

Comments on John 8

1 JESUS went unto the mount of Olives. 2 And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. 3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, 4 They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. 5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? 6 This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with [his] finger wrote on the ground, [as though he heard them not]. 7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. 8 And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. 9 And they which heard [it], being convicted by [their own] conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, [even] unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. 10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? 11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

v7:53-8:11 When the opposing groups split up, the Sanhedrin goes home (v. 7:53) and Jesus apparently "camps out" on the Mount of Olives (v. 1). He comes into the Temple early in the morning, and sits down and teaches the people (v. 2). The scribes and Pharisees try to entrap Jesus in a seemingly impossible situation in an effort to fault him. They bring a woman to him who was caught in the act of adultery (v. 3), and inform him of as much (v. 4). They then ask him the leading question in an attempt to pit him against Moses (v. 5). Jesus ignores them, and goes on teaching (v. 6). The Pharisees don't take Jesus' hint, and they keep bothering him about it. Jesus responds, "Let the sinless among you cast the first stone at her" (v. 7) and then stoops down and goes back to teaching again (v. 8). The Pharisees are stunned at Jesus' reply, with their own consciences convicting them. They leave one by one until none of the Pharisees remain, only the woman (v. 9). Jesus stands up from writing and sees all of the Pharisees have left, and only the woman remains. So he asks her where her accusers have gone to, and whether anyone seeking to condemn her remain (v. 10). She replies that none of her accusers remain. Jesus says he does not condemn her either, and admonishes her to repent (v. 11).

The text of these verses is probably not part of the original Gospel of John as it is not present in the earliest Greek manuscripts. When examined closely it is clear the story is an insertion as v. 12 continues the Tabernacles theme from the

preceding chapter. Most scholarly commentators consider the original author of these verses to be John based upon content, rhetoric, and style of the Greek. Where the original text came from is unknown.

v1 This verse and the preceding one in 7:53 are probably glosses placed in the text by the final redactor in an attempt to make the story flow more smoothly.

v2 Jesus is in a public place teaching a large group of people. The Pharisees intentionally pick a public area with witnesses to for their plan to get him into trouble.

v3-4 In attempting to trap Jesus, the accusing Pharisees violated the Law on a number of critical points:

They should not have brought the woman into the Temple precinct as she was unclean as a result of copulation, cf. Lev. 15:18.

They do not bring the man with whom the adultery was committed along, cf. Deut. 22:22-29.

Unless they themselves were the ones who caught her in the act, which is unlikely unless one of them was the one copulating with her, they are violating the Law by holding a trial without the minimum two witnesses, cf. Deut. 17:6.

The act of stoning someone within the Temple precinct, the act they are trying to provoke, would certainly not be permitted (cf. Deut 22:24 which says to stone people outside the gates, also cp. Lev. 24:14, Num. 15:35, Deut. 17:5).

They are attempting to trap Jesus in the letter of the Law while they violate it in order to set up the trap. This is probably why Jesus initially ignores their question in v. 6, because they are such gross hypocrites and their case is so intrinsically flawed. Their embarrassment in v. 9 when Jesus questions their righteousness certainly stems, at least in part, from these flagrant violations of the Law.

v3 "scribes", a hint that this text is an insertion and probably redacted as the Greek term for "scribes" is not found in any other of John's writings. Another hint is this verse presents "the Pharisees" as approaching Jesus, being rebuked, and then all leaving in v. 9, yet in v. 13 there again are "the Pharisees".

v4 Note only the woman is brought before Jesus. Where is the

man with whom she had committed the act? Why wasn't he brought as well? What does this say of the Pharisee's motives, as well as what Jesus says to them in v. 7? They are observing a double standard, one which the Law clearly doesn't condone.

v5 They are attempting to pit Jesus against the Law. From this the reader may safely assume capital punishment for adultery was not in force at that time, otherwise there would have been no controversy. We also have to recall Jesus' very compassionate approach to women who were classified as "sinners", cp. Luke 7:37-50, John 4:16-18. Given such a pattern, the Pharisees thought for certain they could entrap Jesus with the letter of the Law.

Regarding this text there commonly arises the debate as to whether mercy or justice is appropriate, and whether Jesus was upholding the Law in sparing the woman from capital punishment. In these matters reality is often more complicated than what it seems given the superficial reading and paucity of detail (e.g., we nothing of the woman's history, the man's history, whether she was married or he, whether she knew he was married, and so on). Further complicating matters is the underlying issue that when the men of Israel, particularly the priests, lead the women into sins of this type the blame is placed at the feet of the men, cf. Hosea 5:14. The primary subject at hand is not sexual immorality, so attempting to use this as such is acontextual.

It is probable the Pharisees were trying to get Jesus in trouble with the Romans. The occupying Romans forbade the Jews any capital punishment as all such matters had to be deferred to Roman judgement, cf. 18:31. So, the Pharisees might be trying to put Jesus in between the Law and the Romans with no apparent way out. The way they saw it either way he answered they could get him in trouble, either by accusing him of breaking the Law or by turning him into the Romans for insurrection.

"Moses in the law", referring to Lev. 20:10 and Deut. 22:21.

v6 The author explicitly spells out the Pharisee's intent to the reader and then informs the reader that Jesus perceived their intent, and so he ignored them. The stooping and writing with his finger means he continued on with his teaching (note in 7:14-15 Jesus is teaching the people with writing) as though he were not interrupted by them at all.

There is considerable speculation as to what it is Jesus wrote, but it is all simply speculation.

v7 "he that is without sin", the implicit subject here is not sin in general, but is the sin of adultery. Jesus has caught them scapegoating a woman who is guilty of what they themselves are

guilty of. Jesus turns the tables on them and puts them on trial instead of them putting her on trial.

Were all of her accusers adulterers? We cannot say. But, recall that to look upon a woman with lust is to commit adultery already in your heart, so the implicit accusation Jesus is making need not be that of literal adultery.

Jesus is also implying the manner in which they are trying the woman violates the Law, see the comments above on v. 3-4.

"let him first cast a stone", the Law required the accusing and convicting witness to cast the first stone, cf. Deut. 17:7. Jesus has caught the Pharisees in the manner in which they were seeking to catch him. They are trying to catch Jesus in a capital case, he turns it around and tells them that whoever is not guilt can start executing the capital punishment.

v9 "standing in the midst", in the midst of the multitude that Jesus was teaching. She is left alone of the group of Pharisees which brought her in, but the people Jesus has been teaching from v. 2 are apparently witnesses to the whole thing.

v11 "neither do I condemn thee", i.e., condemn her to death as is the case in v. 10 where they were seeking to condemn her to death. He does tell her to stop sinning.

12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

13 The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true. 14 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. 15 Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. 16 And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. 17 It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. 18 I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.

19 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. 20 These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.

v12-59 This section of text is closely associated with that of the preceding chapter in subject and content. One thing emphasized in particular in this chapter is the way the people in v. 31-59 flip-flop between spiritual and physical interpretations on what Jesus says as it suits their needs. They are perfectly

capable of understanding such things, but only do so in a self-serving manner. Every time Jesus responds to a question, the Pharisees ignore his response, change the subject, and try to attack him on some other point.

v12-20 These verses return us to the Tabernacles theme, and more specifically build on the theme from 7:37 wherein he proclaims himself to be the source of living water. Now, he proclaims himself to be the source of spiritual light as well. As discussed in the general comments on chapter 7, both water and light are major themes of the Tabernacles feast.

Jesus is teaching in the Temple, inside the treasury (v. 20). Jesus announces to the people he is the light of life (v. 12). The Pharisees accuse him of bearing witness of himself (v. 13). Jesus replies that even though he bears witness of himself, it is still true because they, his critics, don't know what they are talking about and he does (v. 14). Jesus tells them they are not spiritual as they judge after the manner of the flesh, and he himself if not judging anyone in this manner (v. 15). If he does judge, he does so truly with the Father's endorsement (v. 16). That his judgement is endorsed by the Father results in two witnesses and according to the Law, two witnesses may legally testify (v. 17). Jesus does bear witnesses of himself, but his Father also bears witness of him (v. 18). The Pharisees then grasp at the only ambiguity possible and ask Jesus where his father is, to which Jesus replies they know neither himself or his Father (v. 19). Despite opposing the Pharisees, Jesus goes unhindered (v. 20).

To us this conversation seems a bit trite, almost name-calling. However, what is happening is in fact a very serious theological discussion, which is played out in a rather obscure manner for a Western reader. The underlying theme is that of Isa. 11:1-4 wherein the Messiah, the stem of Jesse, is characterized as one who judges righteously as a result of the anointing of the Spirit. Jesus is identifying himself as this character, and the Pharisees are behaving in precisely the opposite manner. Thus, the Pharisees are the opposite of the Messiah.

v12 "I am the light of the world", cp. Isa. 2:5, Isa. 60:19.

v13 This matter of bearing witness of yourself is one previously addressed by Jesus with these Pharisees at Jerusalem, also during a public confrontation in the Temple at a feast, cf. 5:31-32. There Jesus outwitted them, here he isn't even bothering to reiterate his logic, he simply states the fact that the Father endorses him and so there are two witnesses.

v14 This verse reiterates the content of 7:27-29.

v15-16 When Jesus says he judges no man, he is referring to the manner in which the Pharisees judge, after the manner of the flesh. Jesus does not judge after the manner of the flesh, he judges after the manner of the Spirit, cf. 5:30, 7:24, 12:47-48. The manner of the flesh which they employ is exhibited in 7:50-52, where the Law is blatantly disregarded, and in the subsequent accusations hurled at him in this chapter.

v16 Implicit in Jesus' statement is that his branding the Pharisees as judging after the manner of the flesh is endorsed by the Father.

"I and the Father", the Anchor Bible (AB) states the Greek construction of this statement is a form of the Divine name and implies solidarity with the Father.

v17 "two men", note Jesus calls his Father a "man".

v19 "Where is thy father?", it was a widely held belief the Messiah was "the son of God", cf. Matt. 16:16, Matt. 26:63. How literally they took this is unclear. It is also clear they saw the Messiah as of Davidic lineage as well, cf. 7:42. It would appear from v. 41 what the Pharisees are doing is questioning Jesus' legitimacy through his paternity. Jesus is making some rather bold claims, and the Pharisees are trying to force him into an argument of literal physical specifics. But, Jesus ignores their attempts to bait him.

"know", reiterates the subject of 6:44-46, although this is a completely different audience.

21 Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. 22 Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. 23 And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. 24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am [he], ye shall die in your sins.

25 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even [the same] that I said unto you from the beginning. 26 I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. 27 They understood not that he spake to them of the Father. 28 Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am [he], and [that] I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I

speaking these things. 29 And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him. 30 As he spake these words, many believed on him.

v21-30 Jesus, using the dichotomies built in v. 12-20, plainly contrasts himself with the Pharisees. Where Jesus is going, they are not going (v. 21). They respond with a ridiculous personal attack (v. 22). Jesus ignores it and continues on with the dichotomy to say he himself is from above and is not earthly while they are underneath heaven, being earthly (v. 23). They will die in their sins if they refuse to believe in him (v. 24). The Pharisees then ask him who he is and Jesus replies that his story has not changed from the beginning and he is saying the same thing now (v. 25), implying they have never listened or heard him. Jesus could say many things about them, but unlike what they have to say, what Jesus has to say is true because the Father has told him what to say (v. 26), but they refuse to understand (v. 27). Jesus concludes the hostilities with the Pharisees by telling them they will only understand who he is after they have lifted him up (v. 28), after that they will know that the Father and he are one (v. 29). Of those of the crowd who are present, many believe on Jesus (v. 30).

v21-22 This verse reiterates the statement of 7:34-36 for emphasis.

v25 Jesus addressed two issues here. The more plain one is Jesus is tired of their deliberate ignorance of what he has told them. He has maintained his testimony the whole time, and they have done everything they could to ignore it and warp it. So, he is tired of their questions, which are nothing but polemics.

The second issue goes well beyond the present conflict and places the antagonism between himself and Satan. In v. 23-24 Jesus identifies them as earthly and sinful, and later on in v. 44 he identifies them as children of Satan. The original conflict, in the beginning, was that of the War in Heaven when Satan opposed the Father's plan and Jesus endorsed it. Thus, Jesus is couching his statement in an eternal context. This antagonism permeates the rest of John's Gospel, cf. 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, 17:15.

v26 Jesus submits to the will of the Father and is completely reconciled to His will, and so he hears and says what the Father tells him, cp. 12:49.

v28-29 Jesus must be speaking in a Last Judgement "when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess" (cf. Isa. 45:20-25) context as there is no other setting wherein the openly rebellious confess such a thing. Jesus is the Savior, as

referenced in the Isaiah citation above, and the only way they will admit to this is when they are forced by circumstances.

v28 "lifted up", by being lifted up Jesus will draw all men to himself, cf. 12:31-32. For the OT context of being "lifted up" cf. Deut. 21:22.

v30 These people are presented as believing on Jesus as a result of what he says in this confrontation with the Pharisees. They are not presented as being spiritually convicted. Rather, we see in the subsequent verses their belief and acceptance quickly evaporates. This group is probably composed of the people spoken of in 7:12 and 7:40-41.

Recall the Jews in general were not favorably disposed towards the Sanhedrin and the ruling class elite at Jerusalem. These were Jewish Rabbis imported from Babylon by Herod to replace the local officials after he had them killed. Thus, the present members of the Sanhedrin were not locals and were subservient to the Romans. Verses 7:13 and 7:26 speaks volumes on how the people felt about the present Jewish rulers. So, when they see Jesus publicly standing up to them and humiliating them, some of the people would have been attracted to Jesus for no other reason than this.

31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, [then] are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. 33 They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? 34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. 35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: [but] the Son abideth ever. 36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. 37 I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

38 I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. 39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. 40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. 41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, [even] God. 42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. 43 Why do ye not understand my speech? [even] because ye cannot hear my word. 44 Ye are of [your] father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is

a liar, and the father of it. 45 And because I tell [you] the truth, ye believe me not. 46 Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? 47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear [them] not, because ye are not of God.

48 Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? 49 Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. 50 And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. 51 Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

52 Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. 53 Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? 54 Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: 55 Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw [it], and was glad. 57 Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? 58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. 59 Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

v31-59 Jesus changes who he is addressing from the Pharisees to those in v. 30 who profess belief on him. These verses present a change in mood where the Jews in general start out casual believers but end up wanting to kill Jesus. They just want to believe in him as a deliverer, so when he tells them they have to change their walk and actually do what he is preaching their belief in him fades. As the goes on the Jews become increasingly hostile and Jesus becomes increasingly blunt in his assessment of their motives and desires.

He tells the believers from v. 30 that if they continue on in his word, then they shall be his disciples (v. 31), and they will know the truth and be made free (v. 32).

They respond and say they are Abraham's children and have never been in bondage to any man (v. 33). Jesus rebuts their statement by stating those who sin are slaves to sin (v. 34), and slaves do not abide in the master's house forever as does the son of the master (v. 35). Thus, if the son makes the slave free, then they will be free indeed (v. 36). He knows they are literal descendants of Abraham, but he is not their spiritual father as they are murderous in their hearts, and he was not like this (v. 37). Jesus has told them the truth according to his Father, but they want to do the works of their father (v. 38).

They again insist Abraham is their father, and Jesus contradicts them saying he is not their father because they do not do the works Abraham did (v. 39). Rather they seek to kill him for telling the truth (v. 40), which are the deeds of their spiritual father.

They demand they were not born of fornication, and God is their spiritual father (v. 41). Jesus again rebuts them saying if God were their father then they would accept Jesus (v. 42) rather than reject him and his words (v. 43). Rather, Satan is their father because they are filled with his desires and lies and do not have the truth in them (v. 44), and because Jesus tells them the truth they will not listen to him (v. 45). No one has exposed Jesus as a sinner, to show is he is not telling the truth. So, if he is telling the truth, then why else would it be they are not believing him except they had no interest in the truth (v. 46)? Those who are of God will hear God's words, and those who will not hear God's words are not of God (v. 47).

The people are angered at Jesus' bluntness and resort to personal attacks by accusing him of being a Samaritan and possessed of the devil (v. 48), thus subjecting him to public humiliation. Jesus rejects their accusation flatly, and tells them that while he honors the Father they dishonor himself (v. 49). Jesus points out he is not seeking to glorify himself, rather it is the Father who is glorifying Himself and judging (v. 50). Jesus goes on to say that if someone keeps his saying they will never see death (v. 51).

The people grasp hold of this ambiguity to attack Jesus anew and bolster their accusation of being possessed as Abraham and all the Prophets are physically dead (v. 52). They mock Jesus asking him who he thinks he is, and if he thinks he is greater than Abraham (v. 53). Jesus again rejects the popular opinion, and defers to the Father's acceptance of him, which Father they claim as their God (v. 54). Jesus says that if he contradicted his Father he would be a liar like they are (v. 55, as it is his Father that has said he is greater than Abraham, cf. Matt. 17:5). Jesus then tells them that Abraham himself saw the day of the Messiah, and rejoiced in it (v. 56).

The people are only looking for fault now and twist what Jesus says around in order to make it suit their needs. They say he isn't old enough to have seen Abraham (v. 57), which isn't what Jesus said at all. Jesus replies to them by invoking the divine name, saying that before Abraham was, "I AM". The people seize the opportunity to accuse Jesus of blasphemy and go for stones to stone him for it. But Jesus takes advantage of the crowd to hide himself among them, pass through them, and slip out of the Temple.

v33 Their assessment of their own condition is inaccurate to say

the least. Israel was in servitude in Egypt, then later conquered and scattered by Assyria, Judah went into captivity into Babylon and was only freed by the Persian king Cyrus. And, Judah and Jerusalem are presently occupied by Roman forces. While they may be speaking figuratively-spiritually, Jesus addresses such an interpretation in the next verses and points out to them that is incorrect as well.

v34-36 Jesus uses a little parable to illustrate the difference between servitude and sonship. Slaves are in the master's house, but they have no portion or inheritance as does a son of the master. The son's inheritance persists after his death in his own children. But, the slave has no inheritance to pass on to his children. So, in order to persist in the master's house, one must be as a son, and not a slave. Also cp. Matt. 21:33-46 for a related parable.

v37 Notice the people are not denying his accusation of their murderous intent. They are all well aware of the hostility present among the people, cf. 7:13, 7:25. The amazing thing is they then turn on him and become filled with this murderous intent they saw in others, as though he were suggesting they do it.

v41 The Jews realize Jesus is speaking of spiritual fatherhood and so they are claiming God is their father because they are not "born of fornications", or in other words they are not idolaters like the Canaanites, cf. Hosea 2:4. Their claim to spiritual connections to the God of Israel is based upon their avoidance of physical idols, not spiritual ones.

Given the personal nature of the attacks upon Jesus, the reader must also consider the possibility the people are casting doubt on Jesus' legitimacy. In 7:42 it is plain the people expect the Messiah to come from Davidic lineage, yet they are not seeing Jesus as such because he is from Galilee. And, with Jesus going around making obscure references to his "Father, whom they know not", the hostile crowds eager to find fault could easily grasp such ambiguity to question his parenthood. We know from Matthew's (cf. Matt. 1) and Luke's (cf. Luke 3) genealogies that such things were considered important in establishing Jesus' claim, so it is likely his opponents would attack such things.

v44 "lusts", a poor translation. A better translation would be "desires". The term "lust" is commonly equated with matters of sexual immorality in specific, but what is being addressed here is more general than that. Jesus is referring to all the carnal desires of Satan which they have subjected themselves to.

v48-50 The underlying issue in this section is that of popular opinion and public glory. The people are attempting to use the power of popular opinion as a threat to deny Jesus any public acceptance and renown. Jesus points out he isn't interested in worldly glory and overrules their appeal to popular opinion with the Father's opinion.

v48 "thou art a Samaritan", the AB states they are associating Jesus with the Samaritans who refuse to acknowledge the Jews as the exclusive offspring of Abraham.

"and hast a devil", this accusation holds a number of possibilities: Jesus is crazy, Jesus is evil, Jesus is in league with Satan and that explains all of those miracles.

v49 The implicit argument is that if the people dishonor the son of God, then they dishonor God. Thus, they are contradicting their own assertion that they are of God.

v56 "Abraham...saw it", cf. IV/JST Gen. 15:9-12. Abraham also understood the messianic symbolism of the events of Gen. 22.

v58 "I am", the Greek "ego eimi" is the emphatic personal pronoun equivalent to the Hebrew "eyeh asher eyeh" which appears in Exod. 3:14. Jesus utters the divine name, a perceived blasphemy, and this is why the people look to stone him.

v59 "they took up stones", the AB indicates the Temple of Herod was not yet finished at that time so there were stones available. Stoning was the punishment dictated by the Law for blasphemy, cf. Lev. 24:16. Jesus is nearly stoned again in 10:31.

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