

The Tale of the Woman Taken in Adultery

*And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So 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.** And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, **Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.***
— John 8:3–11

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1 A Treacherous Tradition

The *Tale of the Woman Taken in Adultery* generally appears at the beginning of the Eighth Chapter of the Gospel Account attributed to John.¹ The tale is well-known to most Protestants, for it is taught frequently from the Protestant Pulpit. Yet, for centuries, textual critics have recognized and flagged the tale as spurious. Though the tale obviously is ancient, appearing in some of the oldest extant manuscripts, the tale is not part of the gospel account attributed to John, nor to any other gospel account; rather, it is a fabrication which has no rightful place in the Canon of Scripture.

¹In some ancient manuscripts in which the tale is found, it has been placed at the end of the *Gospel Account of John*; in other manuscripts, the tale is located near or at the end of the *Gospel Account of Luke*. This shift of location indicates that the tale is not indigenous to the document in which it appears, but is a spurious addition.

The persistence of the tale is due in part to tradition, and in part to emotional appeal.² But the tale erroneously portrays Christ Jesus as lenient and a source of unconditional forgiveness; and the lessons subtly imparted by the tale contradict the teaching of the Scripture. A simple objective examination is sufficient to reveal that the tale merits scorn and contempt, rather than veneration.

1.1 In the Footsteps of the Jew

To knowingly treat a spurious passage as if were genuinely a part of the Scripture is to display contempt for the Scripture. In the epoch of the Incarnation, the Talmudic Jew followed a tradition known as the *Tradition of the Elders*.³ Although the *Tradition* ostensibly is a gloss of the Scripture, the Jew reveres the *Tradition* above the Scripture. Jesus deprecated the *Tradition*, calling it “*the commandments of men*.”

He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

– Mark 7:6–9

1.2 Scriptural Warnings Unheeded

The Scripture repeatedly warns against embrace and propagation of traditions, tales, myth, and forgeries. As might be expected, the Talmudic Jew is the primary source of such rubbish, for he is the great and perennial enemy of Christ Jesus and of the Church. The Jew is well-practiced in the art of story-telling and counterfeiting, a fact to which history provides an abundance of evidence.⁴

As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do. Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

– I Timothy 1:3–7

But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

– I Timothy 4:7

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

– II Timothy 4:1–5

Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, the Cretians are alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.

– Titus 1:9–4

²The case is not unlike that of the *Book of Revelation*. Commentator Adam Clarke, no mean scholar, notes that the *Book of Revelation*, though generally recognized by scholars as spurious, for generations has been bound into the English Bible, simply because it is considered too magnificent a literary work to be relegated to the waste bin.

³The unregenerate Jew continues to venerate the same tradition. The *Tradition of the Elders* has been codified and published; in the present day the *Tradition* is known as the *Babylonian Talmud*.

⁴The forgeries and counterfeits of the Jew include the *Book of Esther*, the *Song of Solomon*, the *Book of Revelation*, and the *Masoretic Hebrew Text*, as well as secular documents such as the *Diary of Anne Frank*, the “Holocaust” myth, and, of course, the productions of Hollywood.

1.3 The Leaven of the Jew

There is a category of Jewish influence against which the Scripture repeatedly gives warning; it is that which Jesus termed the *Leaven of the Jew*.⁵ Leaven is an agent which alters the entity into which is introduced; moreover, leaven replicates itself in the course of transformation, and thus, when even a tiny amount of leaven is added to a lump of dough, the entire lump soon is leavened.⁶ In the Scripture, leaven generally is used to portray an evil influence, such as doctrinal error or hypocrisy.⁷ The *Tale of the Woman Taken in Adultery* is of the category *Leaven of the Jew*.

1.4 Prove All Things

Some Protestants, agreeing that the *Tale of the Woman Taken in Adultery* is a fabrication, nonetheless argue that the passage accurately portrays the manner in which Christ Jesus would have acted if the Tale were true. But such an argument reveals a contempt for the Scripture. The Apostle Paul charges the Christian:

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

– I Thessalonians 5:21

This is not a directive to be delegated to some ancient “Church Council” meeting to settle for future generations issues of canonicity. In this verse, Paul commands the Christians of each generation personally to undertake proof of the teaching of the Scripture.

1.5 Analysis of the Tale

Very little effort is required to determine that the *Tale of the Woman Taken in Adultery* is not part of the Scripture. Moreover, a thoughtful comparison of the details of the tale against the Scripture demonstrates that the Jesus portrayed by the tale is not the Christ of the Scripture. Consider the following analysis.

1.5.1 Where is the Man?

According to the Tale, guilt in adultery pertains only to the woman. But a woman does not commit adultery without an accomplice.

If the tale were true and the woman had been taken “*in the very act*,” the man would have been present and also should have been taken. Jesus would have pointed out the fact that the man also was guilty of adultery and likewise was worthy of death.⁸ And Jesus would have condemned the accusers for hypocrisy in failing to arrest and charge the man.

1.5.2 Jesus Contradicts Moses?

“*Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him.*” This is an absurd charge; Jesus does not contradict Moses.⁹

1.5.3 Writing on the Ground?

“*Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. . . . And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.*” This behaviour is absurd, nor is it seen elsewhere in the Gospel Accounts. In his

⁵Matthew 16:5–12, Mark 8:13–21, Luke 12:1–3. Consider also Matthew 15:1–9, Mark 7:1–13, Colossians 2:8–23, I Timothy 4:1–11, II Timothy 4:3–4, Titus 1:10–16, I Peter 1:18–21.

⁶I Corinthians 5:6–8, Galatians 5:7–10.

⁷However, leaven also is used to portray the beneficial influence associated with the Kingdom of God. As the Gospel of the Kingdom is proclaimed, taught, and embraced, those who receive the truth become salt and light to Society, Matthew 5:13–16; thus does the Gospel have an irresistible and ever-growing influence which transforms Society, Matthew 13:33, Luke 13:20–21.

⁸Leviticus 20:10, “*And the man that committeth adultery with another man’s wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.*”

⁹Matthew 5:17–20, Matthew 23:1–4.

encounters with the Jews, Jesus does not ignore the opposition, and never is he silent.¹⁰ Interpreters make many preposterous claims for what Jesus supposedly wrote on the ground.

1.5.4 The *Law of Moses* Hamstrung?

The exhortation “*He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her,*” makes a mockery of the Law of Moses. It is a claim that the *Law of Moses* is of no practical consequence, inasmuch as the *Law* prescribes punishments which cannot be applied, there being no one of the category “*he who is without sin*” to inflict them.¹¹

1.5.5 Conscientious Jews?

The statement, “*And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one. . .*,” is absurd. In none of the confrontations recorded in the Scripture of Jesus with the hostile Jew is there the slightest indication that the Jew is repentant, or is to the least degree is constrained by conscience. Indeed, a hallmark of the Talmudic Jew is complete absence of guilt or shame.

1.5.6 Jesus Winks at Sin?

Though adultery is sinful, the woman neither confesses sin, requests mercy, nor gives indication of repentance. Consequently, there is no basis for the release, “*Neither do I condemn thee.*” Jesus forgives sin, but Jesus does not wink at sin.¹²

2 Conclusion

The *Tale of the Woman Taken in Adultery* is contemptible rubbish which cannot withstand even the least scrutiny. The tale teaches absurd and diabolical concepts which are contrary to the teaching of the Scripture. It is *Leaven of the Jew*, against which Jesus repeatedly warned.

By happenstance, the tale has found a berth in the Eighth Chapter of the *Gospel Account of John*, though it is not part of the Gospel Account. From generation to generation, the tale continues to be reckoned a part of the *Gospel Account of John* simply because of its emotional appeal and the power of tradition. Sadly, there is a lack of men having respect for the integrity of the Canon of Scripture. Such respect imparts the courage to denounce the Tale as spurious.

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¹⁰The silence of Jesus during the interrogations he faced on the night in which he was betrayed is a different matter entirely.

¹¹Ecclesiastes 7:20.

¹²Though in some periods of time and with some people, God has winked at sin in the sense of disregard, the tolerance ended with the Incarnation and the imminence of the era of New Covenant; consider Acts 17:30.