

# 'Why Christ Wrote on the Ground' Ch. 8:1-20

by Charles Alexander

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*The sermon explores the profound implications of Christ's act of writing on the ground during the confrontation with the adulterous woman, revealing His divine authority and the nature of forgiveness.*

**Topics:** "Christ's Authority", "Divine Forgiveness"

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## Description

Charles Alexander preaches about the nearing climax of the Lord's coming, emphasizing His identity and purpose as He moves towards Calvary. The story of the woman caught in adultery showcases Christ's authority over the law and His divine forgiveness, revealing the deeper spiritual interpretation of prophecy. Through His actions and words, Jesus exposes the hypocrisy of the religious leaders, asserts His deity, and offers forgiveness and transformation to the repentant. The dialogue on deity highlights Christ's eternal origin, unity with the Father, and the Father's witness to Him, culminating in the revelation of His mission to glorify God and bring salvation to humanity.

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## Transcript

The time draws near for the great climax of the Lord's coming into the world. The nearer to Calvary, the more plainly does He declare who He is and the purpose of His manifestation in the world. His course through the great week devoted to the Jewish feast of Tabernacles has been described in chapter seven, and we have seen in the much neglected companion passage in the prophecy of Zechariah (ch.14) how the Lord identifies Himself with the prediction of the living waters which were to flow from the mystical Jerusalem, and have understood therefrom, how prophecy is to be spiritually interpreted. Traveling relentlessly along the prophetic pathway determined for Him from before the foundation of the world, we now see Him sitting in the hallowed precincts of the temple as the great Lawgiver before whom a poor sinful woman is brought by those hard-souled religionists, the scribes and Pharisees.

The Lord disappoints their scheming, and in turning the tables upon them shows how He, the Lawgiver from whom Moses received the law, is the end of the law for righteousness to all who believe. From that point He proceeds to confound the Jews for their disbelief in His own divinity so marvellously attested before their eyes.

The action in chapter 8 begins the morning after the conclusion of the feast (verses 1 and 2). The Lord has been to some lodging on the Mount of Olives that night and now appears in the temple where He sits in one of the main porches, known as the Treasury (v.20), a porch to which women had the right of access, for it was there the widow cast her two mites and was commended by the Saviour (Mk. 12:41-44).The

Pharisees and scribes bring to Him a woman taken in adultery and invite Him to pass judgment upon her.

## THE CONFUSION OF MODERN BIBLE VERSIONS

We pause to make known our own position as to the genuineness of the story, for the stones which the woman's accusers held in their hands ready to extinguish her poor life, were as nothing to the brickbats which critics of the sacred text have taken up down the ages to drive her out of the Bible altogether under the dreadful curse of being uncanonical. Of the canonicity (that is, the right of the story to be regarded as part of the original composition of the apostle John as an eye witness that day, and therefore an inspired portion of Holy Scripture) we have no shadow of doubt.

In recent times versions such as the American RSV and the English NEB have relegated the story either to a footnote at the bottom of the page, or placed it in frozen isolation at the end of the gospel as not being fit to be in at all. The most recent edition of the American RSV strangely puts the story back in the text as though the compilers cannot make up their minds what to do with the woman.

As we have covered this critical ground before in our pamphlet, "The Wretched Woman of John Eight" [Serial Number 020] (which has been distributed in thousands all over the world), we will not repeat what we there declared but will take up the story in our stride as thoroughly evincing its divine right to be regarded as an integral part of the inspired Word. We shall endeavour to show in our exposition a reason superior to that even of favourable textual criticism, why this woman and her story must be accepted as canonical. It is our contention that in this account the divinity of the Lord shines forth in such terrible majesty that even the cherubim must hide their faces in reverential fear before so majestic a token of the divine presence. If this is not inspiration nothing is.

Here are all the elements of a sacred drama. A judgment is being enacted in which the accusers become the accused and the sinner finds forgiveness and rest. The sinful nation of Israel, now hastening on to its inevitable doom, is being judged that day in the temple treasury, the court of the women. How often has Israel in the Old Testament been represented as the adulterous wife of Jehovah, giving herself to the idols of the heathen? These men, the accusers, were adulterers all, in that they were engaged that in rejecting the heavenly Bridegroom of Israel whom shortly they were to condemn and crucify. Some of them were, likely enough, adulterers after the flesh as well, if the records of that time are to be believed.

The sin of the woman was great and not to be excused; that of the nation of Israel was far greater for they sinned against their God, yet condemned others, as though innocent themselves. The woman sold herself for a morsel of bread. Israel sold her God for naught.

The process begins with the hypocritical lawyers claiming the right to speak in the name of Moses:

"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?"

It is a subtle attempt to draw Him into a confrontation with the law, but the Lord, who perceives their perversity, answers not a word, but stoops down and writes with His finger in the dust of the temple floor as though He heard them not.

The lawyers persist in their asking, till the Lord momentarily raises His head, and bids them begin to execute the sentence of death, but he who was without sin among them to cast the first stone.

We pause here not only to emphasise the dilemma of these false Jews, but also the dilemma of our modern critics who are not without some alarming intermingling of evangelical, and even "Reformed" elements, who have allowed themselves to be betrayed into denying this woman her right to be heard in the court of her critics.

It is doubtful if these modern critics have ever been confronted with the overwhelming evidence in favour of this woman's place in the gospel, arising not out of jugglery amongst the ancient manuscripts, but by exposition of the Lord's astounding act when He stooped down and WROTE IN THE DUST OF THE TEMPLES FLOOR, THE IMPENDING DOOM OF THE HYPOCRITICAL NATION WHICH WENT DOWN INTO ITS GRAVE ONLY FORTY YEARS ON FROM THAT DAY, BOASTING STILL OF MOSES AND THE LAW AND PERISHING IN THE RUINS OF THAT SAME TEMPLE.

But spiritual exposition is largely a dead science in these modern times.

There are features in this story which could not have been invented. Let us ponder the words of the Saviour when He said, "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her". Anyone who invented that and put it into the lips of the Saviour was a genius indeed, and ought to have been an apostle. This is one of the most quoted, sayings of Our Lord and comes down the centuries to us as a rebuke to many a thought and to many an expressed word concerning others, when we forget our own sin and point the finger at somebody either in our minds or actually in flesh and blood, and say, "Ah! See what he is! See what she is!" But who is without sin let him speak first. If ever there was a sentence charged with the evidence of its own divinity it is surely this.

There is another feature in this story which we declare nobody could invent and if they had invented it they would not have left their genius to be worked out by others and argued for centuries without having dropped some hint somewhere as to why Jesus should stoop down and with His finger write on the ground as though He heard them not. We are not told why He wrote on the ground and we are not told what He wrote on the ground and if anyone was inventing a story they would not have left it there. But John wrote it because he was there when it happened, yet gave no explanation. This is Johannine. It is like our Apostle John because there are other parts of his writings where he leaves us to search and to find out the hidden meaning. He does not give us the veriest hint of what it is about, but simply records the facts. He did the same with his great "Come and see", in the first chapter of his Gospel (John 1:39-46). He could have told us what was in his mind. He could have directed us to the 46th Psalm (verse 8) or to the 66th Psalm (verse 5) and later on might have shown the connection of the words "Come and see", with the fourfold thunder from the throne of God in Revelation, chapter 6.

But John does not explain. He gives no hint that here is proof of his favourite doctrine of the Godhead of his Saviour and Lord, but leaves us to work it out, and because of that most of the theologians have passed it by. There are very few expositors who are independent enough and original enough to think their own problems through and break new ground. John leaves this story where the Holy Spirit leaves it, without explanation, in order that we might find out some of the answers by meditation and diligent search. The church has been asking for two thousand years why and what Christ wrote on the ground. Some of the explanations have been very profound indeed and some of them have been very childish, but it is one of the advantages of living two thousand years after the event that we can look back and go over the thought of many generations and examine all that men have ever said upon the matter and profit, in the maturity of the age in which we live, by the accumulation of wisdom and light which it pleased God to pour upon the minds of men in successive centuries. We have reached the point where not only, is the story of this

woman vindicated as an authentic part of Holy Scripture, but an expository value of supreme importance is disclosed.

"All the acts of the Living Word, are Word and Doctrine". To understand the mystery of Christ's actions in writing on the ground, it is of the highest significance that that ground was none other than THE FLOOR OF THE TEMPLE. This is clear from the second verse of this chapter: "Early in the morning He came again into the temple and all the people came unto Him and He sat down and taught them." So it was into the holy temple at Jerusalem that the woman taken in adultery was brought by her accusers at the close of the feast. Ordinary people had access to the vast temple court as to a common place of concourse and on some poor bench the Lord sat with the people around Him, listening to His gracious words. The lawyers set the sinful woman in the midst and the people drew apart to see what would happen. From His sitting position the Lord stoops, and with His finger traces mysterious characters in the dust of the temple floor as though He heard them not. They continue asking and He lifts up His head and declares: "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone." Mighty words! Profound words of wisdom! Eternal words! Again He stoops down and writes on the ground. It is recorded four times in Holy Scripture God wrote: twice on Mount Sinai when He traced with His own finger on tables stone, and here in John Eight, where with the same finger He writes on the ground. On each occasion He writes twice.

The words, of lawyers were still in the ears of the people, "Moses in the law said that such should be stoned. What sayest thou?"

But Moses did not write the Law. It was the finger of God that wrote the Law of the Ten Commandments. "The rest of course Moses wrote from the dictation of God but the substance of the Law in those Ten Commands, God wrote and not Moses. Nor did Moses ever command anything at all. Moses was only the clerk of Almighty God in writing down by divine dictation all the explanation and expansiveness of divine commands. But it was the finger of God which wrote the substance of the Law on stony tablets. When Christ stooped down and wrote on the ground with His own finger He was declaring, "I am God. I am the Law. It was I who was with Moses in the mount. It was with me that Moses conversed. I wrote upon those tables of stone with by own finger and I am writing again now."

To say this story is an invention, an interpolation, is to attribute to some unknown person in history a competence and a genius that might be worthy of the Archangel. But the story is factual and true. If the audience had marked what Christ was doing they would have retreated from His presence in awe and shame.

This was God who was writing, not this time on tables of stone, but on the floor of the temple. If that temple could have spoken what it knew of the crimes that had been committed on that very spot where the blood of Zacharias the son of Barachias flowed between the temple and the altar, (the highest crime which had ever been committed since the blood of Abel was shed by his brother Cain) - if that temple could have spoken, what a story it would have told of the shedding of innocent blood? If the very earth could speak, what would it tell of human sin and corruption? As He silently wrote with His finger Christ was saying in effect, "Press me not to speak or I might begin and never cease!" If the Lord began now to write upon the earth our own sins, what a trembling would fall upon all creation! On the great judgment day the books will be opened and the dead will be judged by those things written there - and those books are written, with the finger of God. Things forgotten or never recognised, the criminality of which we may never have realised; the heedlessness of thought and word and deed, the cruelty, the wickedness of' them, is all written down there. Of every idle word that men shall speak they shall give an account in the day of

judgment. Nothing is ever passed over. Nothing is ever forgotten. All is recorded. In an unmeasurable instant of time everything man ever, did, said, thought, or intended, will be flashed into conscience and consciousness and we shall know all as God knows all. The whole universe will be assembled and it will not be a one-by-one judgment of interminable ages, but millions upon countless millions shall know in the flash of an eternal moment who and what they are and nothing shall be left out. The finger that wrote on the temple floor is writing in heaven and it must be so, for every word of God must be vindicated and all must know what kind of persons they are or were. Jeremiah's prophetic spirit cried out: "O earth, earth, earth, hear the words of the Lord": as though the ground itself proclaims the justice and the righteousness of Almighty God! (Jer. 22:29).

Christ stoops down and writes in the earth as though it is written on the very fabric of creation (as in fact it is) man's disobedience to God. Paul tells us in 2 Cor. ch. 3 that the redeemed are the inscription of the Holy Spirit and written not with pen and ink, and not on tables of stone, but the fleshy tables of the heart. It is there that God now writes, not His own covenant of the law, but His new covenant of divine grace. The finger of God has written upon the souls of the redeemed in the language of regeneration, for did not Jeremiah in his 31st chapter tell us, "This is the covenant (the new covenant of grace) I shall make with them after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my law in their hearts and write it in their minds and they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest"? There is a true and faithful transcript of the new covenant of grace inscribed in the hearts and minds of God's people since the day they were born again. Having it written in the mind (the knowing part of us) and the heart (the feeling part of us) the emotions, affections and will are enlisted to do the will of God and to delight therein after the new creative spirit which has been given us.

Did Moses write the law? Did he compose the book of Deuteronomy (which was a second writing of the Law, with suitable enlargements)? "I too", says the Saviour, in effect, as He stoops down and writes upon the temple floor - "I too, the greater than Moses, can write, and do write. You do not know what I write here upon the temple floor, but some day you will know. You will know that Moses only acted under my authority and I who write with my finger twice upon this ground, and God who wrote with His finger twice on Mount Sinai, I am He!"

He says later in this chapter, "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins". (v.24) It is essential that we know and believe that He, Christ, is the second Person of the Holy Trinity, that He is God Almighty, the Great I am. - "If ye believe not that I AM" (omitting the italicised word) "then ye shall die in your sins." He proceeds to tell them that they shall die in their sins anyway because He sees their heart then, and He sees to the end of their lives and warns them, "Where I go ye cannot come." Who is this who long before the judgment seat tells men while alive upon earth with years of their lives stretching out ahead of them that they shall die in their sins, that they never will believe and never repent? "I will never save you. You never will know what forgiveness is or the grace of God. You do not know it now when you have stones in your hand ready to destroy this poor woman, and you are worse than she. You are not only adulterers, you are murderers. You are filled with the spirit of pride which is the spirit of your father the devil and the lusts of your father ye will do." (See verses 42-44). Men should beware of that self-righteousness which leads them to believe that others are worse than themselves. Pride is the root of all sin.

Speechless the lawyers depart one by one from the Lord's presence stung by His convicting words. They will remember these words in the day of judgment when their fully-awakened conscience will smite them with the pains of eternal hell-- and conscience will never die; its flame will never abate.

There is after all no secret about the meaning of Christ's act in writing on the ground, however much we may speculate on the actual words written. As always He was moving through the prophecies, and He was illustrating with terrible emphasis the words of Jeremiah 17, vs.14:

"Oh Lord, the hope of Israel, All that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from thee SHALL BE WRITTEN IN THE EARTH because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters."

According to the Hebrew language those who are written in the earth are sentenced to death. Christ was writing the doom of that nation of Israel which for a thousand years had possessed the law but had not kept it; had boasted of the knowledge of God: yet did not know Him; had regarded themselves, as the chosen people of God, yet their sins were more and worse than those of the nations which God cast out before them. Now the time of their own judgment as a nation was hastening on. Another 40 years (the same period of probation with which their history as a nation began in the wilderness wanderings) would bring them to the outbreak of the Roman war which would see the end of the nation in the ruins of city, temple and priesthood, altar and sacrifice. Their doom was written that day in the dust of their temple floor, by the finger of the Eternal God whom they professed to serve but never knew.

Cursed are they whose names are written in the earth; blessed they whose names are written in heaven, in the eternal marble, traced there by finger of God, never to be erased (Hebrews 12:18-24).

#### THE HIGHER PURPOSE

The story of the fallen woman is not ended yet, however. The lawyers take their departure in shame. The silent crowd waits. There is to be no stoning. The Lord lifts up His eyes upon the accused and asks where her accusers are. Does no man condemn her? "No man, Lord" is her trembling reply.

"Neither do I", says her Saviour, much to the scandal of many good men, especially in the early centuries of the Church, when the story first began to be criticised as non-canonical. Those men could not believe the Lord would use such language to one whose sin was so scandalous and mortal. They had not fully comprehended the purpose of the Saviour's coming into the world. "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the World, but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17).

It was enough that she was already condemned by the law of Moses: and the Lord was in process of showing that the Jews', reliance on the Law and their boasting of it was vain. More persons than the crestfallen lawyers had been struck by the Lord's words. Not a soul in that crowd which thronged the temple court that day but felt the keen thrust Of those words, "He that is without sin among you...." A higher purpose than merely to endorse the sentence of the Law was being pursued by Christ. He, the Lawgiver in Person, to whom Moses on Sinai acted as clerk; He who wrote at Sinai, and who now had written in the dust of the temple floor the condemnation of the entire nation, had other business in view. He saw the woman's trembling soul. Her need was for forgiveness and the power to lead a new and penitent life. Both are here in the Saviour's words: "No condemnation - and now go and sin no More." With the word spoken by the Eternal Word, her soul received grace and light and life and love. She stood, a new creature in Christ, Jesus. Old things had passed away and all things were now wondrous new.

Says Dr. Rudolf Stier in magnificent grasp of it all: "He who effects a cessation from sin accomplishes more than all human law and judgment can do. And this is the glory of the Lord's superiority to Moses, the revelation of which is an essential design of the gospel of John."

The divine character of the story with its powerful and unique testimony to Christ's deity gives it an irrefutable claim to its place in Holy Scripture, and the alleged manuscript difficulties brought forward by those who would exclude this narrative from the sacred canon are trivial indeed when placed beside this solemn action of Christ in writing upon the ground.

Christ's mysterious act showed that His secrets were known only to Himself, who understood all and was the searcher and the revealer of the secrets in the heart of man.

His act was also a claim to divinity as it constituted an assertion of His supreme right to judge the world. Here was the veritable Lawgiver Himself in relation to whom Moses was, as we have pointed out, only the scribe.

The moral lesson also is obvious that we should be slow to apportion blame to others, and quick to remember our own sins.

There is a solemn parabolical shadow cast by this remarkable story. The sin of adultery was the national sin of Israel. Priests and rabbis in those days are reported to have been singularly addicted to the sin and this might well shed some light upon the fact that the male partner to the woman's crime nowhere appears in the story, although the woman was taken "in the act". The nation of Israel throughout its history was singularly addicted to "spiritual adultery". How often this adulterous wife of Jehovah is charged with the unspeakable crime of giving herself as a faithless bride to the idols of the heathen? (See especially the prophecies of Hosea, and of Ezekiel 23).

Hence we read in the N. T. that true believers are virgins who keep themselves undefiled from this world and its ways.

This is undoubtedly the true signification of the description of the Church of Christ in Revelation 14, verse 4:

"These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins (i.e., they are not contaminated with spiritual idolatry). These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb."

The spirit of this great story of forgiveness is beautifully caught and presented in poetic form by Fay Inchfawn:

A Woman Who was a Sinner

By: Fay Inchfawn

All her accusers went,

But still she stayed,

So pale, and so intent

Her great eyes prayed

Dumbly for pardon, yet for very shame

Her lips would never dare to speak His name.

She stayed until He spoke,  
And at His word  
Her sorrowful heart broke.  
No lost soul ever heard  
Accents so courtly, nor so kind before;  
She might have been a queen - or even more.  
"Woman" - the wonder thing  
The Lord God made,  
For man's pure perfecting  
In Eden's glade,  
Knowing the winding ways her feet had trod  
He saw her still the handiwork of God -  
You are dark and distressed  
But I speed you towards the sun;  
Your past stares, demon possessed,  
But I busy your days that are done.  
Men call you unworthy to live,  
You shall live to be worthy, indeed;  
In the untilled soil of your future  
I set a new seed.  
Out from the house of destruction,  
There is still an open door,  
That way lies dawn in the making:  
"Go, and sin no more."

#### A DIALOGUE ON DEITY

This beautiful yet terrible manifestation of Himself as the Almighty, the Everlasting Word, to the comfort of the penitent woman, and the confusion of the proud ungodly is followed by a verbal exposition of His deity - and the manner thereof - in the dialogue which immediately follows.

Though the lawyers had departed in shame, those who remained were not by any means reconciled to the claims of Christ. Even miracles had failed to convince the nation: how much less the forgiveness and spiritual restoration of an abandoned woman? The ungodly are not really interested in affairs of conscience and so their hostile confrontation with Christ went on its bitter and remorseless way. The wicked are bent always upon their own destruction, and here they almost hammer at the gates of hell demanding admission.

"I am the light of the world", declares the Lord to the waiting multitude in the temple court. He might have been quoting Isaiah 42:6. Indeed our King James translators in the margin of their incomparable English Bible direct our attention to that text for its bearing upon Christ's astounding word (itself a veritable claim to deity) -

"I will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the gentiles".

The same word was, taken up by Simeon in that very, place where Christ then stood, when Mary brought the Holy Child into the temple on the 40th day to "present Him to the Lord".

In his inspired NUNC DIMITTIS Simeon declares that this Child would be a light to lighten the gentiles and the glory of His people Israel". For the prophecy does not declare that Christ should come just for the Jews to set up a Jewish kingdom, but that He should be a light to enlighten all the world. Hence - "I am the light of the world".

Likewise, the inspired Zacharias' prophecy at the birth of his son, John the Baptist, that "the dayspring from on high" was about to break upon them and the Lord Himself would presently appear (as appear He did six months later in the stableyard at Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger) - "to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death", said Zacharias (Luke 1:79), quoting from that same 42nd chapter Isaiah, verse 7 - "to open the blind eyes, to bring the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."

See also the prophecy of gentile (that is WORLD) salvation in Isaiah 9, verse 2:

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."

Then there is the remarkable prophecy of Zech. 14:6-7, which tells us that the day of Messiah would be a day without an ending - not like one of the earth's days. "The light shall not be clear, dark" - (margin) - that is, there shall not be light and dark, morning and evening, day and night, but "one day, known to the Lord", the Lord's Day, the endless sabbath, so that "at eventide it shall be light".

This prophecy is all the more to be considered in relation to Christ's declaration that He is "the light of the world", because, as we have already seen in our study of the preceding chapter of John's Gospel, the Lord associated Himself with the mystic "Feast of Tabernacles" described in that prophecy, and claimed that the living waters of the gospel river of grace which Zechariah sees flowing from Jerusalem, were fulfilled in Himself (Zech. 14:8 and John 7:37).

In this prophecy in particular, as also in the vision of Isaiah quoted above, the Lord moved and lived in those eventful days at Jerusalem. Always He pointed back to the prophetic word which was being fulfilled in Himself, and if the people had only had eyes to see and ears to hear the words of the prophets, they would have known who He was, who spoke to them, and who so deliberately claimed that He was the

fulfillment thereof.

That in so clothing Himself with the prophetic word He yet continued to veil Himself from the eyes of the ungodly, is part of the mystery, and also the nature and purpose of prophecy. The Bible is a spiritual Book to be understood by the spiritual Mind. Faith alone can "know the things of the Spirit of God". It is no small token of the inspiration of the Word, that it hides its secrets and its treasures from the ungodly, A mere human word would enter into fulsome interpretations so that the Word would be available to the common understanding. But the Bible is not beholden to the approval of an ungodly and sin-loving world. It can afford to be passed by and be derided by the world, for God has chosen the things that are not to bring to naught the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. The intention of the inspired Word is to regenerate sinners not to dazzle the vain and the indifferent "Blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear."

It is enough that the ungodly CAN know that Jesus is Christ and God, but they cannot know "savingly". That blessing is reserved for the repentant as in the case, of the Woman of John Four, as well as the Woman of John Eight, the Woman of Luke Seven, and the Woman of Mark Five.

Hence the Lord declares (John 8:12) that only the man who follows Him will see the Light of the World and no longer abide in darkness.

Hence too, the Pharisees objected that it was easy enough for a man to "bear witness of himself", but such a witness must be invalid - "thy record not true".

See now the manner of the Lord's witness to Himself, as He retorts upon the Pharisees,-

"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. Ye judge after the flesh: I judge no man."

"And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me."(John 8, verses 14 -18)

#### FROM THE THRONE TO THE THRONE

Let us consider these words: "I know whence I came and whither I go, but ye cannot tell or know this". Whence did Christ come and whither would His path lead? From the Eternal Throne to the Eternal Throne.

Again, "I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me." The sentence sounds unfinished and so it would be in the lips of any other. Only the Eternal Son can say "I and the Father". The Godhead is not a lonely isolated Essence, but a holy society, subsistence, and communion of love in Three Persons. The Holy Spirit is not mentioned here, for the time of the manifestation of that ineffable mystery was not yet come (See John 7:39). Yet the Holy Spirit is implied in the words of Christ, for Father and Son can only be an eternal Oneness in the indivisible unity of Godhead as the Spirit is common to both - the Spirit of the Father and the Son (Romans 8:9) - in co-eternal and co-equal majesty.

In His true humanity Christ retained His undivided communion in the Godhead by that same Spirit who personifies the love of the Father and the Son and for each. Christ shows this in His words to the Pharisees - words of intense meaning and unfathomable depth, which they could not grasp, but

which, because of the evil in their hearts, only roused their hatred.

Now in what sense did the Father "bear witness of the Son"? (v.18). In a variety of ways but chiefly in the prophecies and in the mighty words and works of Christ. Three times in the Lord's earthly ministry the Father addresses Him from heaven with audible voice, attesting Him to be His Beloved Son (Matt. 3:17), enjoining the disciples (and through them, all the world, to "hear Him", for only in Him and through Him, the Eternal Word and Wisdom of God, did the Father ever speak (Matt. 17:5). Finally, when the hour of crucifixion drew near and the forerunners of the gentile world began already to seek after Him ("Sirs, we would see Jesus" John 12:21) - He summoned the Father to glorify His name and the Voice of the Eternal replied in the roll of the Eternal thunders, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." (12:28). The significance of that final voice was that it attested the crowning success of Christ's mission and also showed what was the object of that mission - to glorify the Father's Name.

By obedience unto death, in the frailty of human nature, He who was God glorified God; the Son glorified the Father and the Father undertook in terms of the everlasting covenant, that His Beloved should not be left in the bonds of death, but should rise as glorious Victor over death and the grave, to return again to the majesty of the throne on high. He should not simply re-assume the glory He laid aside, but in a new sense not before possible, by His own merit, having submitted Himself to the most awful tests He should be approved ON FALLEN MAN'S BEHALF AND IN MAN'S NATURE AND LIKENESS. He should assume the rule of all creation as its pattern, its firstborn, its king. So would be fulfilled in completeness the Father's design and purpose in Creation (See John 17:1-3). Man at last would triumph over sin and death and share the Eternal Throne with God - but only as he (man) becomes partaker with Christ in that new and eternal creation which Christ brought with Him from the grave of sin and death.

The querulous Pharisees, blinded by their own pride and ignorance, reject the light extended to them and seizing upon the word "Father" demand "Where is thy Father?"

Easy would it have been for any author about to perpetrate a pious fraud to have struck home at this point of his narrative to describe some popular notion of the nature of God. Not so this author. For Christ is reported by John to say "If ye had known me ye need not have asked, for he who knows me knows the Father, with whom I am One eternally". This is the purport of His reply. His actual words are:

"Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also" (John 8, v.19).

Always the words of Christ are exceedingly high.

Eternity shines through them.

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/charles-alexander/why-christ-wrote-on-the-ground-ch-81-20/>

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