

# Do You Know My Jesus? Part 2

# But I Say Unto You

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## Turning the World Upside Down

*Now when Jesus had finished saying these words, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as their scribes.  
(Matthew 7:28–29)*

God is like Jesus. So if we want to get to know God, we can start by thinking more about who Jesus is. Next week, we'll be looking at Jesus's compassion which he demonstrated through his miracles and other acts of kindness, but this week, we're going to focus in on Jesus's teaching and actions which made strong statements about who God actually is and what the kingdom is all about.

Throughout the book of Acts, Jesus's disciples got in trouble by the religious and political leaders for challenging the status quo. Beginning in Acts 4 and extending through the rest of the book, the disciples found themselves on trial over and over for their statements and controversial actions. A group of disgruntled religious people went to the political leaders of their city and complained, "These people **who have been turning the world upside down** have come here also, and Jason has entertained them as guests. They are all acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus" (Acts 17:6–7).

It is this spirit of *turning the world upside down* that characterizes Jesus and his ministry. The people of Israel could not believe what they were seeing Jesus do and hearing Jesus say. They complained and tried to trick Jesus, but he kept on pressing towards a new way of living and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God.

From literally flipping over tables in the temple to overturning cultural barriers and challenging traditions, Jesus leads the way in shouting from the hilltops, "You have heard that it's been said...**but I say unto you!**"

## But I Say Unto You

*You have heard that it was said...but I say unto you. (Matthew 5:21-22, etc)*

Six times in Matthew 5 Jesus names a tradition of the elders or quotes a passage from the Law, and six times he alters, intensifies, or discounts that tradition entirely. Jesus's drive to challenge these traditions came from his knowledge that the kingdom of God was at hand. He knew that seeking God's kingdom meant seeking God's justice, and this would require a major change in the minds of the people. John began his ministry in quite the same way, and he even made the radical suggestion that God could raise up a people from the stones to fulfill his promises to Abraham (Matthew 3:9).

While Jesus's teachings certainly challenged the status quo, it is his actions that stand out to me as being earth-shattering. In the book of John, Jesus performed miracle after miracle which critiqued everything the people thought they knew about worship, God, the temple, and who is in and who is out.

In John 2, **Jesus flips over tables** and says, "You have heard that it was said that the temple's purpose is to make money off of your devotion to God, but I say unto you that God is building a temple that is not made by human hands."

In John 5, **Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath who had been ill for thirty-eight years** and says, "You have heard that it was said that man was made for the Sabbath, but I say unto you that God shows mercy on those who do not have rest because of their ailments, so God desires mercy, not sacrifice."

In John 6, **Jesus feeds five thousand** and says, "You have heard that it was said that the Messiah is going to give you a physical kingdom and take care of all of your physical needs, but I say unto you that the kingdom of God is not in meat or drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

In John 9, **Jesus heals a man who was born blind** and says, "You have heard that it was said that this man was born blind because of his sin or his parent's sin, but I say unto you that the ones who say these kinds of things are spiritually blind and need a different kind of sight."

In John 18-19, **Jesus died on a cross** and says, "You have heard that it has been said that the Messiah would come with a great army and establish the kingdom of God on earth, but I say to you that the kingdom of God is not of this world."

While all of these examples definitely can turn one's world upside down, there are two situations I left out that I want to pay special attention to. These are the stories of the woman at the well and the woman caught in adultery.

## The Well and the Stone

*She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said,  
"Neither do I condemn you. Go your way,  
and from now on do not sin again."  
(John 8:11)*

Jesus's interaction with the woman at the well is one of my favorites in John. It was one of those texts that opened up my mind to a whole new way of viewing the world around me as well as my relationship with God. Maybe one day we can talk about the world changing implications of the conversation here between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, but today we will just tackle one element of this story.

One day, as Jesus's fame was growing, he decided to leave Judea and travel back to Galilee. On his way, it was necessary to travel through Samaria. Now, as some of you know, the Samaritans were impure descendants of Abraham, so there was a lot of animosity between them and the Jewish people. As John lets the reader know in the story, "Jews do not share things in common with the Samaritans" (John 4:9). So when Jesus asked a Samaritan woman for a drink, she responded, "How is that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?"

This woman had two things working against her: not only was she a Samaritan, but she was a woman with a questionable history. By every standard, she would be considered perpetually unclean, but Jesus, according to his custom, says, "You have heard that it has been said that you are a dirty Samaritan and an unclean woman, but I say unto you that you have equal access to the presence of God and the water of life!"

How cool is that? That is what our God is like because **God is like Jesus.**

After a short exchange about this water, Jesus reveals that he knows her history: "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true" (John 4:17-18)! The woman is shocked. This Jewish man, who she now knows is some kind of prophet, is talking to her and asking to drink from her jar. When she realizes that Jesus is the Christ, she takes on the role of a missionary and begins proclaiming the good news to everyone in her village.

John tells us that many of the Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony which led them to interact with the Son of God (John 4:39-42).

Okay, now let's switch gears and talk about the woman who was caught in adultery.

In John, Jesus travels to Jerusalem for the feasts as was commanded in the Law. During the feast of booths, the people would set up tents to represent God being in their midst. In chapter 8, the Pharisees bring a woman who had been caught in adultery, perhaps in one of the tents, before Jesus to see what needed to be done. They suggest that she be stoned like the Law of Moses prescribes.

Instead of playing their game, Jesus writes in the dust. This is a potential reference to Jeremiah 17:13 where Jeremiah says that those who forsake the Lord will have their names written in the dust because they rejected living water, which is what Jesus had just spoken of in chapter 8 of John.

After they continued to question him, Jesus looked up and said, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7). Of course, the only person there without sin was Jesus. Beginning with the oldest, the people leave one by one because they all realize they are just as worthy of death as the woman they are accusing. Jesus straightens up again and after a short exchange says, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again" (John 8:11).

Raise your hand if you have been divorced, are the children of parents who are divorced, are close to a situation where a couple split up, or have been in a toxic relationship in the past.

Jesus sits at the well with you.

Jesus looks up from the dust and says to those who look down their nose at you, to the family that talks about you behind your back, to the church that has made you feel unwelcome, to the pain that you direct towards yourself, "He who is without sin, cast the first stone." And he says those incredible words, "Neither do I condemn you..."

This is the God we serve. There is no other.

And if Jesus, if God, isn't going to throw a stone at you, then I won't either. In fact, if someone tries to throw a stone at you, I will do what I can to stand in the way so that it strikes me instead because you have been hurt enough.

See, it is our privilege to stand up and say, "You have heard that it has been said...but I say unto you." Regardless of whether we're dealing with our work culture, family problems, or even

our faith, we can follow Jesus's lead by refusing to pass on the hurt and the pain. Let's take a look at a few examples of what this might look like from day to day.

## Intergenerational Trauma

*What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezekiel 18:2)?*

You have probably heard an authority figure say, "If you don't respect me, I won't respect you." When people in authority positions use the word "respect," they typically mean that you have to do everything they tell you...or else. But when employees, students, etc, use the word "respect," they are typically asking to be treated as a human, with dignity, love, and gratefulness. So when that boss says, "Respect me or I won't respect you," what they are saying is, "You do whatever I tell you to do, or I won't treat you like a human being..."



Like Jesus, you have an opportunity to say, "You have heard that it has been said...but I say unto you..." Whether it is unhelpful or even harmful religious ideas, workplace culture, or family trauma, you can break the cycle of intergenerational trauma. You don't have to pass that on to the next generation.

If you have employees that work under you, for example, you may think that the only way to run your company, manage your department, or lead those under you is by copying what you experienced as an employee when you first started out. Maybe you worked for a family member or for some other person you knew who was demanding, uncaring, ungrateful, and perhaps a little hateful. It can be easy to employ those same strategies when you're dealing with your workers. Or you can break the cycle. You can say, "You have heard that it has been said...but I say unto you..."

Or perhaps you were raised in a household where your guardians screamed at each other all the time. Maybe they abused you physically, emotionally, or mentally. It can be so easy to follow in their footsteps. It can be easy to think those are the only ways to handle conflict,

disagreements, or disobedience. But it doesn't have to be this way. You have the power to say, "You have heard it has been said...but I say unto you..."

Yes, this might take some effort on your part. Quality change always takes effort. But you **can** make a difference. You **can** break the cycle.

Think about how elders in the past have treated members that no longer attend this congregation. How might we comfort them by speaking and living these words? Or think about how you react when someone cuts you off in traffic, how teachers sometimes treat students: you don't have to pass it on to the next person.

The "eye for an eye" mentality is one of the very things Jesus said is not part of the kingdom mentality. That's how it usually works in the world, but in the kingdom we turn the other cheek and break the cycle of violence. We leave our gift at the altar and make things right with our brother. We love our enemies.

Husbands, society now expects women to work thirty to forty hours a week and then come home to do the same household chores she was expected to do when most women stayed at home. It doesn't have to be this way. You can look your wife in the eye while you're doing dishes and say, "You have heard that it has been said...but I say unto you..." Wives, you have heard your whole life that men aren't supposed to cry and show emotions. You can tell your husband, "You have heard that it has been said...but I say unto you..."

## Conclusion

We don't have to pass on the abuse we have received. Whether it is religious trauma, unhealthy ways of viewing God, parental abuse, or even workplace culture, we have the power to stand up and say, "You have heard that it has been said...but I say unto you."

You'll get into a lot of trouble for doing this. Jesus died for this very reason in fact.

But think about the joy of the woman at the well. Think of the relief of the woman caught in adultery. Think of the pride Zacchaeus must have felt. Or maybe picture the look on Peter's face when Jesus asked him to feed his sheep.

It's up to us to turn the world upside down. Not only should we try to find the confidence to proclaim this truth, but this also means listening to people who come along and say, "You have heard that it has been said...but I say unto you..." We don't like hearing this, but if we want the world to be a better place we need more thirty-year-olds like Jesus to stand up and say that they

won't pass on the trauma to the next generation. In fact, we need people of every age to be doing this.

People get angry when we flip over their tables, but the shouts of relief of the poor people who were being taken advantage of made it worth it for Jesus. Let's follow in his steps. So go out there, flip some tables, and turn the world upside down. This is who God is, and this is who God has called you to be.