

**Text:** Jn 7.53-8.11

Our passage for this session has the name “Pericope de Adultera” – the story of the woman caught in adultery. Just like this poor woman, the passage has a spotty record which raises questions about authenticity.

## II. The pericope de adultera (Jn 7.53-8.11)

### A. External Evidence

1. The passage is omitted entirely from a number of different manuscripts
  - a. P66 and P75
  - b. Sinaiticus and Vaticanus
  - c. Codexes: L, N, T, W, Q, Y
  - d. Minuscules: 0141, 33, 157, 565, 1241, 1333\*, 1424
  - e. Majority of lectionaries
  - f. Majority of Latin Versions
  - g. Majority of Syriac Versions
2. The passage is included but marked with asterisks or obeli
3. The passage is found in other locations:
  - a. After John 7.36
  - b. After John 7.44
  - c. After John 21.25
  - d. After Luke 21.38
4. The passage is found in situ in many manuscripts, including the Majority or Byzantine text.

### B. Internal Evidence against

1. The argument is primarily made on the basis of flow.
2. The assumption is that the text flows more naturally between 7.52 and 8.12. The Pericope interrupts the flow

### C. Reasoning out the evidence

1. The textual argument against the passage is **very strong**

## 2. The authentic sound of the passage is the problem

- a. Many important proponents of the older texts acknowledge authentic sound

Morris makes some remarkable statements concerning the passage: “The textual evidence makes it impossible to hold that this section is an authentic part of the Gospel.”<sup>1</sup> But at the same time he asserts, “But if we cannot feel that this is part of John’s Gospel we can feel that the story is true to the character of Jesus. Throughout the history of the church it has been held that, whoever wrote it, this little story is authentic.”<sup>2</sup>

Westcott and Hort say the story “first came into St John’s Gospel as an insertion,”<sup>3</sup> but Hort also says, “the story itself has justly seemed to vouch for its own substantial truth....”<sup>4</sup>

Metzger says: “the evidence for the non-Johannine origin of the pericope of the adulteress is overwhelming.”<sup>5</sup> Then he adds: “At the same time the account has all the earmarks of historical veracity.”<sup>6</sup>

James White: “All of these things taken together make it a near certainty that this passage was not originally a part of the Gospel of John. Yet, the story itself is certainly in harmony with the ministry and teaching of the Lord Jesus. Most feel it was an early oral tradition that was popular primarily in the West and that it came to have a part in the Gospel of John over time.” White, p. 262

- b. The reasons why the passage sounds authentic

<sup>1</sup> Morris, p. 882

<sup>2</sup> Morris, p. 883

<sup>3</sup> Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, vol. 2: *Introduction: Appendix* (Cambridge and London: Macmillan & Co., 1881, rpt. Graz, Austria: Akademische Druch-u. Verlagsanstaltdt, 1974), p. 88 of the Appendix.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87 of the Appendix.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), p. 219.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

“In endeavoring to answer the query about the truthfulness of the story set before us, one must give due weight to two items which appear decisive. It would hardly have occurred to an inventor to represent Jesus as writing on the ground, since no record of writing by Jesus is found anywhere else in the Gospel tradition. Again, the word of Jesus to the woman’s accusers has such an atmosphere of originality about it, and is so in agreement with the unexpected and searching character of remarks attributed to Him elsewhere, that we can hardly doubt the historicity of the event.”<sup>7</sup>

### c. My conclusion: It really happened – it’s authentic

#### 3. In support of its originality

a. Regardless of the manuscript evidence against it, the passage is very early. For such a passage to be added early would be remarkable.

1) The one major uncial that has it is D, from the late 400s

2) Jerome, the translator of the Vulgate, mentions having seen it in Greek and Latin texts

3) Another early father, Ambrose speaks of the passage.

b. The subject matter is such that I can see someone wanting to exclude it rather than add it.

Augustine makes this comment: “certain persons of little faith, or rather enemies of the true faith, fearing, I suppose, lest their wives should be given impunity in sinning, removed from their manuscripts the Lord’s act of forgiveness toward the adulteress, as if He who had said ‘sin no more’ had granted permission to sin.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Everett Falconer Harrison, “The Son of God among the Sons of Men — Part 8: Jesus and the Woman Taken in Adultery” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 103:412 (Oct 46), p. 432.

<sup>8</sup> Augustine, “Adulterous Marriages” (2.7), trans. Charles T. Huegelmeier, in *Saint Augustine: Treatises on Marriage and Other Subjects* (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1955), p. 107, quoted in Hodges, p. 331.

c. The length and position makes addition unlikely.

A lengthy passage might be “tacked on” at the end of a book, but not stuck into the middle.

d. The contextual issues (does it fit where it sits?) make exclusion easier than addition.

1) The passage does seem a little awkward in its place.

2) If someone were adding it in, the awkwardness would more likely be avoided; it could be added into Luke easier than it is here.

Therefore, I do accept this passage as Scripture.