

The Gospel of John

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Chapter Eight

The verses John 7:53-8:11 are not in the oldest manuscripts and some commentators, such as F. F. Bruce, do not include it in their books. It does not appear in the later Greek manuscripts until after A.D. 900. I include it here since it is included in most translations. Some translations place it at the end of the book of John and some place it after Luke 21:38. The quote "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone" has become a frequent statement by people found guilty of some crime as they appeal to the common sin of all people. I accept it as a reasonable historical truth about the actions of Jesus but not as part of the inspired text.

John 8:1-5 NASB

*But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. (2) Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them. (3) The scribes and the Pharisees *brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, (4) they *said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. (5) "Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?"*

From 7:53 we know that most of the group surrounding Jesus went to their own homes but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. He apparently spent the night there and the next morning He went again into the temple. He used the Court of the Gentiles on numerous occasions so this event probably occurred during one of His trips to Jerusalem, perhaps at the Feast of Dedication (10:22) or the Final Passover (12:12). It seems that this was a trap set by the Sanhedrin. They would not normally have been present there early in the morning but they made their way to the front and presented what they thought would be an impossible dilemma for Jesus to try to solve. Since the woman had been caught in the act there was no question about her guilt. The Law was clear also in this case:

Lev 20:10 NASB '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 shall surely be put to death.

Deut 22:22-24 NASB "If a man is found lying with a married woman, then both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel. (23) "If there is a girl who is a virgin engaged to a man, and another man finds her in the city and lies with her, (24) then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city and you shall stone them to death; the girl, because she did not cry out in the city, and the man, because he has violated his neighbor's wife. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you.

Note that the scribes and Pharisees broke the law in bringing only the woman to Jesus for the law required the stoning of both people. The dilemma was that either answer would get Him into trouble. If He disagreed with the penalty He would have been charged with contradicting the Law of God and He would be liable for condemnation. But if He agreed with the penalty He

would lose His reputation for compassion and He could be reported to Rome as inciting the Sanhedrin to independently exercise the death penalty, which they were not allowed to do.

John 8:6-8

They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. (7) But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." (8) Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

There have been considerable discussions about these verses. This is the only record of Jesus writing. What did He write? We cannot know what He wrote for John did not tell us. Most people think that He began to write sins of the people questioning Him and that seems like a very good guess considering the reaction of the people. Jewish law was that if such a stoning were allowed the ones who witnessed the act would have to cast the first stones. But nobody came forward as witnesses and it would be very strange for there have been witnesses. Someone just happening to come upon the act would be very unusual but possible. If someone had been planted there to witness the act then they would be guilty of perpetrating a hoax to trip Jesus and they would be guilty also for they had to condone the act to be there to see it. Each person would then have to either admit to being a witness or explain how they were there or they had to withdraw their question. If the adultery did not actually occur but was just a trap they would have to admit that and lose their credibility with the people. Jesus then removed Himself from the discussion by continuing to write on the ground.

John 8:9-11

When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court. (10) Straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" (11) She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more."]

Either the older ones had more sins to confess than the younger ones or they were wiser than the younger ones so as not to attempt to feign a profession of righteousness. So Jesus was left alone with the woman. Jesus then asked her if anyone was present to condemn her and she replied that nobody condemned her. Jesus did not condemn her either but He also did not proclaim her innocent. Instead Jesus told her to go and sin no more. These eleven verses end the insertion of this event into John's record.

John 8:12-14

Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." (13) So the Pharisees said to Him, "You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true." (14) Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.

We cannot know exactly when these series of events happened but the time could be immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles when Jesus was still in the city. The reference to light could also be related to this feast for the Menorah was lit during the celebration to cast its light over the Court of the Women where Jesus was teaching. That light was extinguished at the end of the celebration but His light would continue forever. The second "I am" statement is also reminiscent of the prologue: *"In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."* (John 1:4-5 NASB) The Pharisees were quick to challenge the claims of Jesus. If all that Jesus was doing was testifying about Himself such could be criticized for anyone may make bold claims about himself. The Pharisees are actually throwing back to Jesus His words from earlier (John 5:31), which He validated by saying that He was sent by the Father (John 5: 32-47). Jesus knows that He comes from the Father (John 5:36) and will go to be with the Father (John 13:1). However He is also in the Father and the Father is in Him (John 14:11) so even by the letter of the law His testimony about Himself is to be accepted. But the Pharisees thought that, at the best, He was just a teacher come from God (John 3:1) so they did not recognize His supreme authority. All judgment has been given to Him by the Father (John 5:22) and He had been sent to bring salvation (John 3:17).

John 8:15-16

"You judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. (16) But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me.

The Pharisees judged by appearance only (1 Sam 16:7) and Jesus was not using that superficial basis of judgment. The judgment of Jesus was true because it is based on His relationship with the Father.

John 8:17-18

"Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. (18) I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me."

The law to which Jesus refers is stated in Deut 19:15 and He calls it "your law" for they would have used it to judge the testimony of Jesus for Himself. Jesus states that the second witness is the Father who had sent Him.

John 8:19-20

So they were saying to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also." (20) These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.

They thought that they knew where He came from but, if they were thinking He was referring to Joseph, they did not know where he was. We do not know if Joseph was dead at this time for we have no Biblical statement of him after the 12th year of Jesus. If they knew he was dead, they may be asking where he was after death. At any case, they did not understand the reference made by Jesus for the Father being God. Jesus states that they did not really know who He was for, if they did, they would know that He was referring to God the Father. The treasury was part of the Court of the Women where 13 containers were placed to receive donations for various dues. Six

of these containers were for voluntary offerings and it was in this location that Jesus saw the widow put her offering (Mark 12:41-44). Jesus is not recorded as thinking that someone was about to seize Him but John states that nobody did seize Him because the time set by the Father for such to occur was not yet.

John 8:21

Then He said again to them, "I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come."

The word "sin" is singular and so means their sinful state and without believing in Jesus they will remain forever under the wrath of God (John 3:36) and so can never go to where He is going. He knew that they would seek Him in vain after His death and resurrection as they would try to understand what happened to His body. But with no understanding of His status and function they would be separated from God and under His wrath forever.

John 8:22-24

So the Jews were saying, "Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?" (23) And He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. (24) "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

Previously they had wondered if He was getting away from them by visiting the Dispersion: *"The Jews then said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find Him? He is not intending to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks, is He?"* (John 7:35) Now they wonder if He is talking of committing suicide. The Sadducees did not believe in life after death so they would have thought that He meant that in death they could not go to find Him since there was no life after death. The Pharisees did believe in a life after death so the two parties might have also argued about their theology. Jesus interrupted their discussion to explain to them what they were not capable of understanding. He explains that they are of two different realms. Jesus is from the state above and they are only of the state below, meaning the world. Those who belong only to the realm below have no access of themselves to the realm above: *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."* (John 3:6) Only if they are born again will anyone have access to the heavenly state. The only access for those of the lower realm to the upper realm are those who have been born again by belief in the One who originated from the upper realm, came to the lower realm, and then ascended to the upper realm thereby providing a path between realms (John 3:13). Jesus here uses the plural form for "sins" and so refers to all their thoughts, words, and actions that are the fruit of their sin state. When Jesus states that "I am He" or "*ego eimi*" He is stating that He is the link between God and His people forever and reminds us of the same statement in *"Who has performed and accomplished it, Calling forth the generations from the beginning? 'I, the LORD, am the first, and with the last. I am He."* (Isa 41:4) When He states that they will die in their sins He is probably referring to the second death that awaits all who are not in Christ: *"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."* (Rev 21:8)

John 8:25-26

So they were saying to Him, "Who are You?" Jesus said to them, "What have I been saying to you from the beginning? (26) I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world."

This reply is appropriate to the statement by Jesus, *ego eimi*, and His reply is very difficult to interpret. Some translate the reply as "Why should I speak to you at all?" but that does not fit the context. This NASB translation probably fits the context best for Jesus has been telling them that He is sent by the Father, He can only do what the Father says to do, and He can also only say what the Father wants Him to say. Their question could also be scornful as they did not believe Him and, since He had none of their formal education, they could be not expecting an answer but put forward the question scornfully. Jesus had received enough information about their lack of understanding and their attitudes that He could judge them. However He is limited by the desires of the Father and so He will only speak to the world what the Father tells Him to say.

John 8:27-29

They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father. (28) So Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. (29) And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him."

They had no understanding of who Jesus really was and could not understand the meaning behind His words. This lack of understanding of spiritual matters was also mentioned by Paul: "*But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.*" (1 Cor 2:14) Jesus was aware of His total mission and He knew that it would end with His death and resurrection when many people would then know the truth. However many would not believe even when He is resurrected. He again affirms that He is doing nothing of His own initiative but only perfectly carrying out the plan of the Father. Jesus also affirms that the Father has not left Him alone but is with Him. Even when the cross was looming ahead Jesus had the knowledge that the Father was with Him: "*Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.*" (John 16:32) This knowledge of the continued presence of the Father was probably one reason that Jesus was so distraught when the Father deserted Him when He took the wrath of the Father for the sins of His people: "*About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"*" (Matt 27:46)

The sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross is what sets apart Christianity from religions of the world. No other religion offers a solution to the sin problem so that God no longer holds the person guilty of his sins. All other religions only offer an example of someone who was supposedly a great teacher but who does not atone for sin. Thus the lifting up the Son of Man is the pinnacle of the mission of Jesus to the world.

John 8:30-32

As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him. (31) So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; (32) and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

The validity of this belief must be questioned due to the response of the people just before and during His crucifixion. Even the demons believe (James 2:19). We were told that some believed after the signs of Jesus (John 2:23) but the fact that many left Him after His statements about eating His flesh and drinking His blood (John 6:66) leaves us with the impression that such belief was superficial until after His resurrection. The reply of Jesus seems to mean that He knew many of them were not disciples of His for only those who persevere are true disciples of Jesus. Those who persevere will know the truth that sets them free from sin and into the realm of the Spirit. Verse 32 has often been misused by the world in many areas. The truth here is that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God as He stated many times in His ministry. This truth is not any area of philosophy but that Jesus is the Son and the Lord and Savior of the person who has that truth. The true disciple also makes the truths of Jesus his basis for life actions while he lives. A false belief only serves to enslave a person but the truth of Jesus sets people free from sin as they live for Him.

John 8:33-36

They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free'?" (34) Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. (35) The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. (36) So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."

They again demonstrate their total lack of understanding of the words of Jesus. They seem to have forgotten that their ancestors had been slaves in Egypt and in Babylon as well as numerous oppressions during the time of the Judges. But now they thought of themselves as free even though they were still under Roman authority! Jesus has to explain to them that there are other types of slavery. The language construction makes it clear that Jesus refers to the continual practice of sin that enslaves rather than the occasional sin. A slave has no guarantee of a continual relationship with the house he serves, whereas a son does have a relationship with his house forever. Jesus then states that He has the authority to make someone free from sinning so that he will be a son and thus free forever. The hope for real freedom cannot be obtained by any ancestry of Abraham but by the conferring of a relationship with God by Jesus.

John 8:37-41a

*"I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. (38) "I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father." (39) They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus *said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. (40) But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. (41) You are doing the deeds of your father."*

Jesus did not dispute their physical descendancy but their actions betrayed a lack of moral relationship to Abraham. In verse 38 Jesus contrasts what He has seen with His Father with what they heard from their father. As we will read later, Jesus is referring to their father being the devil. They try to correct Jesus by saying that Abraham is their father but Jesus told them that their actions do not correspond to even the teachings of Abraham, much less The Father, God.

John 8:41b-

They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God."

They may have heard about the circumstances of His birth from Mary that could have led them to think that He was born by fornication since she and Joseph had not consummated their marriage when Jesus was conceived. They could have then been sneering at His physical birth and supremely claiming to be born naturally by the plan of God.

John 8:42-43

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. (43) "Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word.

Jesus tells them that if God was their Father they would certainly love Him for He was a representative of the Father. He had been sent to the world to bring light into darkness but they do not understand because they still prefer the darkness. Jesus understood that their physical hearing was not deficient but they were still not understanding what they were hearing.

John 8:44-45

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (45) "But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.

Jesus then went right to the source of the problem. They could not understand Him because they were of the family of the devil rather than of God. He then categorizes the devil because He has known him from his beginning. The devil has always been a murderer and there is no truth within his character. He lies because he is a liar and all who lie do so demonstrating that they are one with him rather than one with the Father. Since Jesus speaks the truth they cannot believe Him since they are only capable of hearing what the devil has implanted into their conscience.

John 8:46-48

"Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? (47) "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God." (48) The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"

Only a sinless person could ask such a crowd for evidence of any sin in his life. If He had ever sinned then someone in the crowd could have offered some evidence of that sin. He knows that

He speaks the truth but since their father is the devil they can only understand lies that originate with the devil. All who are in the family of God would recognize the words from God but since they are not of God they cannot understand His words of truth. Their actions and words contradict their spiritual claims of serving God. The way they phrased their question implies that they had asked this question before. John states in 7:20, 8:52, and 10:20 that Jesus was accused of demon possession. The Samaritans had different interpretations of the Pentateuch than the Jews and they were more lenient in allowing other beliefs to be included in their religion. Since Jesus differed in interpretation with the Pharisees on several occasions they assumed that He was a Samaritan.

John 8:49-51

Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. (50) "But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges. (51) "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death."

Jesus denied the accusation of having a demon and emphasized that He honored His Father and that they dishonored Him. Someone with the attributes the Pharisees accused Him of possessing would certainly be seeking his own glory but Jesus denied that also and then stated that there is only One who seeks and judges, meaning the Father. He then added a phenomenal statement regarding death. This is the mission of Jesus as He came to destroy the work of the devil (1 John 3:8) begun in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:17). An even fuller statement concerning this mission appears later in His promise to Martha: “*Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, (26) and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?*” (John 11:25-26). Peter is recorded as saying that Jesus has ‘words of eternal life’ (John 6:68) so he did have some understanding of the mission of Jesus. To see death, like to see the Kingdom of God (John 3:3), means to experience it fully. The Second Death (Rev 20:6) yields the person to an eternity of death and the Christian is guaranteed to never see that event.

John 8:52-53

The Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.' (53) "Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?"

The reply of the Jews is understandable since they could not understand the words of Jesus. They were convinced now that He was demon possessed. Since Abraham, the originator of the nation, died as well as the prophets, they could not see in their history any fulfillment of this claim to not die. To taste death also means to fully experience it. Certainly those mentioned by the Jews also will not participate in the Second Death. To the Jews it seemed that Jesus was lifting Himself above their great prophets and they were correct about that although they did not believe it.

John 8:54-56

Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God'; (55) and you have not come to know Him, but I

know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word. (56) "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."

If Jesus were glorifying Himself, that glory would be nothing (John 5:31) but with the Father glorifying Him the meaning would be clear. The Jews claimed allegiance to God but their statements and actions reveal a lack of knowing Him. Jesus says that He knows God and He would be a liar if He said that He did not know Him. Jesus not only knows God but also keeps His word. Jesus then added another statement that was sure to raise the ire of His opponents. He says that Abraham, your father, rejoiced to see the day of Jesus arrive.

John 8:57-58

So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" (58) Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

The Jews then reacted as their literal minds dictated. They knew that Jesus was not physically old enough to have seen Abraham. Jesus had actually said that Abraham saw Jesus and was overjoyed to see the day of the Lord. Jesus replied with the affirmation *ego eimi* that was used in John 8:24, 28. Jesus echoes the language of the God of Israel: *"Who has performed and accomplished it, Calling forth the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD, am the first, and with the last. I am He."* (Isa 41:4).

John 8:59

Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.

This last statement was indeed blasphemous to the Jews who did not understand the truth that they were in the presence of God the Son. They then were ready to inflict the penalty prescribed in Lev 24:16. However this was not the death planned by the Father for the Son so He passed out of their sight and left the temple. This is the second time John tells us that Jesus mysteriously left the area (John 7:30).