

The Adulterous Woman

Bruce Scott Bertram

John 8:2-11

Early in the morning Yahshua came again into the temple court, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees then brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. Now, in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do you say?" They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Yahshua stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. 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." Again He stooped and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, until He was left alone, with the woman, where she was, in the center of the court. Straightening up, Yahshua said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Yahshua said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more."

Question. Did Jesus introduce the doctrine of Grace here and "do away" with the Law, or did the Grace in the Law save her?

Some considerable speculation has been advanced as to what exactly Jesus wrote in the dirt (twice). Some think the accuser's names were written, then their sins. But, maybe, He was writing down the references in the Law that they were not including in their impromptu court case. The first time He might have written the following two references.

Leviticus 20:10 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.

Deuteronomy 22:22 If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband,

then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman; so shalt thou put away evil from Israel.

Obviously, if she was "caught in the very act" then there was a party to the proceedings that was missing. The scriptures say that both people should be put to death but they only had one person. They persisted in their testing, so Yashua may have wrote the following references the second time:

Deuteronomy 17:6-7 At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.

Deuteronomy 19:15-19 One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity (lawlessness), or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth; at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established. If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; then both of them, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; and the judges shall make diligent inquisition; and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother; so shalt thou put the evil away from among you.

With this second set of references He may have been pointing to another problem: if she was "caught in the very act" there should be witnesses, and the witnesses should have to throw the first stone. The curve in the question was that if the accusations were being made "without sin" (i.e. according to the Torah), then let the stoning begin. Torah comes from an archery term meaning "straight shooting (hit the mark)." The word for sin is also used in archery and means to "miss the mark." The Mark was Torah, and all of God's Word is Torah.

In any case, whatever was written, it is beyond doubt in my opinion that

Yashua, using the Grace in the Law, was dealing with the core issues in the matter: lack of the presence of the other offending party, lack of witnesses, and false testimony. In other words, as the defending counsel, without resorting to "eliminating" or "remaking" the Law, Yashua brilliantly maneuvered His line of questioning to illuminate the Grace-filled provisions of God in the Law and expose their own intentional misuse of that Law.

Many who attempt to excuse their own sin have also misused the statement made by Yashua concerning the first stone. "Only someone without sin can cast a stone at me" has been the rallying cry of many who attempt to dodge responsibility for their actions. Meaning, of course that since none of us are without sin (Romans 3:23) then no one can properly judge the sinner's actions. It seems people nowadays are almost frantic to find some reason to avoid judgment so they can continue with their behavior. Even Grace has been twisted out of proportion to justify disobedience.

Only by understanding the whole of the Word, including it's beautiful Grace-filled Laws, can we arrive at a correct judgment, and exercise our God-given responsibility to rightly divide, and apply, the Word of Truth to daily living.

Yashua did not condemn the woman, probably because He was not a witness to the act (although she probably was actually guilty of wrong behavior). This does not mean Yashua approved of her actions, although the admonishment to "sin no more" implies He knew. But according to the Law, He could not pass judgment at that moment as far as physical death was concerned. How many of us are not punished instantly for some sinful action only to presume on the Grace of God and do something else?

The point of this narrative seems to be, not the guilt or innocence of the

woman, but the proper and Just application of God's Word. His justice goes a lot deeper than a few rules and regulations, so also His Grace. But the one does not exclude or eliminate the other. In His infinite Mercy and Wisdom they BOTH are balanced to the fullest degree.

Praise Him that has justified us, not by erasing His Word but by giving it to us filled with His Mercy!

May the Lord bless you and keep you
Bruce Scott Bertram