

Comparison of Cultural Norms in Late Antiquity to Jesus' Engagement with Women

Culture in Late Antiquity	Jesus
Women were viewed as a commodity.	Jesus treated women as human beings – he walked and talked with them. He used them as positive examples (Matthew 12:42; 13:33; 15:8; 24:41; 26:6-13; Luke 4:26; 15:8-10; 21:1-4 Mark 12:41-44; 14:3-9, John 4:1-42).
A woman's domain was her home. She was expected to primarily stay inside and be invisible. If she were poor, to sustain her family she would have had to work outside of the home. She still was expected to be subservient to the men around her.	Jesus accepted women's service inside or outside of the home. Women traveled with him and the apostles. Women provided the financial means for Jesus to sustain his ministry. (Luke 8:1-3)
Rabbinical oral law declared: "He who talks with a woman in public brings evil upon himself." "One is not so much as to greet a woman." (Papazov)	Throughout the gospels we read of Jesus speaking to women publicly with no hesitation. He not only spoke to women, he also asked them to give verbal responses. (John 4:1-42; 8:9-11; 11:17-43)
Jewish religious education of women happened in the home and was minimal compared to men's. One rabbi wrote, "Let the words of the Law [Torah] be burned rather than taught to women...If a man teaches his daughter the law, it is as though he taught her lechery." (Papazov)	Jesus taught great spiritual truths to women. Martha and Mary were Jesus' close friends. Mary would sit at Jesus feet and learn. He commended her on her spiritual thirst. (Luke 10:38-42; John 4:1-42)
Husbands could easily divorce their wives.	Jesus challenged Pharisees reasons for divorce. He told them divorce was an issue of their hard hearts. (Matthew 19:3-9, Mark 10:1-12)
An adulterous woman carried the burden of the sin. She was either put away or in some cases killed.	Jesus, though not approving of adultery, forgave the adulterous woman and challenged men about their own sins. (John 8:1-11)
A Jewish man who touched a woman when she was menstruating or hemorrhaging would be seen as unclean. The Greco-Roman societies also viewed women as unclean.	Jesus not only allowed a woman who was hemorrhaging to touch him, but he blessed and healed her. (Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:25-34, Luke 8:43-48)
Women's testimony was considered worthless and untrustworthy. Even the disciples did not believe Mary Magdalene and the other women when they told them Jesus had risen. (Luke 24:11)	God chose women to be the first eyewitnesses that Jesus had risen. Mary Magdalene was the first to speak to the risen Christ. (Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20)

Papazov, Sveltana. "The Place of Women in the Graeco-Roman World." *Enrichment Journal*. The General Council of Assembly of God. Web. 04 Aug. 2015.

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