

John Chapter 7

JESUS IN THE LION'S DEN-THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES Read John 7

Even if you haven't read the story in years, you probably still recall ninety-year-old Daniel, who was framed by a few jealous men in the king's court. Though innocent and faithful, he was thrown into a den of hungry lions. Waiting for the outcome was nerve-shattering: would he be ripped to shreds by the wild lions or would someone, somehow, come to his rescue?

Well, the king, who greatly respected Daniel, couldn't stand the suspense and came to the lions' den early the next morning. To his amazement, Daniel was still alive! God had rescued him, miraculously closing the lions' mouths.

Daniel was not the only one thrown to the lions. Jesus spent the last six months of His life in a lions' den of savages intent on tearing Him to pieces. Eventually these brutal animals cornered Him at the cross (Ps. 22:13). But in our study today, Jesus escapes the enemies' sharp fangs and manages to shut their objecting mouths.

- Why did the religious leaders want to kill Jesus? (see 5:18)
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- In urging Jesus to attend this feast, are the brothers being sincere or sarcastic (vv 2-5). Explain.
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- What rumours are circulating about Jesus in Jerusalem? (vv 12-13)
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- If you face any family opposition to or ridicule of your faith, how do you deal with it?
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- What other reactions do we see of the crowd (see vv 25-26, 31, 41a)
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Jesus and God

What relationship does Jesus talk about between Him and

- the Father (vv 16-18, 33 -44)
- the Spirit (vv 37-38)

Comment: To appreciate the drama of the event, you must understand a little of the ceremonial background to that final day. "Each day of the festival the people

came with their palms and their willows to the Temple; with them they formed a kind of screen or roof and marched round the great altar. At the same time a priest took a golden pitcher ... and went down to the Pool of Siloam and filled it with water. It was carried back through the Water Gate while the people recited Isaiah 12: 3: 'With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.' The water was carried up to the Temple altar and poured out as an offering to God. ... The whole dramatic ceremony was a vivid thanksgiving for God's good gift of water and an acted prayer for rain, and a memory of the water which sprang from the rock when they travelled through the wilderness." Against this background, the time is ripe for Jesus to reveal His identity. Dramatically, He stands and shouts: "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink, He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'" (vv. 37b –38)

Even knowing that He is opening himself to attack, Jesus shows His concern for these people's lives. He not only stands up, making himself an easy target, but He extends His hand to these ruthless lions, offering their lashing tongues the refreshing water of the Holy Spirit.

- Can you identify the voice that speaks for Jesus in vv 50-51? Does this incident tell us anything about the faith of this man?
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Food for Thought

There's certainly one thing Jesus teaches us: God does not do what we expect. He has His own plans, His own timing, His own methods. And He is definitely not limited by our limited understanding of His Book.

LETTERS IN THE SAND

Read John 7: 53 – 8: 11

Jesus frequently said or implied that there could be no league table of sins. Adultery is not worse than pride in God's sight; its just different. And pride is as deadly and inexcusable as any other sin. We all live in glass houses: our lives are partially open to the stare of others, and fully open to the scrutiny of God. If we do need to expose publicly the sins of others (and that is often questionable, and 'public interest' is often merely a synonym for morbid, self-righteousness public curiosity), we should do so with great sensitivity and sadness.

Woman caught in adultery

John 7:53-8:11

- 1. Which to you is the grossest sin?**
 - a. cheating on income tax
 - b. having premarital/extramarital sex
 - c. selling pornography
 - d. cutting shady business deals
 - e. child abuse
- 2. Who would you have trouble forgiving?**
 - a. a rapist
 - b. a drug dealer
 - c. a crooked politician
 - d. an adulterer
 - e. a Nazi war criminal

3. If you had been in the crowd when the woman caught in adultery was brought to Jesus, what would you have done?

- a. blushed
- b. stood up for the woman
- c. looked the other way
- d. picked up a stone
- e. prayed for the woman

4. Why do you think Jesus bent down and wrote on the ground?

- a. to let the men think
- b. to take the attention from the woman
- c. to write something for the teachers to read-like their names
- d. to collect his thoughts
- e. to doodle something
- f. to keep from getting so angry with the accusers

5. What was Jesus really saying by these words, "If any of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her"?

- a. to deal with your own sin first
- b. judgementalism is a worse sin
- c. every one of you has committed adultery
- d. you see in others your own sin

6. In the last thing Jesus said to the woman, what was the tone in his voice and what did it mean?

- a. a guilt trip: you've been bad, and I'm ashamed of you
- b. warning: I'll let you off this time but don't do it again
- c. affirmation: you're a beautiful person and you don't have to put yourself down
- d. support: you may fail again and again, but let's go for it
- e. understanding: You're free to live differently

MY OWN STORY

1. What's the hardest thing about forgiving?

- a. they might think I'm condoning their behaviour
- b. when their sin is something I don't have trouble with
- c. fear they might consider me a pasty
- d. resisting the temptation to take revenge
- e. letting go of the hurt feelings

4. What do you do when you blow it?

- a. crawl into a hole
- b. try to be extra good
- c. confess it to God and move on
- d. confess it to my pastor or priest
- e. shrug it off

3. When it comes to forgiving yourself when you blow it, put a dot on the line to indicate where you are between these two extremes.

I ALWAYS PUT _____ I HAVE LEARNED
MYSELF DOWN TO ACCEPT GOD'S
FORGIVENESS

2. Who are the people in your life that accept you no matter what you've done?

- a. my parents
- b. my friends
- c. one special person
- d. my support group

From this passage three truths emerge that we can apply in our relationships today. Discuss:

- The practice of confronting a wrongdoing calls for humility not pride (Matt 7: 5, Gal 6:1)
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- The privilege of condemning a wrongdoing is based on righteousness, not knowledge (Gal 6:1)
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- The principle of correcting a wrongdoing starts with forgiveness, not rebuke (John 8: 11)
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It's easy with a story like this in John 8 to feel superior to the Pharisees. But are we really so different from them?

Suppose for a moment, that the woman in the story wasn't an adulteress. Suppose that she was a lesbian or a woman who had had an abortion or a drunk driver or a prostitute. That can put the pharisaic shoe on the other foot, can't it?

If one of these possibilities had been the scenario in John 8, would that change your attitude toward:

- the Pharisees
- toward the woman
- Christ?
- If so, how? And why?