



# International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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## **John 8:1-11 Commentary New Revised Standard Version**

**Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse [International Bible Study Commentary](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Study Forum](#).

**(John 8:1) while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.**

After the Festival of Booths, many went to their homes, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives where He often went to pray and meet with His disciples. His Father led Him to stay in Jerusalem and teach the crowds who came to the temple—His Father's house.

**(John 8:2) Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them.**

Jesus rose early to teach those who came early to the Temple. Probably, these early morning worshipers would be some of the most devout worshipers of God. Unlike the day before when Jesus had to cry out to be heard by the large crowds, Jesus sat down as was the custom of a Rabbi or Jewish Teacher to teach those who gathered around Him (a smaller crowd, for many had returned home). In this setting, the people would hear or rehear some of Jesus' most important teachings about himself and why He came into the world—to save us from our sins and give believers eternal life.

**(John 8:3) The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them,**

While Jesus was teaching, we can imagine the scribes and Pharisees pushing their way through the crowd bringing with them a woman caught in adultery—thus bringing great public shame upon her by making her stand before the whole crowd in front of Jesus. Notice: their purpose was not to seek a way to help her receive redemption and forgiveness from God.

**(John 8:4) they said to him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery.**

They addressed Jesus as “Rabbi” out of a feigned respect, because they wanted to kill Him and were seeking to entrap Him. The crowd considered Jesus an authoritative compassionate Teacher who healed all their diseases, so the authorities wanted to entrap Jesus as a Teacher to discredit Him before the crowd. Notice: they did not bring the man who was also “in the very act,” because the man was probably part of the scheme to dishonor the woman publicly and entrap Jesus.

**(John 8:5) Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?”**

The Pharisees reminded Jesus of what the Law of Moses commanded. They already believed He violated the Sabbath, and they were looking for more reasons to bring Him before the Sanhedrin or Council for condemnation. If Jesus upheld the Law of Moses and judged that she must be stoned, He would have condemned her to death and have done what He did not come to do; for Jesus came to seek and save the lost and bring sinners to faith in Him that they might receive the gift of eternal life. If He condemned her, He would have contradicted what He had been teaching people to expect from Him as the Savior of the world and the Savior from sin. He would not have been the Friend of sinners. Many in the crowd would have lost faith in the sincerity of His loving concern for others. Furthermore, the Pharisees would have succeeded in discrediting Jesus and His teaching before the crowd and His disciples. They would have destroyed His saving influence.

**(John 8:6) They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.**

Their test, an effort to entrap Jesus and bring more charges against Him, would have succeeded if Jesus had unwisely answered their question directly. First, if Jesus had upheld the Law of Moses and declared that she must be stoned, Jesus would have advocated violating Roman Law, for the Romans did not permit the Jews to execute criminals by stoning someone or by any other means. If He had advocated breaking Roman Law, the Pharisees would have accused Him before Pilate of being a revolutionary, of inciting rebellion against the Roman government, and of telling people to break Roman Law. With their testimony, Jesus could have been declared guilty by the Romans and crucified—they would have succeeded in killing Jesus as they hoped (but His hour had not yet come). Second, they thought the Law of Moses was clear and could be easily understood and applied. They knew Jesus would be committing a sin if He made void any part of the Law of Moses, as He seemingly made void the Sabbath Law (at least in their opinion and according to their traditions). Then, they could have charged Jesus before the Sanhedrin (that would have easily convicted Him) for being a false prophet and pretending to be the Messiah; thus, they would have destroyed His ministry and influence over the people. They felt they had Jesus in a trap that He could not escape. To begin escaping their trap, Jesus began to write on the ground with His finger.

**(John 8:7) When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.”**

The longer Jesus waited to answer them, the more they kept pushing Him or taunting Him for an answer. Because of His delay, they felt they had Him trapped. Meanwhile, they made the woman keep standing in fear and trembling before the crowd and the crowd kept listening expectantly for Jesus to pass judgment. Would Jesus break the Law of Moses and out of compassion let her go, as He healed the sick on the Sabbath—and supposedly broke the Law of Moses as the Pharisees charged? Or would Jesus advocate the breaking of Roman Law, so that the Romans would

come and arrest Him? Jesus kept writing in the sand. The Bible does not tell us what Jesus wrote in the sand. But we can use our imaginations and come up with various ideas. In my imagination, I see Jesus writing down a list of sins or commands in the Law of Moses. Then, demonstrating a wisdom greater than Solomon, Jesus said the one without sin should cast the first stone, and in my imagination He had just written a list of sins on the ground that they could see.

**(John 8:8) And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground.**

Resuming His silence and writing in the sand, Jesus let the scribes and Pharisees consider what they would do. The crowd, that also knew that no one was without sin and only God was good, watched expectantly to see who would proudly claim to be sinless and come forward to take her away to be stoned. They would not stone her in the Temple or on its grounds. They would lead her outside the city walls as was the custom. While they were leading her out, no doubt someone would have notified the Roman authorities and put the blame on Jesus for condemning her to be stoned. Thus, they had probably planned on Him being arrested by Roman soldiers before they stoned her—for they would have wanted to remain innocent. Again, the Bible does not tell us what Jesus wrote in the sand, but we can use our imaginations and think about what He might have written. In my imagination, Jesus began to write the names of the scribes and Pharisees by each one of the sins or broken commandments that He had written earlier. Since Jesus knew what was within each of the scribes and Pharisees, He may have begun with the oldest leader and written his name by the sins he had committed. Then He went to the next oldest, perhaps even writing guilty by each name. If Jesus did this (and remember we have no idea what He wrote) I can see why the scribes and Pharisees would have begun leaving, and leaving quickly, before He wrote down their names too. He probably would not have needed to reveal the sins of too many of them.

**(John 8:9) When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.**

“Beginning with the eldest or oldest ones” is to be preferred to “beginning with the elders” (see KJV, NASB, and NIV). If I had been one of the scribes or Pharisees, I certainly would have wanted to leave before my name was written down and my sins were exposed before the whole crowd as they had exposed the woman’s sin before the whole crowd. The Bible does not tell us whether the whole crowd left too, but it does tell us that Jesus was left alone with her. Perhaps each person in the crowd was ashamed of their sins and ashamed of what the scribes and Pharisees had done to bring shame to the woman; so, they respectfully left Jesus alone with her. At least we know with certainty that the ones who shamefully brought her to Jesus left her standing alone before Him.

**(John 8:10) Jesus straightened up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”**

Then, Jesus spoke to the woman for the first time. He asked her if anyone had condemned her. No one had tried to take her outside the city to be stoned. No one had tried to break the Roman Law which forbid the Jews from executing someone. No one had tried to enforce the Law of Moses against her; so, the religious authorities did not uphold the Law of Moses—they had her in their grasp and knew what the Law of Moses required, but they did not enforce it. Unlike the scribes and Pharisees, with His authoritative answer to the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus did not break or advocate the breaking of either the Law of Moses or Roman Law. He did not answer their question, but stayed true to himself; for in John 3:17, Jesus declared, “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” Jesus came not to condemn her, but to save her.

**(John 8:11) She said, “No one, sir.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.”**

If the crowd were watching, they heard her tell Jesus that none of the authorities had condemned her, and if they heard Jesus say that He did not condemn her either, they were probably amazed at His wise compassionate application of Jewish Law and Roman Law. In addition, neither the woman nor the crowd were left with the impression that Jesus condoned breaking

the Law of God. He called her behavior a sin and told her not to sin again. We do not learn if she repented of her sins and asked Jesus to forgive her as He had forgiven others. We do not know if she believed in Jesus as her Lord and Savior and received the gift of eternal life, but Jesus gave her the opportunity to do so by not condemning her. Jesus wants to forgive us for our sins, not condemn us. He wants to lead us to faith in Him. He wants us to receive Him and also receive from Him the power to become children of God.

### **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. Who brought the woman to Jesus and why did they?
2. What was the charge against the woman and what was the punishment if she was found guilty?
3. Why might they have not brought the man to Jesus too?
4. What might Jesus have written on the ground with His finger?
5. Who condemned the woman, and what did Jesus tell her?

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