

Inquirer's Studies
Lesson 3
John 8: Jesus Forgives Sins

Historical Background

Comment

Exodus 32:15-16 shows God himself writing the Ten Commandments. According to Exodus 31:18, he did it with his finger. (Deuteronomy 9:10)

Reading

The student should read Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 22:13-30. Then answer the following question:

1. What was to happen to the people caught in adultery?

Opinion Questions:

On what basis do you accept—or not accept—the Ten Commandments as given by God to us?

What harm, if any, comes from the sin of adultery?

Reading

The student should read Numbers 5:11-31 and answer the following question:

2. When a spouse suspected unfaithfulness had occurred, what was to be done to the suspect ?

Comment

The grace of God is clearly shown in the rules about adultery. He loves families and he intended the Jewish people to be faithful to him and to one another, in a marital sense. The sexual act is wondrous in the right context. When it occurs outside of marriage it is wrong and out of bounds. Adultery ruins families. Adultery is a "mixing." In our last study we encountered the Samaritans who adulterated the worship of Yahweh with the worship of the other gods of the Assyrians. The "lie-detector test" of drinking "bitter waters" (found in Numbers 5) was another gift of grace from God. This test favored the innocent.

Reading

The student should read John 8 and answer the following questions:

3. How many people were caught in adultery?
4. What should have been their punishment?
5. What was the accusers' motivation for bringing the woman to Jesus?
6. When her accusers dropped their charges, was she still morally responsible for her sins before God?
7. What did Jesus say to the woman?
8. What does Jesus claim to be (verse 12)?

Opinion Questions:

In light of Exodus 31-32, what might Jesus have been writing on the ground? (For additional insight read Jeremiah 17:13.)

Why might the accusers have been "convicted by their conscience"?

What did the woman really want?

What emotional burden might Jesus have taken from her?

Comment

God cared about this woman. It appears that she was "set up" to be caught. Her guilty partner might have been one of the accusers surrounding Jesus. She was terrified. Women had little status in those days. With little regard for her dignity or safety, this woman's accusers dragged her into a public, humiliating, even life-threatening scene. What would Jesus do to her? He was a very righteous man and public figure. He could not allow himself to be associated with such a lowly person as this woman. Yet he could not ignore her or the situation. Therefore, he distanced himself from the accusers and from her by elevating God's Law. Everyone had to stand humbly and confess that not one of them was righteous. Justice could not be meted out by such persons. The older men understood and were the first to drop their rocks.

Continuing with John 8,

9. If Jesus' hearers know him, who else do they know?
10. Where does Jesus claim to be from?
11. What quality does the One who sent Jesus possess?
12. In verse 28, Jesus again speaks of "being lifted up" (see John 3:14). What will Jesus' death show about him?

13. What did Jesus say to those who believed in him?
14. What did Abraham rejoice to see?
16. What claim of Jesus' made the men threaten his life?

Opinion Question:

Based on this claim of Jesus, did he have authority to offer the adulteress forgiveness of sins?

Comment

You may or may not be guilty of adultery. But "there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin" (Ecclesiastes 7:20). At its root, sin is rationalized self-will in rebellion against God.

Jewish people in modern days speak about forgiveness of sins on Yom Kippur, the biblical Day of Atonement when special sacrifice for sins was made. But the Book of Hebrews records that "in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." In contrast, "We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:3-4, 10). The writer of Hebrews goes on to quote Jeremiah 31, which we referred to in lesson 1: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: 'I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,' then He adds, 'Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more'" (Hebrews 10:16-17).

Through messiah's atoning death and resurrection, the Lamb of God offers us forgiveness of sins as we turn to him, acknowledge our sin, and accept his atoning work.

Opinion Questions:

Do you need forgiveness of sin?

Where do you go for forgiveness?

Can Jesus forgive your sins?

What emotional burden might forgiveness lift from you?

Key Verse: John 8:32

"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Is there any reason why you should not accept Jesus now?