

III. The Controversy Regarding Jesus Christ. (5:1 - 12:50)

C. Just After The Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem .

The plan to take Jesus and restrict his influence on the people failed (Chapter 7). Now a specific “plot” is devised to entrap Jesus to 1. Diminish his affect upon the people, and 2. Ensnare Him with the Roman government.

7. The Woman “Taken” In Adultery (8:1-11)

a. (v.1) Jesus went to Mt. Olives to recuperate his humanity. (Lu. 21:37 confirms this practice of our Lord) A mile East of Jerusalem. Gethsemane was to the West, and Bethany, home of Mary and Martha, was on the East.

b. (v.2) Jesus is back in the temple teaching in the morning (day break). People are drawn to Him even this early.

c. (v.3, 4) His antagonists interrupt this teaching session with “breaking news.” A “woman” was taken in the act of adultery, and they position (bringing / dragging) her publically in the midst of the teaching session. The probability is that this act of adultery was “staged,” (designed, plotted) in a manner to produce numerous material witnesses to catch Jesus between the horns of a dilemma. Also, where is THE MAN?

d. (v.5) They quote the “the letter of the law,” without any heart or desire of restoration for the woman. (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22). Punishment was death. The entire audience knew that this law had never been applied literally; and that the Sanhedrin had not enforced it because the Roman’s had taken from the nation the power of “capital punishment.”

e. (v.6) It was a trap. They sought grounds for some FORMAL accusation.. Let Him show leniency and they would accuse him of deliberately ignoring and repudiating the authority of the Law of Moses. Let him affirm stoning, then they were ready for immediate execution, and the responsibility of such violation of Roman jurisdiction then fell upon Jesus.

But, Jesus did neither. He did not fall into their trap. He stooped down (gave the appearance of indifference) and wrote on the ground.

f. (v.7) After He wrote on the ground, he stood and spoke. Christ refused to assume the part of a civil magistrate. He lifted the discussion from the judicial to the MORAL sphere. “He who is without sin (This same particular sin, Albert Barnes), cast the first stone.” (Deut 17:6-7) In O.T. times the witnesses were the

first to start the execution. Jesus applied the principle of Matthew 7:1, hypocritical judging.

g. (v.8) He stooped again and continued writing. The narrative would not suggest that every one of these accusers had been in this time guilty of like offence, but ἀναμάρτητος must at least mean that he was free from the desires which might lead to the commission of such sin, and Christ calls for inward saintliness and freedom from all irregular propension. He calls for personal chastity as the only possible moral condition for precipitately executing this ancient and severe law. The question before the crowd (asked so craftily) was, not whether Moses' Law was to stand or not, but whether these particular men, with their foul hearts and spurious zeal, were or were not at that particular moment to encounter the displeasure of Roman power by dashing the stones at the head of this poor trembling creature of sin and shame; whether they were morally competent to condemn to immediate death, and carry the verdict into execution. Before this tremendous summons from the Holy One, conscience could sleep no longer. The hypocrisy of the entire maneuver stared them in the face. (Pulpit Commentary)

h. (v.9) Inner sin conviction drove the accusers away. The Spirit of the law is greater than the letter. (Matthew 7:1.) Men with the highest reputation to lowest in rank began to depart. (Mat. 16:4, Adulterous and wicked generation.) Maybe even with this same woman. The accusers were gone, but the multitudes from the morning were still present. These two ("Misericordia et Miseria," as said Augustine), "Misery and Pity," face one another, and in the presence of a multitude of disciples and other listeners, Misery waits for Pity to speak — for perfect holiness and perfect mercy to do its will. There is One seated there who is without sin. He is at liberty, on his own showing, to condemn, and even to execute his fierce displeasure against a sin which he had, in his great inaugural discourse, charged upon the ill-regulated desires and evil glances of men.

i. (v.10) Jesus' compassion. None of her accusers had a clear conscience. Matthew 7:1. Luke 19:10; John 3:17. "I know you not," or "Depart from me," will be the signal of doom. But now his mission is to heal, not to wound; to comfort, not to punish; to reveal the heart of God, not to execute the crude judgments of men; to soothe, not to stone.

j. (v.11) Jesus' command. Your accusers have all left. From a magistral perspective I have no cause (no witnesses present) to condemn you. But, we know your sin is great, therefore, go and sin no more.

He does not say, "Be of good courage; thy sins are forgiven." He does not say, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; Her faith hath saved her;"