

Jesus Forgives an Adulteress

The connection between **Jesus writing in the dirt** (John 8:1–11) and **Shemini Atzeret** (the "Eighth Day Assembly" following the Feast of Tabernacles) is not explicitly stated in Scripture, but there are intriguing thematic and symbolic links worth exploring. Here's a structured explanation of potential connections:

♦ 1. Timing and Context

- **John 7:2** tells us the events are during the **Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot)**.
- **John 7:37–38** places Jesus speaking on the **last and greatest day of the feast**, likely the **7th day (Hoshana Rabbah)**.
- **John 8:2** begins the next morning — **possibly Shemini Atzeret**, the **eighth day of assembly**

If this is the case, then the woman caught in adultery scene would occur **on Shemini Atzeret**, a day of **solemn assembly and reflection** (Leviticus 23:36, Numbers 29:35).

♦ 2. Themes of Shemini Atzeret

Theme	Description	Connection to John 8
Solemn Assembly	A time to conclude the joyful Sukkot and return attention solely to the LORD	Jesus draws attention from crowd's judgment to God's mercy and righteousness
Water and Spirit (John 7:37–39)	Water ceremonies on the last days of Sukkot point to the Spirit	Jesus had just offered "living water" before this scene
Renewal and Covenant	The eighth day symbolizes a new beginning after the 7-day cycle	Jesus brings a new covenant approach : mercy over legalism
Judgment and Mercy	Torah reading cycles end and restart around this time (Simchat Torah)	Jesus upholds the law but expresses mercy — "Neither do I condemn you"

♦ 3. Writing in the Dirt – Echoes of Divine Judgment

There is no clear record of what Jesus wrote, but **writing in the dust** could symbolize:

Possibility	Explanation	Link to Shemini Atzeret
Jeremiah 17:13	"Those who turn away from You will be written in the earth..."	A judgment motif — Jesus may be exposing the hypocrisy of the accusers
God writing the Law	Exodus 31:18 — God's finger wrote the Ten Commandments	On a day commemorating the Law, Jesus "rewrites" its purpose in mercy
Dust and Mortality	Genesis 3:19 — "For dust you are..."	Reflects human frailty — fitting for Shemini Atzeret's solemn tone
Yom Kippur connection	Just 2 weeks prior, God "wrote again" the tablets after Moses' intercession	Jesus intercedes for the woman just as Moses did for Israel

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◆ 4. Covenant Renewal and Heart Writing

- **Shemini Atzeret** is associated with **covenant reflection** and joy in the Torah (as celebrated in **Simchat Torah** today).
- Jesus embodies the **Word made flesh** and writes perhaps to emphasize **internal transformation**:

"I will write my laws on their hearts" — **Jeremiah 31:33**, a New Covenant passage often associated with Jesus.

◆ 5. Summary Chart

Element	Shemini Atzeret	Jesus in John 8
Time	8th day, conclusion of Tabernacles	Next morning after Hoshana Rabbah
Mood	Solemn reflection and assembly	Crowd gathered to test and accuse
Focus	End of feasting, return to Torah	End of accusation, return to mercy
Symbol	Torah & water	Word & Living Water (Jesus)
Divine writing	Law written on stone by God	Jesus writes in the dust, invoking divine wisdom
Outcome	Renewal and closeness with God	Mercy and a call to "go and sin no more"

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To compare the **account of the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1–11** with the **Law of Moses**, we can examine:

1. What **Mosaic Law** required for adultery
2. How the **scribes and Pharisees' approach** reflects or distorts the Law
3. How **Jesus responds** in light of the Law
4. What this reveals about **justice and mercy under the Law versus in Christ**

Here's a structured comparison chart, followed by an explanation:

Comparison Chart: Law of Moses vs. John 8:1–11

Aspect	Law of Moses	John 8:1–11 Account	Alignment or Difference
Adultery punishment	Death for both man and woman (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22)	Only the woman is brought forward	✗ Incomplete enforcement
Need for witnesses	Must be at least two witnesses (Deut. 17:6; 19:15)	Accusers say she was caught in the act	✓ Claimed eyewitness, but suspect motive
Execution method	Stoning mentioned for betrothed virgin (Deut. 22:23–24)	They say she should be stoned	⚠ May not apply unless she was betrothed
Justice requirement	Judges must investigate diligently (Deut. 19:18)	No investigation shown; a public trap	✗ Improper legal process
Penalty applies equally	Both adulterers are condemned (Lev. 20:10)	The man is missing from the scene	✗ Gender bias, selective enforcement
Purpose of the Law	Promote justice, holiness, and covenant faithfulness	Law used as a trap for Jesus (John 8:6)	✗ Law used manipulatively
Provision for mercy	Some allowances (e.g., cities of refuge, Yom Kippur, intercession)	Jesus shows mercy without denying sin	✓ Grace while upholding moral truth

Relevant Mosaic Law Passages

Reference	Summary
Leviticus 20:10	<i>"If a man commits adultery with another man's wife... both the adulterer and the adulteress are to be put to death."</i>
Deuteronomy 22:22	<i>"If a man is found lying with a married woman, then both of them shall die..."</i>
Deuteronomy 17:6–7	<i>"On the evidence of two or three witnesses... The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death..."</i>
Deuteronomy 19:15–19	False witnesses are to be punished as they intended for the accused
Deuteronomy 22:23–24	Betrothed virgin and man caught in the city are both to be stoned if she didn't cry out

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Analysis

The Law Upheld Justice and Equality

- The Law required both **adulterer and adulteress** to be held accountable.
- It demanded **due process**, multiple witnesses, and protection against false testimony.

The Accusers Violated the Law

- They only brought the woman, suggesting **selective application**.
- No mention of the man involved or a proper trial process.
- Their goal was not justice, but to **trap Jesus** (John 8:6), corrupting the Law's intent.

Jesus Honors the Law — and Exceeds It

- He does not deny her guilt.
- He highlights the **hypocrisy** of the accusers: "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone."
- He shows **mercy**, consistent with God's covenant heart -as seen in the prophets (e.g., Hosea, Micah 6:6–8).
- He tells the woman to **"go and sin no more"** — calling for repentance, not permissiveness.

Key Takeaway

Jesus does not *nullify* the Law of Moses — He **reveals its true spirit**:

Justice must not be twisted for personal agendas, and mercy must not excuse sin.

On Shemini Atzeret, a day of solemn assembly and renewed closeness to God, Jesus acts as the true Judge:

- **Exposing sin** (of both accuser and accused)
- **Upholding the Law's intent**
- **Extending mercy and calling for transformation**