

The Woman Caught in Adultery

John 7.53-8.11

In the days following the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus continued teaching in the temple every day. Hoping to get Him to incriminate Himself, they brought a woman accused of adultery: "What do you say we should do to her?" It was a trap...but Jesus used the opportunity to show grace!

- The Case of the Missing Verses: Is John 7.53-8.11 Scripture?
  - A quick lesson in "textual criticism"!
  - Why most modern scholars don't think this story is biblical
  - Why I choose to believe it is biblical
  
- Lessons from a Story of Grace and Truth
  - Legalists objectify and condemn sinners
  
  - Libertines are indifferent toward sin
  
  - The Lord restores sinners



The New Testament is easily the best-attested text from antiquity. To see this for yourself you can Google "manuscript evidence for the New Testament." Consider this chart, which shows date of writing, date of the oldest copy, time span, and number of copies:

AUTHOR	COPY DATE	TIME SPAN	NUMBER
Plato (427-347 BC)	900 AD	1200 years	7
Herodotus (5 <sup>th</sup> c. BC)	900 AD	1300 years	8
Euripides (5 <sup>th</sup> c. BC)	1100 AD	1300 years	9
Tacitus (100 AD)	1100 AD	1000 years	20
Aristotle (4 <sup>th</sup> c. BC)	1100 AD	1400 years	49
New Testament (1st c.)	2 <sup>nd</sup> c.	< 100 years	5600

The oldest copy of most ancient writings is 1000 or more years after it was written; for the New Testament it's less than a century! While few copies exist of most ancient documents, the New Testament has over 5600! This "embarrassment of riches" creates a problem: Since there are so many copies, there are variants. The two main groups of manuscripts are the Alexandrian and Byzantine. Alexandrian manuscripts are older (2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> c.), but few in number (about 200). Byzantine manuscripts aren't as old (5<sup>th</sup> c. and later), but numerous (5000+). Alexandrian manuscripts come from Egypt, where a dry climate better preserved old manuscripts. Byzantine manuscripts come from all over the ancient world, and had to be continually renewed as previous copies deteriorated. The good news is that all the New Testament manuscripts agree about 99% of the time!

Now let's focus on John 7.53-8:11. Of about 925 manuscripts of John, over 900 include these verses. The oldest Alexandrian manuscripts do not; the numerous Byzantine manuscripts do. What about you? Roman Catholics view it as canonical because it is in the Latin Vulgate. Some Christians think it's canonical because it is in the King James Version. Many who don't think it was originally in John's Gospel still view it as a true narrative from the life of Jesus.

Bottom line: Whatever view you take on its canonicity, what do you see in Jesus' response to the Jewish religious leaders and the woman caught in adultery? What encourages you in your walk with God?