

Who is Jesus?

Heavenly Father, as we come to consider your word this morning, enable us to do so with humility, with grace, and with a deep desire to understand its teaching. May the Spirit of God be given to us all, so that your Son might be glorified, so that we might go from this place knowing more about him and his mission, and so that we might be equipped to serve you in the days to come. And we pray in Jesus's name. Amen.

- So if you were to create a chart of Bible passages, all the way from Genesis to Revelation, and you were to put a little red flag over those verses and those passages where you have a number of questions, problems, and difficulties, two things would happen:
- Number 1, you would have a very big chart.
- And number 2, you would find that some places on the chart had a significant number of red flags.
- One of those areas with more red flags than most is John chapter 8 verses 1-11.
- Here are just some of the questions that it brings, and which have troubled and perplexed Christians down the ages.
- Why does Jesus write in the floor of the temple?
- What does Jesus write on the floor of the temple?
- Is this passage about Jesus doing away with the law or at least the punishments for law-breaking?
- What was the sin that the accusers all felt convicted of that caused them to slink away one by one?
- And even more fundamentally than these questions is this: does this passage even belong in the Bible, since as you'll see from the footnote at the bottom of the page, many of the earliest manuscripts don't actually contain it.
- Now, I'm not going to attempt to answer all those questions, but one thing I do want to do is to frame all of those questions in terms of a much bigger question.
- And it's a question which has been lurking throughout John's Gospel so far, but particularly in chapter 7 where it really comes into focus.
- And I want to suggest is that the purpose of the passage at the beginning of chapter 8 is to answer that question.
- What at first appears to be something of an interlude or a somewhat clunky insertion in between the end of chapter 7 and verse 12 of chapter 8, giving weight to the suspicion that the passage may not be genuine scripture, in actual fact turns out to be a direct continuation of what has taken place in chapter 7, and in fact it answers the question set up in that chapter.
- And that question is essentially this: Who actually is Jesus?
- This is a huge source of contention and division in Chapter 7, but then along comes the opening verses of Chapter 8, and answers the question in two ways.

- Firstly, it answers it by showing that Jesus is The Prophet, the new and greater Moses.
 - And secondly, it shows that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Messiah of God, whom the Father has appointed to judge the earth in righteousness.
 - What I want to do this morning is therefore to begin by spending some time in chapter 7, showing how it poses the question which chapter 8 then answers.
 - And so our three headings this morning are as follows:
 1. Jesus: the Great Divider
 2. Jesus: the New Moses
 3. Jesus: the Christ
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Jesus: the Great Divider

- When you read through chapter 7, it is clear that there are various groups of people grappling with the question of who Jesus actually is.
- This includes his brothers, the Jewish authorities, the Scribes and the Pharisees, and numerous groups of ordinary people.
- His brothers, who at that time did not believe in Him, seemed to treat him as nothing but a conjurer and celebrity, egging him on to do some great miracle in full view of the public (v.3).
- Some thought he was just a good man (v.12).
- Others thought he was a deceiver, leading the people astray (v.12).
- Some thought he had a demon (v.20).
- Others wondered whether he might possibly be the Christ (v.26)
- Later in the chapter, we see some claiming that he was The Prophet (v.40)
- This is a reference to The Prophet foretold by Moses in Deuteronomy 18 – a new and greater Moses who would one day be raised up by God to speak the words of God to the people.
- Others affirmed him to be the Christ – God’s Messiah, whose coming had been foretold by God through his prophets throughout the Hebrew Scriptures (v.41).
- Some disputed this and said he couldn’t be the Christ, since he was from Galilee, whereas the Prophet Micah had foretold that the Christ would come from Bethlehem – the City of David (v.42)
- And then in verses 43 and 44 we see that Jesus was causing such division that as well as those ready to proclaim him The Prophet or The Christ, there were those who wanted him arrested.
- In other words, there were strong opinions, wildly diverging theories, and many unanswered questions at that point about who exactly Jesus was.

- It's perhaps easy for us, with the whole record of the Gospels and the Epistles in front of us, to wonder why there were such wildly diverging opinions on his identity.
- Yet given that there are a plethora of different opinions on Jesus around today, it really shouldn't surprise us that there was such confusion back then.
- These people were in the midst of it, and many had only seen a little of what Jesus was teaching and doing.
- And whilst undoubtedly there were some who rejected his claims to be God's Messiah because of their hard hearts and vindictiveness ...
- There were also some who immediately recognised him to be who he said he was ...
- And there were those who took a little more time to get there, such as Nicodemus, who appears briefly – yet very significantly – in verse 50.
- We'll come back to him in a moment, because his words are actually crucial to understanding the connection between chapter 7 and the incident at the start of chapter 8.
- But equally key to understanding what's going on in all this is the central place that the law occupies in chapter 7.
- Specifically, there was a question over who was and who was not keeping the law.
- This focus on the law begins when Jesus goes up to the Temple and begins teaching (v.14).
- And in verse 15, we see the one thing that all who heard him seemed to agree on, regardless of what they ultimately thought about him: Jesus's learning and his teaching was astonishing, all the more so because he had had no formal education or training – except of course in a joiner's shop.
- It's as if, in the middle of a debate between highly respected scholars and authorities at the Cambridge Union Society, an uneducated, unlearned person from the audience, without any qualifications starts asking questions that neither of the experts can answer, and then proceeds to speak on the subject with more knowledge and authority than either of them.
- Jesus responds to their amazement by telling them that his teaching wasn't got from the rabbis or from the university, or from a seminary.
- Rather, he tells them that his teaching came direct from the one who sent him – that is God (v.16)
- Furthermore, he goes on to say that all who know God's will and seek to do it will know that his teaching is from God and therefore will know that he has come from God (v.17)
- This is a clear hint that he is proclaiming himself to be The Prophet foretold by Moses, since God had said this of this person in Deuteronomy 18:

"I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him." (v.18-19)

- Nevertheless, these are strong claims, and ones which were guaranteed to upset many of those in front of him.

- But he is far from finished, and he follows up his claim of having received his teaching from God by telling his hearers that though they see themselves as law keepers, they are in fact the opposite:

“Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law.” (v.19)

- Can you imagine how offensive this was to those in front of him?
- There they were, self-proclaimed disciples, students and experts of the Mosaic law, knowing every jot and tittle of it, and yet here comes this apparently unlearned, uneducated man to tell them that every last man of them is a law-breaker.
- His words were guaranteed to get a reaction from them, but since he is intent on challenging them, rather than backing off, he goes on to highlight their hypocrisy.

“I did one work, and you all marvel at it,” he says in verse 21. “Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well?”

- Not for the first time, and not for the last, Jesus is using high irony to challenge their understanding of the law and its purpose, and to show them up for their hypocrisy.
- Circumcision was necessary for males to be ingrafted into God’s covenant, so that they could enter into God’s presence.
- And quite rightly, Jesus’s adversaries they had no issue with performing it on the Sabbath.
- “So why,” Jesus poses the question, “do you have an issue with my healing a man who was paralysed and unable to come into God’s presence on the Sabbath day?”
- Both the circumcision and the healing pointed towards the same end: to restore fellowship between man and God, and to enable a person to enter God’s presence and his rest.
- What they had done in their studying of circumcision and the Sabbath is somehow utterly missed the mercy of God.
- Therefore, when Jesus brought healing, restoration and rest on the Sabbath – the true meaning of Sabbath in fact – the fruit of this was that they now sought to add murder to their lawlessness.
- What John presents in chapter 7 is therefore a battle over the law, who is rightly keeping it, and who has rightly understood it.
- In the one corner, we have the Jewish authorities, the Priests, the Scribes and the Pharisees who not only claim to be fastidious keepers of the law, but who are also accusing Jesus of breaking the law.

- In the other corner, we have Jesus, who not only claims to have come from God, from whom he has received his teaching, but who also accuses his accusers of being law-breakers.
- Who is right?
- In verses 32 and following, we see the Pharisees attempting to settle the matter by taking the law into their own hands – also known as acting lawlessly.
- They send officers to arrest Jesus, yet in a moment of high comedy, the officers not only come back empty handed, but it turns out when asked by their bosses why they hadn't brought the man, the reason is actually that they had listened to Jesus and found him compelling.
- Children, have you ever seen one of those cartoons or a film where the bad guy employs one dastardly plot after another to get the hero, rubbing his hands in glee waiting for his victory?
- And yet the plot backfires on him spectacularly and he's left hopping up and down with rage at the foiling of his plans.
- That's pretty much what's going on here, as these officers come back and give their good report about Jesus.
- But it is here that we come to the crux of the chapter and we start to get our answer to the question of who is, and who isn't the law breaker around here.
- Enter Nicodemus.
- When last we met him in chapter 3, he was intrigued by Jesus, enough to go and visit him by night to pose questions to him.
- And yet it was clear from that passage that he really couldn't grasp the idea then that he, and Israel as a whole, needed to be born again from above.
- Here in verse 50 we see that he has moved on in his thinking, and although perhaps not quite to the point where he has accepted Jesus as the Messiah, what he is prepared to do is defend Jesus's right to a fair hearing.
- Remember that Nicodemus was a Pharisee, and a member of the Great Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court, which met to try hard legal cases.
- He is an important man, and a learned one, and when he hears of the plotting of his fellow Pharisees, he is clearly unhappy, and reminds them of the law:

“Does our law,” he asks, “judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?”
- What he is doing, is defending the right to what is called due process – the idea that everyone is equal under the law, innocent until proven guilty, and that all who are accused of something must be given a fair hearing with an impartial judge.
- This was, he says, an essential part of the law.

- Perhaps Nicodemus expected his fellow Pharisees and members of the Sanhedrin to realise what they were doing, to calm down, and to back off.
- If he did he was sorely disappointed by their response, which far from accepting his reasonable and lawful point, is scathing and sarcastic:

“Are you from Galilee too?”

- Are you from that little backwater place too?
- Village idiot, is basically their jibe.
- And so in one foul swoop, this aged, respected man, with years of service behind him as a judge in the local courts, then in the Lower Sanhedrin, then in the highest of all Jewish courts is dismissed and mocked, and likely held with suspicion if not outright contempt by them from that point on.
- And why?
- All because he mentioned a very important part of the law that they professed to keep, which is this:
- An accused person must be given due process, must be given a hearing before they can be pronounced guilty.
- And so as we come to the end of chapter 7, the scene ends on this somewhat sinister and threatening note, with the Scribes and Pharisees clearly more determined to get Jesus for his alleged lawlessness.
- But the conclusion to the question of who Jesus really is, tied to the question of who is and isn't the breaking the law, is left hanging in the wind.
- Until we come to chapter 8, where we get our answers.

Jesus: The Prophet

- The episode described at the start of the chapter is very familiar, but let's remind ourselves of what happens.
 - It's early in the morning and Jesus is sitting in the Temple teaching.
 - A woman, apparently caught in adultery, is then brought in by the Scribes and Pharisees, and they ask him whether she should be put to death, which was the penalty for adultery under the Mosaic law.
 - Jesus's response is to ignore them, but also somewhat cryptically he writes on the floor.
 - They keep badgering him, and eventually he responds by standing up and delivering one of the most famous lines in all the Bible:
- “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.”
- Again, he stoops down and writes on the floor, and as he does so, one by one the woman's accusers leave, leaving just her standing before Jesus.

- Finally, he stands face to face with her, and asking where her accusers have gone and whether anyone is now condemning her.
- “No one, Lord,” she replies, to which Jesus responds by telling her:
 “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”
- So what is going on here?
- The first thing to say is that although the passage appears on the surface to be about a woman being judged, really it isn’t.
- She is simply the pawn being used in a much bigger game.
- Verse 6 tells us that her accusers brought her to Jesus “to test him. That they might have some charge to bring against him.”
- In other words, having failed in their plot to get their officers to arrest him, they are now seeking to get Jesus using another cunning method: entrapment.
- They ask him if he will condemn the woman, but really their plan is all about condemning him.
- If he says yes, stone her, they will no doubt accuse him of being inconsistent, since they have already accused him of being a Sabbath breaker.
- If he says no, don’t stone her, then they will accuse him of teaching contrary to Moses, and therefore contrary to God.
- Yet once again we find that Jesus evades their trap, and not for the first time he turns the tables on them.
- To understand how he does this, we must go back to the law: that is the law given by Moses that they were asking him to adjudicate on.
- The law they were referring to is found in Leviticus 20:10, and it reads as follows:
 “If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbour, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.”
- Now let’s see how the accusers in John 8 frame their case:
 “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?”
- It is immediately obvious that there is a glaring problem with their charge.
- The law they were referring to stated that in a case of adultery, where clearly there are two people, upon establishing guilt, both the man and the woman were to be put to death.
- So where, then, is the man?

- Whoever he is, he is nowhere to be seen.
 - And so immediately it is obvious that their case against the woman is decidedly shaky.
 - But there was a second omission in their charge, which if anything was even worse than the first.
 - If you read their charge very carefully, you will discover that there are other people missing as well.
- “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery.” (v.4)
- Caught in the act? By whom exactly?
 - Not by them, that’s for sure.
 - If she had been caught by them, they would have said, “We caught this woman in the act of adultery.”
 - But instead, they use the passive voice: “She has been caught.”
 - In other words, not only were these Scribes and Pharisees not witnesses to the alleged crime, they also did not bring any alleged witnesses along with them.
 - And what do you know, this was entirely contrary to the law of Moses that they claimed to keep, and which they were accusing Jesus of breaking.
 - If you turn back to Deuteronomy 17, which we read earlier, we find the following in verse 6:

“On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.”
 - According to this law, an accused person must not be convicted on hearsay, or rumour, or gossip, but on the testimony of numerous witnesses.
 - And of course these witnesses must be credible, which in turn implies that the accused must be given the chance to defend him or herself against the allegations made.
 - Those accusing this woman had not done this.
 - Not only had they failed to bring with them the alleged adulterer, they also failed to bring any witnesses to the alleged crime, and allowed the woman no opportunity to defend herself.
 - They had simply asserted the thing to be true, without the co-alleged, without a trial, without credible witnesses, without any impartiality, without due process.
 - In so doing, they had therefore shown themselves to be operating completely and utterly outside of Moses’s law, and yet here they are trying to trip Jesus up on a matter of the law.
 - This is why Jesus responds by seeming to ignore them.
 - In verse 7, we read that he “bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground” and in a number of other translations, it adds the words “as though he heard them not” at the end of that verse.

- He ignored them, without the man, without the witnesses, their case was a sham and no impartial self-respecting judge would even consider hearing it.
- And yet what he did do was to write something on the floor?
- What was that?
- Whilst we cannot know for sure, there are a couple of popular explanations that I think we can rule out as they simply don't fit the facts.
- The first is that he just wrote the 10 commandments.
- However, I don't think this can be made to work for two important reasons:
- Firstly, these were extremely self-righteous people, and they knew the 10 commandments full well, having read them perhaps every day, and of course they believed that they were keepers of it.
- It is therefore highly unlikely that seeing Jesus write them down would have caused them all to leave.
- But there is an even more problematic issue with this view, which is that it would imply that sinners are unqualified to judge cases.
- Yet God's law commanded men – that is sinful men – to try and judge cases.
- Another popular view is that he maybe just wrote the 7th commandment – Thou shalt not commit adultery.
- However, this is also highly unlikely, firstly because they were very familiar with this law, and secondly it is not really very probable to assume that every last one of them had committed actual, physical adultery.
- But whilst we cannot know for sure what Jesus wrote, since John does not tell us, there may be a clue in what Jesus says to them after he writes for the second time:

“Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.”
- This verse is famous the world over, but where it comes from is not quite so well known.
- A moment ago we saw from Deuteronomy 17 that the law required at least 2 or 3 credible witnesses in order to find someone guilty.
- But the very next verse explains what was to happen if, through the testimony of those witnesses, a person was found guilty. So Deuteronomy 17:7:

“The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.”
- Do you see what's going on there?

- According to the law, there must be credible witnesses, whose testimony must be established as truthful, in order to find someone guilty.
- And if it was a capital crime, it was the witnesses themselves who were to be the first to enact the death penalty.
- In the case of adultery, therefore, it was the witnesses to the crime who were to cast the first stone.
- And so I think – although we can't be certain – that this gives us a clue as to what Jesus may have written on the ground, and the reason why the accusers departed.
- It is likely that Jesus was drawing attention to the lawless way in which they were conducting this case, perhaps referring to their lack of witnesses, which was contrary to Deuteronomy 17:6, and then inviting them to cast the first stone – which was something only witnesses could do.
- It may also be the case that the second time Jesus stooped to the floor to write, he reminded them of what the law of Moses had to say about false witnesses just two chapters on from the Deuteronomy 17 passage.
- In verse 18 of chapter 19, it states:

“The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. And the rest shall hear and fear, and shall never again commit any such evil among you. Your eye shall not pity. It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.”
- In other words, in condemning this woman for adultery, yet without bringing the man involved, or the witnesses, and without giving the woman a fair hearing, they were themselves in danger of being stoned, should their testimony be found false.
- This is, I think, the most credible explanation for why they all left one by one.
- And so Jesus, a man they accused of being a law-breaker, had shown them that in inviting him to condemn a woman without trial, without the co-accused, without witnesses, and without due process, they themselves had utterly fallen foul of the Mosaic law they claimed to keep.
- In their battle to show Jesus to be a law-breaker, these hypocrites had been thoroughly routed by the true law-keeper – Jesus, the new and greater Moses, The Prophet foretold by Moses who would speak the words that God the Father put in his mouth.

Jesus, the Christ of God

- And yet this passage is not just about Jesus being The Prophet, the new Moses.
- There is in fact much more going on.
- It shouldn't escape our attention that all this action took place in the Temple, which as well as being the place of sacrifices, was also where the Jewish Sanhedrin met to judge cases.
- The basis for this was again from our Old Testament lesson, Deuteronomy 17, where we read that legal cases which were too complex to be judged at the local level were:

“To be brought to the place that the LORD your God will choose. And you shall come to the Levitical priests and to the judge who is in office in those days, and you shall consult them, and they shall declare to you the decision.”

- It’s likely that some of those who brought this woman to Jesus were members of the Sanhedrin that met in the Temple.
- And so what we have here is a very odd situation.
- A woman, apparently an adulteress, has been brought into the place where the Sanhedrin met, probably by some of those who were actually part of that judgement council, but instead of asking the Sanhedrin to look at the case, they bring it to Jesus, who at that time is sitting in the Temple.
- But notice how they have everything back to front.
- The purpose of the Sanhedrin was not merely to pronounce judgement, but rather to hear hard cases, to try them, and *then* to pronounce judgement.
- And yet they come to Jesus, in the Temple, and ask him to pronounce judgement on a case that neither he, nor any other court, has heard.
- Children, and adults I hope, you may well recognise this scenario from a very famous, very entertaining and – in many ways – quite profound book.
- Let me read an extract and see if you can recognise it.

“‘Then the words don't fit you,’ said the King, looking round the court with a smile. There was a dead silence. ‘It's a pun!’ the King added in an offended tone, and everybody laughed. ‘Let the jury consider their verdict,’ the King said, for about the twentieth time that day.

‘No, no!’ said the Queen. ‘Sentence first—verdict afterwards.’

‘Stuff and nonsense!’ said Alice loudly. ‘The idea of having the sentence first!’

‘Hold your tongue!’ said the Queen, turning purple.

‘I won't!’ said Alice.

‘Off with her head!’ the Queen shouted at the top of her voice. Nobody moved.”

- It is of course Alice in Wonderland, where Lewis Carroll perfectly encapsulates the absurdity of passing sentence before hearing a case.
- And Alice is of course quite right when she describes the idea of passing sentence before considering the case as stuff and nonsense.
- And yet that is exactly what the Scribes and Pharisees have come to the place of judgement to ask Jesus to do.
- But even worse than this, they’re not really interested in the woman herself.

- She is simply the bait in their Alice in Wonderland justice in order to catch their real fish – which is Jesus himself.
- Yet Jesus doesn't take the bait.
- And the reason that he doesn't take the bait is because of who he is.
- Back in chapter 7, when it is said that the Scribes and Pharisees are seeking to kill him because he healed a man on the Sabbath, he says this in verse 24:

“Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.”

- He is alluding to the great passage about the Messiah in Isaiah 11, where we read:

“And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. *He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.*”
- This is was exactly what Jesus, sitting in the Temple, the place of God's judgement did.
- He refused to condemn the woman based on her appearance of guilt, with all these learned and important men stating her guilt.
- He refused to condemn her based on their allegations, which had not been tested, and which were without independent witnesses whose testimony could be verified.
- He refused to judge the case in any other way than the way it deserved to be judged, which was to condemn those who sought the sentence before a fair and impartial trial.
- By the way, none of this is to say one way or the other as to the woman's guilt or otherwise.
- She may well have been an actual adulteress, although I think the passage is somewhat more nuanced on this than at first meets the eye.
- John tells us that the Scribes and Pharisees “brought a woman who had been caught in adultery.”
- Her accusers say that “she had been caught in *the act of adultery*”.
- There is a subtle difference there, but there's enough room to suggest that she may have been suspected of having committing adultery, and may have been gossiped about as an immoral woman, rather than having engaged in the act itself.
- The lack of a man in this Alice in Wonderland trial makes this a distinct possibility.
- Yet whether or not she was actually guilty, here's the point: given the lack of proper testimony, the lack of evidence, the lack of due process, would you condemn her?
- Hopefully not.

- What, even if she had the appearance and the look of an immoral woman?
- Again, hopefully not.
- What, even though all these learned men of the law had condemned her?
- Once again, I hope not.
- And neither is Jesus prepared to condemn her, since what he sees before him is a mockery of justice.
- But notice what else is there.
- We've already considered what it is he may or may not have written on the floor of the Temple.
- And whilst that is of course somewhat speculative, what is far more important is the action itself.
- John tells us that sitting in the Temple, he bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground – that is on the stony floor of the Temple.
- What is that a hint towards?
- In Exodus 19, as God is about to give Moses the law, we read that:
- "The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain."
- And after the law had been given, we read this in chapter 31:18:

"And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God."
- John is clearly inviting us to see the parallel.
- Just as God came down to Sinai, the Mountain of God, to write the law with his finger on tablets of stone, here Jesus stoops down in the Temple of God to write the law with his finger.
- And the result?
- The woman's accusers, having been judged by the law they professed to keep, leave his presence one by one, from the oldest of them to the youngest, and just he and the woman are left.
- But it's not just the woman's accusers who have left.
- Even more crucially they are Jesus's accusers, who came to judge him by tripping him up on a matter of the law, and finding themselves judged in the Temple of God, they are utterly silenced and put to shame.
- What John is doing is therefore not just showing us who is the true law-keeper, The Prophet whom Moses said would speak all the words that God commanded him.
- He is also inviting us to see Jesus, the true judge sitting in God's Temple, of whom Acts 17:31 tells us:

“God has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed.”

- This is who Jesus really is.
- The Prophet, and also The Christ: the one on whom the Spirit of the Lord rests, and the one who *“shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.”*

In Closing

- As we close, there’s one more detail in this passage which we mustn’t miss.
- Not for the first time, and not for the last in John’s Gospel, Jesus is left alone with a woman of bad reputation.
- In chapter 4, he was alone at Jacob’s well with the woman of Samaria, who had been married five times and was with a man to whom she was not married.
- In chapter 20 he is alone with Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb – someone from whom Jesus had cast out seven demons.
- And here he is alone with a woman who had been accused of adultery.
- All these women were tainted with scandal, and yet each of them are saved by Jesus.
- To the woman of Samaria, he tells her all things she ever did, and she is convinced that he is the Christ.
- Mary Magdalene, he restores her and she has the privilege of being the first person to speak to him after his resurrection.
- And as he sits in the Temple, in the place of judgement, alone with another scandal-tainted woman, again he brings salvation:

“Jesus stood up and said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”
- This constant theme of fallen or scandal-tainted women is therefore a continual theme in John’s Gospel, and they are there to give us a glimpse of Christ and his bride, the church.
- Like the woman in the Temple, the church has its accusers.
- Sometimes these accusations are just, sometimes they have a partial foundation, and sometimes they are made up from whole cloth, utterly fabricated and without foundation.
- And yet Jesus will save his church.
- Jesus will marry his bride.
- And on the last day, every accusation against his true bride, and against all true believers within that true church, will be dismissed.

- There will be no condemnation for true believers in Jesus, regardless of whether the accusations against them are true or false.
- And why?
- Because Jesus is The Prophet – the one who has been sent by God to speak the words that the Father has given him.
- And because Jesus is the Christ – the one who will judge with righteous judgement, and whose judgement on the sins of his people have been paid for in his crucifixion.
- Who is Jesus?
- He is The Prophet; He is The Christ.
- It is he we must listen to, for it is he who shall judge the world in righteousness.
- May God give us all grace to see this; faith to believe it; and his Spirit to walk worthily of him all the days of our lives.

Heavenly Father, You have shown in your word to us who Jesus is. You have shown us through the Apostle that he is indeed The Great Prophet, and that he is indeed The Christ. Help us to love this truth, to live this truth, and to seek to spread this truth to our neighbours. In Jesus's name. Amen.