

Another Failed Attempt...

In an earlier article I discussed Matthew 22, where the Pharisees, along with their normally disliked opponents, the Herodians, attempted to confuse Jesus in hopes of trapping Him into saying something which could be used against Him. The Pharisees thought Jesus would have to answer the “paying taxes” question in a way that would either condemn Him by the Roman government for failing to pay, or be held in contempt by the Jews for being told to pay.

This article addresses another attempt by the Jews to trap Jesus in the same way. John 8:1-11 reads,

But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act." Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

Once again, a group of Pharisees were using an opportunity to ensnare Jesus between Jewish law and Roman law. The woman had been caught in the act of adultery. Where the man is, we do not know. In the Jewish law, both guilty parties were to be stoned. However, they did not care about the law, or the woman. Their motives were obvious to Jesus; they apparently dragged this woman out of the court to bring her before the crowd and Jesus. Their plan was to publicly ask Jesus if He would uphold the Jewish law which called for her to be stoned (Deut. 22:22).

The Jews were under Roman government, and the Romans prohibited the Jews from practicing capital punishment. The Pharisees thought if they asked Jesus what He would do, they would condemn Him either way he answered. If He answered "yes" to stoning her, they would turn Him over to the Roman authority. If He answered "no", they would accuse Him before the crowd of disregarding the Law of Moses. Either way, they thought they had Him. The Lord

knew their motives. He indicated by stooping and writing on the ground that He did not intend to reply. Just what He wrote is unknown and useless to speculate. However, after repeated request by the Jews, He finally replied, "You who are without sin cast the first stone." His response threw the responsibility back to them. They could do nothing more, so they left. They were gross violators of the law by instigating their act and their cause perished with the Master's reply.

For the elders,
Tony Williams