

John 8:1-20

The Feast of Tabernacles had provided a unique opportunity for Jesus to preach the gospel of the kingdom.

And under normal circumstances, it was a very enjoyable occasion, a kind of camping experience, and an opportunity to get back to their roots all rolled into one.

And not only was it was a good time socially, but this feast had always been a very profitable time spiritually.

It had originated way back in Israel's history.

Leviticus 23:33-43 --- **"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,**

34: Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD."

And then skipping down to V 39 --- "Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath.

40: And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days.

41: And ye shall keep it a feast unto

the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

42: Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths:

43: That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God."

Once in the Promised Land, the children of Israel had given up their tents in favour of permanent dwellings.

However, during the feast of Tabernacles, or the feast of tents, they went back to temporary dwellings.

These booths, as they were called, were set up in the streets, or in their yards, or upon the tops of their flat-roofed homes.

The purpose of these temporary shelters was to remind them of their wanderings in the wilderness, and help them to appreciate the good land that God had now given them.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The timing of this feast was also very significant.

It was held just after the ingathering of the corn and wine.

So, in a very real sense, it was a *harvest home* celebration.

And I'm sure there would be a real sense of community as they dwelt side by side in their little shelters.

But most importantly, it would be a time to
listen to God's Word, and be thankful.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

However, this year, everything was
different.

Everyone seemed to be on edge, and **"no man
spake openly of" Jesus "for fear of the
Jews."**

Well, the days wore on, and there were
confrontations, but no arrest had been
made.

On the last day of the feast, Jesus was
still at liberty, and He was still
gravely concerned for His people. ---
**"If any man thirst, let him come unto
me, and drink."**

And the religious leaders weren't too happy
either.

Their officers had returned empty handed,
and their last meeting broke up on a
rather sour note.

The chapter ends with the words --- **"And
every man went unto his own house."**

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Yes, there were homes in Jerusalem for
Jesus' enemies, but none for Him.

Oh, I'm sure He had many friends in the city
who, under normal circumstances, would
have been glad to invite Him in.

But right now it was much too risky.

And even if they had been brave enough, I'm
sure Jesus would have declined.

So as darkness fell on the city of the King,
Jesus could be seen heading for **"the
mount of Olives."**

Remember what He had told a young man who
was considering discipleship --- **"The**

foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

No doubt this was one of those nights when Jesus preferred to sleep under the stars.

And why not?

He had made them all, and could call them by name.

All through the day He had willingly faced His enemyies, and He had faithfully proclaimed God's Word to God's people.

But tonight it would be better to sleep outside of Jerusalem, if not for His own safety, then certainly for the safety of His friends.

He knew men's hearts very well, and the fact that evil often rears its ugly head at night.

In the not too distant future, His enemies would confront Him in the Garden of Gethsemane--at night--and away from the public eye.

Do you remember what His first words were? -- **"Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves?"**

53: When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

So, Jesus would sleep under the stars, not because He was afraid of His enemies, and certainly not because He was defenceless.

Remember what He said to Peter --- **"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"**

No, He had left Jerusalem because it was the prudent thing to do.

It was the same when He had traveled to that very city **"in secret."**

And it was the same when He **"departed again into a mountain himself alone"** because He **"perceived that they would come and take him by force."**

Oh, He had the power to confront all of these situations, but it was not God's will to do so.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

It was now the day after the feast, but everyone was still there.

It wasn't because they weren't anxious to go home. It was simply impossible.

You see, there was a great deal to accomplish before they left.

Food must be prepared, possessions packed up, and last, but not least, the booth had to be dismantled and the branches disposed of.

None of this could be done on the last day of the feast.

Like the first day, the eighth day of the feast was a holy convocation in which no work could be done.

Consequently, they would sleep in their booths one more night, with plans to make an early start in the morning.

It would be a long day before they could finally lay their heads on their pillows, so everyone turned in early.

Tomorrow it would be---*Get up with the birds and just keep moving!*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

However, there were a few among them who had something else in mind.

If they made a very early start, there would be time to visit the temple, just in case Jesus would be there.

Actually, it wasn't a very practical idea, for someone had seen Him leaving the night before.

Would He be there?

Of course He would be there.

V 2 **"And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them."**

Yes, even though yesterday had been a very busy day, and even though Jesus might have spent the night in prayer, as He often did, He was there.

He had walked all the way back from the Mount of Olives, and was quietly waiting for them when they arrived. And Jesus will always be waiting for the seeking heart.

Proverbs 8:17 **"I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me."**

Yes, there's a great deal to be said for an early morning watch.

First of all, your mind is fresher, at least after the first cup of coffee.

And best of all, there are no interruptions, so Jesus can have your undivided attention. No phones will be ringing, and the children will still be in bed.

Yes, it is a good time.

King David was well aware of that fact.

He often talked to God very early in the morning before the demands of the day claimed his attention.

Psalm 63:1 **"O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is."**

And that's the kind of people that were there that morning.

In spite of the mammoth day ahead of them, they had assembled in the temple, and Jesus had **"--- sat down, and taught them."**

Yes, as the sun rose over the city, making the pillars of the temple shine in its early morning light, Jesus' words rang out in the stillness.

Not a word was recorded.

It almost seems that it was His exclusive gift to those early morning visitors. And then the city began to stir, bringing with it the first interruption of the day.

V 3-4 **"And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, 4: They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act."**

Wouldn't we be shocked if someone burst into this meeting right now and proceeded to interrupt the lesson?

That's exactly what happened to Jesus.

And not only were they determined to destroy His lesson, but they were intent on destroying His reputation "--- **Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in**

the very act.

**5: Now Moses in the law commanded us,
that such should be stoned: but what
sayest thou?"**

Only yesterday they had called Him a
deceiver. Now they were honouring Him
with the title "**Master**" or teacher.
Certainly it was well deserved, for Jesus
had just spent the best part of the
feast teaching the people.

Actually, that should have been their job
had they not been attending to more
important matters.

However, they didn't seem to be jealous,
and, apparently, were quite willing to
accept His judgment.

**"Moses" commanded to us, "but what sayest
thou?"**

What a change in attitude!

Maybe, after sleeping on it, they had
reconsidered their harsh treatment.

Don't you believe it!

And if you have any doubts about their
motive, just look at the next verse.

V 6 **"This they said, tempting him, that they
might have to accuse him."**

Yes, it was a trap, a no-win situation
specially prepared for Jesus.

First of all, let's consider His first
option.

Supposing He said stone her?

Commentators have a different opinion
concerning the political landscape
Jesus was facing.

Some believe the Roman government had
claimed the exclusive jurisdiction over
all cases where capital punishment was
involved.

If this were the case, then Jesus would have been overstepping the mark if He ruled in favour of stoning her.

However, other commentators believe the Romans had made an exception in the case of adultery, allowing the Jews to judge their own affairs.

In this case, Jesus would have had the legal right to condemn her.

However, as far as the people were concerned, such a judgment would seem inconsistent in one who had the reputation of being a friend of sinners.

Certainly, Jesus had never condoned adultery, but He had been accused of eating with publicans and sinners.

On the other hand, if He chose to free her, He would have been immediately accused

of overruling Moses' Law, and indeed
God's Law.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

However, Jesus had no intention of sitting
in judgment.

No, He **"--- stooped down, and with his
finger wrote on the ground, as though
he heard them not."**

This is the only record we have of Jesus
writing, but we don't know what He
wrote.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

However, they wouldn't be put off that
easily.

They had carefully planned this little
dilemma, and they were determined to
make it work.

V 7-8 **"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.

8: And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground."

No, we don't know what Jesus wrote, but we do know what He said --- "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

V 9 "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."

Jesus wasn't insisting on sinless perfection when said "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

If that were the case, the Law of Moses would have been completely unworkable. Certainly He might have been referring to their own personal sins, and perhaps what He wrote on the ground had convinced them that He knew what they were.

Yes, that's one possibility, but there's another.

Perhaps He was referring to a collective sin.

You see, there is something very fishy about this whole thing.

In V 5 they said --- **"Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned."**

OK, let's look at that law.

Leviticus 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."

Yes, the Law clearly states that **"the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death."**

So if, as they said, this woman was taken **"in the very act,"** then where was the man?

Why had the man been allowed to escape?

There is only one logical answer.

This whole thing was a setup.

The man must have been an accomplice in their evil scheme, while the woman was nothing more than a pawn.

However, Jesus was two jumps ahead of them.

He had no intention of refuting Moses' Law,
but had agreed that she should be
stoned.

But then He said, --- **"He that is without
sin among you, let him first cast a
stone at her."**

So knowing what they knew, would they be
willing to execute a woman whom they
had manipulated in order to get Jesus?

V 9-10 **"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.**

**10: 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?"**

The law states that there can be no conviction without witnesses, and, of course, they had all left.

We see that in Deuteronomy 17:6 **"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."**

And the very next verse makes another requirement.

V 7 **"The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people."**

So with no witnesses, and, of course, no executioners, there was no need of a judge.

The case was closed.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

But wait a minute.

Jesus was a witness, and so was His Father.

How could an all-knowing, completely

righteous individual like Jesus say ---

**"Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin
no more."**

**"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do
right?"**

Actually, He could say it.

He could say it on the very same grounds

that His Heavenly Father has said it
about us.

Romans 3:26 **"To declare, I say, at this time
his righteousness: that he (that is
God) might be just, and the justifier
of him which believeth in Jesus."**

Yes, Jesus had every right to say **"Neither
do I condemn thee,"** because He was
willing to take her place in judgment.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

However, Jesus didn't condone her sin, for

He also said, **"go, and sin no more."**

No, salvation is not a license to sin.

Not only has Jesus delivered us from the penalty of sin, but He has delivered us from the dominion of sin.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Well, the first interruption was over, and Jesus could resume His lesson.

This part was recorded.

V 12 **"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."**

I'm sure the woman that He had forgiven would be willing to follow Him.

Yes, she would be most willing to walk in the light, but what about the others? What about those early birds who had set aside everything in order to hear Him teach?

Certainly, that was quite commendable, but Jesus isn't just a good teacher. He is **"the light of the world:"**

And He wasn't just a light; He was claiming to be the light.

It would be Jesus or darkness.

And He said something else that might have shocked them.

He said He was --- **"the light of the world."**

Not just the light of Israel, but **"the world."**

Yes, there was great significance in the words --- **"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in**

darkness, but shall have the light of life."

What would their answer be?

Unfortunately, they didn't have much time to think about it; for once again the Pharisees interrupted His lesson.

V 13 **"--- Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true."**

They were probably referring to Deuteronomy 19:15 which says **"One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, 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."**

And even though there was no iniquity involved here, Jesus did honour their claim.

V 14-16 **"Jesus answered and said unto them,
Though I bear record of myself, yet my
record is true: for I know whence I
came, and whither I go; but ye cannot
tell whence I come, and whither I go.
15: Ye judge after the flesh; I judge
no man.
16: And yet if I judge, my judgment is
true: for I am not alone, but I and the
Father that sent me."**

Yes, He had borne witness of Himself, but as
He assured them, He knew what He was
talking about --- **"I know whence I
came, and whither I go."**

And then, in V 15, He adds this statement, -
-- **"I judge no man."**

They had made a real effort to set Him up as
a judge in order to ensnare Him.
But He had refused --- **"I judge no man."**

The fact is, He hadn't come for that purpose. --- John 12:47 **"I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."**

However, that doesn't mean He will never be a judge.

As He told them in V 16, **"And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me."**

Yes, someday He will be the Judge of all the earth, including those Pharisees who were harassing Him.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

I'm not sure what they thought of this little interlude on the subject of judgment, but He would answer their charge.

In fact, He would supply them with two witnesses.

V 17-18 **"It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. 18: I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me."**

I'm sure they weren't satisfied with His answer, for Jesus was one of the witnesses.

However, as they all knew, He had already supplied them with no less than four witnesses on a previous occasion.

As you might remember, they were: John the Baptist, His own miracles, the witness of His Heavenly Father, and the Scriptures.

However, in this case, they weren't even satisfied with His second witness.

V 19 **"Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father?"**

When Jesus named His second witness, He, of course, was referring to His Heavenly Father.

However, the Jews didn't believe He had a Heavenly Father, but had stubbornly stuck to the belief that Joseph was His father.

Of course, they couldn't explain how a carpenter's son could heal the sick, cast out demons, or raise the dead, but that's what they believed.

And, no doubt, that's what they meant when they said, **"Where is thy Father?"**

It's quite certain that Mary was widowed by this time, for we never hear a word about Joseph.

If that were the case, then there would be a
smirk on their faces, when they said
"Where is thy Father?"

What kind of a witness is that? Your father
is dead.

To this, Jesus replied **"Ye neither know me,
nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye
should have known my Father also."**

Oh how they hated Him, but they were
powerless to do anything.

V 20 **"These words spake Jesus in the
treasury, as he taught in the temple:
and no man laid hands on him; for his
hour was not yet come."**

Once again, Jesus had been protected from
harm, but I'm afraid not from further
interruptions.

In next week's lesson, they will continue to interrupt His teaching, and even take **"up stones to cast at him."**

It's a good thing those early birds had been diligent, or they would have completely missed the blessing.

Proverbs 8:17 **"I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me."**