

"LIFE'S MEANING & PURPOSE: A Study of the Gospel of John"

V. The "Signs" and Testimony of Jesus (Jn. 2:1-12:50)

L. Opposition in Jerusalem cont. (Jn. 8:1-52)

Jesus goes back to Jerusalem probably during the Feast of Tabernacles and is teaching in the Court of Women near the treasury (**Jn. 8:20**) early in the morning when he is rudely interrupted by members of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish ruling body of elders) with a woman supposedly caught in the act of adultery. What follows is a series of conversations between Jesus and those present in the Temple courts that highlight a series of contrasts and conflicts between Jesus and those present, all of which testify to the deity and mission of Christ.

3. Grace and Law - *The Woman Caught in Adultery* – (vv. 1-11) – Here we have one of the most poignant and powerful accounts of Jesus' compassionate ministry in the Gospels. A woman is brought before the Lord by some of the Jewish religious leaders. She supposedly has been "*caught in the act*" of adultery. They want to know what Jesus would have them do. Of course, they neither were concerned about justice nor the plight of the woman. They instead wanted to entrap Jesus. The Mosaic Law was clear – if someone was caught in the act of adultery both the man and the woman were liable to death by stoning (**Lev. 20:10; Dt. 22:22-24**). However, this practice had ceased for centuries and now under Roman rule, no Jew could execute anyone unless approved by the Roman authorities (**Jn. 18:31**). So Jesus had a seemingly impossible dilemma. If He agreed that the woman be stoned it would hurt His ministry in the eyes of the people. It would also put Him in jeopardy of violating Roman law. If He said no to the punishment it would make Him weak in upholding God's Word and law. What would Jesus say? First, Jesus said nothing but rather took a stick and began writing in the dirt. While no one knows what Jesus wrote there has been speculation that it may have been the sins of those who were accusing the woman or even the Ten Commandments since they, too, were written by the finger of God (c.f. **Ex. 31:18; Jer. 17:13**).

Rather than condemn the woman or call for her release, Jesus simply said, "*He who is without sin, cast the first stone.*" In other words, if these men who have brought the woman to Jesus really want her to be executed under the law, they can go ahead and do it. But by doing so, they would in fact show their own guilt on multiple levels. First, if she was caught in the act, where was the man who was also guilty? Moreover, they would have to have been present if they could lawfully accuse her. Therefore, did they set the woman up? By doing so they would be condoning the sinful behavior. Second, if they went ahead and stoned the woman, they would be violating Roman law (see note above). Third, Jesus' words implied that those present had been guilty of the same sin as the woman. Notice that no one picked up a stone but they all left! Jesus tells the woman to *go and sin no more* – literally, "leave your life of sin." His mercy and compassion prevailed. Jesus was not being light on sin but simply affirming His mission to seek and save the lost. Ultimately, only Jesus can pass judgment on all of us for He is the only One without sin. Moreover, as the One who will give His life to pay the punishment for our sin He has the authority to forgive sin. Thus, He forgives the woman but tells her to cease from her adultery. God calls us to Himself so that we can be forgiven and then not remain in our previous sinful state. He gives us the means of grace (His Son) and His presence and power through His Holy Spirit for us to live lives of grace and mercy.

4. Light and Darkness– "*I Am the Light of the World*" - (vv. 12-20) - During the Feast of Tabernacles four large lamps in the temple's court of women lit up the area and at night time there were celebrations of dancing, torch bearing, and songs of praise. They reminded the people of the pillar of fire

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that had guided Israel in the wilderness. In fact, John has combined three “wilderness images” with the words of Christ - the manna in John 6, the water from the rock in John 7, and now the pillar of fire in John 8. Jesus took advantage of this practice to portray another spiritual analogy. He states *“I am the light of the world, he who follows Me will not walk in darkness but have the light of life.”* In addition, with the sun rising at dawn which was a typical time of teaching for Jesus, it also served as a witness to Who Jesus really is! To the Jews the sun was a symbol for Yahweh (**Ps. 84:11; Mal. 4:2**).

This is Jesus’ second “I AM” statement after *“I am the bread of life”* in **Jn. 6:35**. As set forth in John 1:4-5, Jesus is the Word *who is the life who is the light of all men. And the darkness did not overcome it.* Of course, those who were present challenge Jesus’ audacious statement. He can’t testify merely by Himself, they contend. The law spoke of everything being confirmed by two witnesses for spiritual or legal confirmation. How could Jesus say that He only testifies by Himself? Jesus can testify by Himself because as the True God He only says what is true! Just as a light does not need another’s testimony (Ever been in a plane at night? What is the only thing you can see? The city lights!) neither does Jesus. However, He still has a second testimony – His Father! And we see from **John 5:37-47** that the witness of the Father is found in the Word of God. Why didn’t they respond to Jesus being the light? They were judging according to the flesh (sinful human nature). They completely missed the reality that Jesus is their Messiah! Only by following Him can truly understand life, human nature, and the nature of God.

5. Life and Death – “...unless you believe that I am (He), you shall die in your sins” – (vv. 21-30). By not recognizing Jesus as the Light for His people and the world, Jesus’ hearers had a greater problem – death! They would not only remain in spiritual darkness but they would die in their sins if they ignored Christ’s words and not truly believe. Instead of trusting in Jesus, the people were arguing with Him. Jesus was giving them an opportunity to hear His words and believe but they were more concerned with proving Him wrong! This is an all too common reaction by those who hear the good news of Jesus Christ but refuse to follow it. They would rather argue than learn more. Thus, while Jesus was speaking of His going away they thought He was speaking of suicide and therefore the place of judgment since suicide was forbidden in the Jewish faith. And yet, the very opposite was true! Jesus came from heaven (*“from above”*) and was going back to heaven. His accusers were from the earth *“from below”* and would die on this earth and be condemned *“die in their sins”*. The ultimate problem all men have is death. And the reason for death is sin. Sin is simply the seeking of our own will instead of the will of God. As a result of our sin, our relationship with God is broken and this in turn, leads to broken relationships with other people and ultimately the entire creation. Unless, one recognizes their sin problem and God’s answer to it, he or she has no hope for change or eternal life. Reiterating what He first said to Nicodemus in Jn. 3:14, Jesus then speaks that He will be lifted up – *“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.”* Here, Jesus is referring to both His crucifixion and His resurrection. He will suffer and die on the cross but will also rise from the dead. He is exalted in His suffering and His glorification. The Apostle Paul reminds us in **Philippians 2:10-11** that the Christian life includes both when he says *“that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. It will only be AFTER the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that the world will truly see Him for who He is and the many of the Jews will recognize that He is the Great I AM (note: “He” is not in the original Greek but is added for meaning.)*

NEXT WEEK:

- 6. Freedom and Slavery – “...you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free” – (vv. 31-47)**
- 7. Honor and Dishonor – “I honor My Father and you dishonor me” (vv. 48-59)**

John 9 – The Healing of the Man Born Blind