

5 Ground-Breaking Truths

(John 8:1-11)

(preached 11/18/18; Pine Grove BC Sun AM)

Introduction

If you are holding a good translation of the Bible in your hands, I can confidently say that you are holding the word of God.

Without taking you through a class this morning on how we got the Bible, I would remind you that God breathed out every word of Scripture..

The Bible says that the Holy Spirit carried along the writing utensils of those who wrote down the words of God..

In short, the inspiration of the Bible was a miracle.

For God to give every word of the Bible to men who copied every word down is incredible.

Yet that is exactly how the Bible came into existence.

The OT was roughly written over a 1000 year span from 1500 BC to 500 AD, while the NT was written in a span of 50 or so years..

Now an important note to remember is this.

WE don't know possess any of the original documents of those Bible writers...

Instead, what we have are copies of what was originally written..

WE call these manuscripts..

And when we put all those manuscripts together, it is easy to determine what was originally written..

But there are a couple times where the manuscripts don't agree...

And before you think this is upsetting, rest assured, the disagreement is not over matters of salvation, who God is, who Christ is.

Most of the time, it is an issue of spelling..

Or an issue of grammar or sentence structure..

There are only two times in the NT where the issue is a little bigger...

One of those is the ending of Mark, which I spoke about when I finished up the book of Mark a few years back..

The second issue is in the text that we will look at this morning in John's gospel..

Though this is a well known incident in the life of Christ, there is debate over whether this scene belongs in John's gospel..

Or whether it belongs in the Bible at all..

For many of you this passage may be in brackets...

Those brackets begin back in John 7:53 and end in 8:11...

For other of you there may be no brackets at all..

And the reason for that is simple..

You see every translation of the Bible uses a certain set of manuscripts to translate from..

The NASB that I use is translated is translated from manuscripts that don't include this scene, so they use brackets here

The King James which some of you use is translated from manuscripts that do include this scene so they don't use brackets..

For some of you there may simply be a note in the margin or at the bottom of the page about this issue..

Now, where does that leave us?

First, let me give you my opinion on the issue...

Again this is how I view this text, and it doesn't have to be your view since we simply don't have a clear solution to this issue..

But here is my opinion..

I don't believe that John 7:53-8:11 was originally in John's gospel for a couple reasons...

#1 is the technical reason, and it is this..

The oldest manuscripts we have which means these were the closest in age to the originals...

The oldest manuscripts don't include this scene..

For instance, let's say John wrote his gospel in 80 AD.

Well we don't have the original manuscript of 80 AD, but let's say we have one copy of that manuscript from 120 AD and one from 200 AD..

Well, the oldest copy wouldn't contain this scene and these verses while the newer one would..

That would seem to indicate that it may have been added later, which would prove that it isn't original..

Well, in the case of these verses, the oldest copies of the original lack these verses...

You see, the King James is translated from newer copies of the original, so the King James includes it...

While the NASB is translated from older copies of the original so they put it in brackets...

So that is reason #1 I don't think it belongs..

Reason #2 that I don't think it belongs is this..

This scene doesn't fit the flow of John's gospel..

Now here is where expository and sequential preaching, verse by verse preaching helps us..

And what I mean by that is this..

We know the context of John 7 and John 8...

It is the festival of tents..

In fact, John 7:37 lets us know that the end of chapter 7 takes place on the last day of the feast of tents..

But we also know this..

John 8:12 also takes place on the last day of the feast of tents..

And the scene of all of this is Jesus preaching in the temple to the Jews and to the common people gathered there for the fall festival..

Well, what we will see in John 8:1-11 seems to happen early the next morning after John 7...

In other words, it doesn't fit the chronology of the days of the feast...

If the last day had begun in John 7:37, John 8:1-11 seems to happen the next day but most people would be departing and not hanging around for day 8..

Again, I can't prove this to you.

Just wanted to offer why I felt this way to you..

Now where does this leave us?

First, it leaves us confident in the Bible..

I almost hesitated to even bring up the issue and just preach it like the next scene in John's gospel..

And the reason in my mind was simple..

It addresses an issue that really isn't that big of a deal, but I also take seriously my command to shepherd your souls...

And you need to know about these issues so you can take a position on them in your own heart..

So I encourage to read about this issue...

But I also want you to know that my faith is not shaken but this issue at all, and neither should yours be...

First, this isn't common in the Bible..

Only happens here and 1 other place in the NT...

It never happens in a passage that deals with the nature of God, the deity of Christ, or the way of salvation..

But second, this passage nor the one in Mark doesn't contain anything that contradicts another verse of Scripture..

In fact, I believe this scene occurred..

I believe this scene also reinforces other truths that we see in other parts of Scripture...

And I believe this scene describes the true character of Christ in all his glory..

Now with that long introduction out of the way, here is what I am going to do this morning...

WE are going to read this passage in its entirety, and then I simply want to draw some principles from it that we can apply to our lives..

I am not convinced this should be here, but I also know that God can use it for our good and His glory..

So, let's read John 8:1-11..

WE are going to call this "A Ground-Breaking Scene."

John 8:1-11..

*1 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?" 6 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. 9 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, [a]Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more."]*

Truth #1 - *“These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.” (Jude 1:16)*

As this scene opens, Jesus is in the temple teaching the masses..

Maybe it is a morning in connection with the feast of tents..

All we know is this..

Jesus is teaching the masses truths about Himself, about salvation, about the Kingdom of God..

Jesus is preaching truth.

He is trying to lead others to salvation..

Yet, the teaching is interrupted by the scribes and the Pharisees..

These are the men who run the Jewish religion..

They had a successful con game going until Jesus showed up..

But now their false religion is being exposed.

Jesus is opposing all that the Jewish religion had become.

Jesus is claiming that good works are not the way to God..

Jesus is calling people to believe in Him for salvation.

As a result, this false empire built by the scribes and Pharisees is beginning to crumble.

Well, that gets the Jews hot under the collar, and since God is not allowing them to lay hold of Jesus, their plan is try and turn the crowds against Jesus...

You see, the mob loved Jesus.

They didn't love him as God as Messiah, but they did love his free food, his free healing, his amazing miracles..

But if the leaders can turn the crowds against Jesus, the mob will seek his death his death just like them..

So, they go on the attack, and their sights are set on Jesus.

But in order to get to Jesus, the need to attack someone else, so they probably set this woman up and catch her committing an act of adultery..

And the reason its a setup is that the man committing the adultery with the woman is nowhere to be found..

You see, the law required both adulterers to be stoned, but the Jews only needed her to try and trap Jesus so they either set the man free or it was a setup from the start..

So the attack on Jesus begins, but sadly it is an attack on the woman as well..

And this is the ugliness of unbelief..

It doesn't care who it attacks.

It only want to find the faults of others in order to elevate itself..

It only wants to win at all costs..

These religious leaders only wanted Jesus dead, and if they had to stone a woman to accomplish that, so be it.

Unbelievers love to attack, and that attack on Jesus begins by dragging this woman into the temple in front of everyone...

The attack then turns into a single question in verse 5..

And that question is what does Jesus say about this woman's situation..

You see, the law of Moses was clear.

Adulterers were to be stoned to death, yet Jesus was seen a friend of sinners..

His ministry had been to the downcast, the lame, the blind, the tax collector...

Jesus had come proclaiming forgiveness for the worst of society...

But now the worst of society stood before him in and the question to him was simple?

Should we stone her?

This is an attack on the character of Christ.

This is an assault meant to turn the crowds against him.

If Jesus says stone her, the crowd turns against Him for his inconsistency...

If Jesus says don't stone her, the crowd turns against Him for not keeping the Law of Moses.

Now look, this question is an interesting one for sure..

How do the justice of God and the mercy of God co-exist?

In other words, how can a woman deserving justice experience the grace of God?

Well, let me give you the answer to that...

IT is simple...

There is no human explanation for that.

Now, God is both gracious and just, so the answer is found in Him....

But none of us can offer a good answer to that question, which leads to what we see in the end of verse 6..

Jesus simply offers no answer to them..

Which leads to a second principle we see here..

Truth #2 - *“Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Or you will also be like him.” (Proverbs 26:4)*

Let me preach to myself as much as I preach to you by saying this..

Every attack doesn't require a response from you.

Every argument doesn't require you to argue back.

Jesus had an answer to their question, but the unbelieving fools around him wouldn't understand..

And the best answer to some attacks is to simply offer no answer at all..

So Jesus does something groundbreaking here..

He literally writes on the ground...

Now what did write?

I am about to tell you...

We have no idea what he wrote..

There have been all sorts of explanations for what he wrote, but all of them are simply educated guesses...

WE truly don't know what Jesus was doing here other than stopping down and using his finger to write on the ground...

However, the Pharisees and scribes don't leave..

The attacks continue in verse 7, and then we get this response from Jesus at the end of verse 7..

“He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.”

Now, let's understand this verse in its context because it is often ripped from this context and used against Christians...

Jesus is not saying that no one can execute judgment if they are a sinner...

If that were the case, we could never have a court system because every human judge is a sinner..

Jesus is not saying that we can't make judgments on other people..

In fact, Jesus says in Matthew's gospel that we must address the sins of others..

So this isn't a verse that prohibits you from identifying the sins of others...

In fact, Jesus even commands believers to judge others with a righteous judgment..

In other words, we are to identify those who break the commands of God..

The context of this passage is that these men couldn't stone the woman for adultery because they were all guilty of adultery themselves..

In fact, I think it is likely that one of these leaders were the setup man for her fall and capture..

How else would all these men know when and where to catch her in the act?

I also think its possible and likely that each of these men had probably committed adultery with her previously...

It is likely that they wanted her stoned to keep her from exposing them..

So this verse must be understood in its context.

Jesus isn't saying that sinners can't judge others...

Jesus is simply saying that each of these men is guilty of adultery too, and if they stone her, they will have to stone each other..

And the bottom is that all of them had committed the sin of adultery and therefore none of them was qualified to sentence her to death without sentencing himself to death..

That is the meaning here, so when you hear others take this verse out of context, you correct them...

And this leads to principle #3...

Truth #3 - *“the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving...” (2 Corinthians 4:4)*

I cant tell you how many times I have listened people complain about the sins of others while being guilty of the same sin themselves.

People will come to me and tell me this...quote. “So and so loves to slander and gossip.”

What they don’t even realize is that they slandered and gossiped while telling me about someone else..

In calling for this woman’s death, they were in effect calling for their own death...

For every stone they threw at her, there would be a stone coming at them..

So what happens?

Well in verse 8 Jesus keeps writing on the ground, while His words are ringing in their ears..

Eventually the truth hits them and they leave in verse 9...

The only ones left in the scene are Jesus and the woman..

So Jesus stands up to speak to her..

He addresses her as woman, which was a sign of respect, and asks her where the accusers went...

She responds in a way that we must take note of...

“No one, Lord.”

She calls Jesus Lord..

We can't be sure that this is a moment of salvation or acknowledgment that Jesus is Lord, but it certainly is a good sign...

I think this leads to our fourth principle of the passage..

Truth #4 - *“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1)*

Many people struggle with the ending to this passage...

Here is Jesus before this woman caught in adultery and yet he says that he doesn't condemn her...

So what in the world is going on here?

Is Jesus not concerned with adultery?

Well, no.

WE know that is not the case..

Is Jesus going to let her out of the penalty for sin?

Well, we also know that isn't the case.

The slightest sin.

The littlest of lies deserves punishment..

So what are we to make of this?

How can Jesus just let her go and simply say to her “don't do it again.”

Doesn't someone have to die for the sin of adultery?

And the answer is yes.

Someone has to die, and the someone who will die for her sin of adultery is standing right before her eyes.

I truly believe this woman came to Christ in this very moment, and that is why Jesus can simply tell her that He can't condemn her..

It is the same reason that Jesus can't condemn any believer in here this morning..

Though we have all sinned today, his death has removed our condemnation..

That is Romans 8:1..

“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1)

You see Jesus isn't letting her off her off the hook, he simply taking the hook for her...

Someone will die for her sin of adultery, but the good news of the gospel is that it doesn't have to be her...

Which leads to the final principle of this passage this morning...

Conclusion

Truth #5 - “Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!” (Matthew 11:19)

Possibly the greatest truth of this passage is the illustration it provides of Christ being a friend of sinners..

In the eyes of the Jews, this woman was just the opposite of those who brought her to Jesus.

They were the scribes and Pharisees..

They were the keepers of the law.

They were the super spiritual.

They were the religious elite.

She was the ultimate breaker of the law.

She was the least spiritual of their land.

She was the elite of sinners..

Yet at the end of the scene, Jesus is with and the religious leaders are gone..

This is what it means to be a friend of sinners..

This is what the gospel of Christ is all about.

The chief of sinners is sought and saved by Christ while the chief of religious people attack and then leave Christ.

Jesus....What a Friend for Sinners...

If you are here today caught up in the worst of sins,
Jesus is your friend..

If you are here trying to be the most moral person you
know but constantly failing to do that, Jesus is your
friend..

Jesus....What a Friend for Sinners..

Today is the day to come to Christ.

He won't condemn you.

In fact, he will remove the condemnation in your life and
bear it in his body.

Jesus...What a Friend for Sinners...

Let us pray...

Let us stand and sing this great hymn together...

It is #185.

We will sing the first verse and the last verse this morning...