

# Bible Questions and Answers

(By Robert C. Veil, Jr.)

**Question:** Please explain the incident of the woman caught in adultery. Why wasn't the man also brought, instead of just the woman?

**Answer:** This incident is described in Jn. 8:2-11 as follows: "And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. 3 And the scribes and the Pharisees bring a woman taken in adultery; and having set her in the midst, 4 they say unto him, Teacher, this woman hath been taken in adultery, in the very act. 5 Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such: what then sayest thou of her? 6 And this they said, trying him, that they might have whereof to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground. 7 But when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. 8 And again he stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground. 9 And they, when they heard it, went out one by one, beginning from the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the midst. 10 And Jesus lifted up himself, and said unto her, Woman, where are they? did no man condemn thee? 11 And she said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn thee: go thy way; from henceforth sin no more."

There were two sections of the Mosaic law which may have been in their minds. First: "And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death," (Lev. 20:10). The other passage states: "If a man be found lying with a woman married to a husband, then they shall both of them die, the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away the evil from Israel," (Dt. 22:22).

Several facts reveal their true motives here. They failed to bring the male perpetrator, who was equally subject to the death penalty per the old law. Some have speculated that one of the scribes or Pharisees was himself the guilty party, and this was nothing but a pre-planned "set-up." Or, perhaps bringing in the man was unsuccessfully attempted, or was unnecessary to accomplish their ulterior purpose, to entrap Jesus, (vs. 6).

This situation is similar to their attempt to ensnare Jesus with regard to paying taxes, (see Mt. 22:15-22). In each case, Jesus paid respect to the law while pointing out the hypocritical inconsistency of his accusers.

We do not know what Jesus wrote on the ground, and this is the only time Jesus is ever described as writing anything. But this action seems to have defused the tension, and allowed time for the accusers to see their own inconsistency. It is significant that the older, more mature members of the group were the first to leave. They knew that the penalty portion of this law had fallen into disuse, and the Roman law forbade capital punishment without official approval.

It is also significant that Jesus does not excuse the conduct of the woman, but rebukes her after the emotional crowd had departed, and tells her to "go...and sin no more." Far from excusing her adulterous conduct, Jesus effectively uses this teaching opportunity to expose the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, which was their primary problem.

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