaging to the church. Adultery is damaging to the church when **you** commit that sin — because often adultery involves another member in the church. Adultery is damaging to the church because you need to be strong spiritually for the other members of the Body. I need you to be strong spiritually. I need you to pray for me. I could go that way except for God's grace. I need you to be alive in Christ. My wife and I – we need you praying for us, and the other pastors do also. This church needs you to be on fire for Jesus Christ for us to healthy. It's damaging to the cause of Christ, it's damaging to the church (universal and local) and it's damaging to your witness, because how are you going to share the power and love of Christ with someone else when you're living that way?

We cannot overstate how grievous the sin of adultery is.

**WHAT IS ADULTERY** — Fornication is any sexual involvement outside of the covenant of marriage. Adultery is sexual involvement outside of the bonds of covenant marriage. You can be single and commit adultery by being sexually involved with a married person.

**PUNISHMENT FOR ADULTERY IN OLD TESTAMENT** — It is such a grievous sin that it was a capital offense in the Old Testament. If a woman committed adultery she was to be stoned to death. Her accuser would throw the first stone and then everyone else would throw rocks at the woman until she was bloodied and beaten and left for dead.

**The Mishnah** (the oldest authoritative postbiblical collection and codification of Jewish oral laws, systematically compiled by numerous scholars (called tannaim) over a period of about two centuries. The codification was given final form early in the 3rd century ad by Judah ha-Nasi. The Mishna supplements the written, or scriptural, laws found in the Pentateuch. It presents various interpretations of selective legal traditions that had been preserved orally since at least the time of Ezra (c. 450 bc) SOURCE: Britanica On Line Encyclopedia) prescribed a particular way of putting to death men who were guilty of committing adultery. They would take a man into a public place and they would bury him at least up to his knees in dung. And then they would take a large towel

and they would put it around his neck. And there would be one man on each side and they would choke him to death — and then let go of him and let him fall in the dung and leave him there for dead.

You could actually commit adultery during your betrothal. The betrothal was the one year period before the wedding — during that time you were legally married though you have not consummated your relationship and become one flesh. If you committed adultery during the betrothal, it was a capital offense that would cost you your life. That's why we read in the beginning of Matthew's gospel — that when Mary was found to be with child during the period of her betrothal — Joseph seeks to divorce her (put her away) because he wanted to spare her life. One source said that if a single girl went out and had sexual relations with a married man, or if a betrothed woman committed adultery, they would take her to her father's home — place her on the porch of her father's house — and they would stone her to death in front of her father and her brothers. Why? Because as the head of the home it was his obligation before God to govern and oversee and protect her, to make sure that she was not out committing adultery, destroying families, and ruining lives. Again — things couldn't be more different in our culture. Parents teach with their lives and their words that sexual sin is at least acceptable, and is actually advisable. The media, the culture we live in, with a single blasting voice declare that every imaginable form of sexual sin is fine — that *Sexual sin is NO BIG DEAL!*

**THE POINT** is that it was adultery was no little deal in Israel.

By the way — It is still a serious issue. In the New Testament the death penalty is still in play! Not by stoning or strangling in a pile of dung — but eternal death! Eternal separation from God in the Lake of Fire that burns forever! There are lots of places in the New Testament where we are told that those who habitually live in sexual sin will not inherit the Kingdom of God ([Galatians 5:19](#), [Ephesians 5:5](#), [Hebrews 13:4](#), [Revelation 2:22; 21:8](#)). There is no place in the Scriptures where you are given the understanding that you can claim to be a Christian and go out and do whatever you want sexually.

SO — the historical and cultural CONTEXT of this event is that if you committed adultery you would be put to death if caught.