

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
FFF. Handling The Passage Of The Adulteress
(John 7:53-8:11)

I. Introduction

- A. Though my mentor, Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost, taught from John 7:53-8:11 (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 282-283), “The NIV states in brackets that ‘The earliest and most reliable manuscripts do not have John 7:53-8:11.’ The style and vocabulary of this passage differ from the rest of the Gospel, and the passage interrupts the sequence from 7:52-8:12.” (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 302-303)
- B. Since we are responsible before the Lord to handle this passage in a way that pleases Him, we view John 7:53-8:11 for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

II. Handling The Passage Of The Adulteress, 7:53-8:11.

- A. The Apostle Paul directed pastor Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15 NIV, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”
- B. If we then examine the **external** evidence of John 7:53-8:11, we find it not to be part of John’s initial Gospel:
1. “Not only do many Greek manuscripts lack these verses, but those that do include them often mark them with asterisks or obeli,” indicating they were at least questioned by many copyists. (op. cit., p. 346)
 2. “In addition various ancient Greek manuscripts include the passage in five different locations (after John 7:36, after 7:44, after 7:52, after 21:25, and after Luke 21:38).” (Ibid.)
 3. “Both the textual evidence and stylistic data in the passage indicate that this is non-Johannine material,” that it is not what John would write as compared to the rest of John’s Gospel or his other writings, Ibid.
- C. If we then examine the **internal** evidence of John 7:53-8:11, I *personally* believe it is *not even true Scripture*:
1. Alfred Edersheim’s authoritative work, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 2004, p.586-587, in footnote 17, claims that he did not comment on this passage in the body of his text, for not only does the external evidence indicate it was not part of John’s original Gospel, but that it “*could* not have existed” in Scripture due to the multiple ways the content of the passage conflicts with Jewish practices of Jesus’ day:
 2. Edersheim then provided seven reasons for this comment in his footnote cited above (as follows):
 - a. It was “utterly un-Jewish” in Jesus’ era of Israel for “a woman taken in the act of adultery” to “have been brought before Jesus” instead of her being brought before the duly constituted Jewish authorities, Ibid.
 - b. It was “utterly un-Jewish” for her to be “brought before Jesus without the witnesses to her crime,” Ibid.
 - c. It was “utterly un-Jewish” in Jesus’ era “as well as illegal” for the “procedure” of the woman’s being brought before Jesus to “have been that of the ‘Scribes and Pharisees,’” Ibid.
 - d. It was “utterly un-Jewish” in Jesus’ era of Israel as well as “a breach of law, and of what Judaism would regard as decency,” for a woman caught in adultery to be brought before Jesus “to ‘tempt’ Him,” Ibid.
 - e. It was “utterly un-Jewish” that “the Scribes should have been so ignorant as to substitute stoning for strangulation, as the punishment of adultery” in violation of Jewish legal practices of that era, Ibid.
 - f. It was “utterly un-Jewish” for “this scene” to be “enacted in the Temple” as was claimed in John 8:2, and Edersheim added that this point “presents a veritable climax of impossibilities,” Ibid.
 - g. Edersheim expressed “surprise” that “Archdeacon *Farrar*” in his eminent work on Christ’s life wrote “that the ‘Feast of Tabernacles had grown into a kind of vintage-festival, which would often degenerate into acts of license and immorality,’ or that the lives of the religious leaders . . . ‘were often stained’ with such sins” to support the idea that the woman was caught in adultery during that feast. (Ibid.) Edersheim wrote, “I do not recall a single instance in which a charge of adultery is brought against a Rabbi of that period,” Ibid.
 3. Since the internal evidence of John 7:53-8:11 reveals that it *could* not be *true* due to the multiple conflicts it contains with Jewish practices and rules of Jesus’ era, I believe that the passage is *not true Scripture!*
- D. Thus, to obey 2 Timothy 2:15, I conscientiously choose not to preach or teach from John 7:53-8:11.

Lesson: *Since both the external evidence and the internal evidence of John 7:53-8:11 lead me to believe that the passage is not true Scripture, I conscientiously choose not preach or teach from it.*

Application: *(1) Though reputable Bible teachers like the late Archdeacon Frederick Farrar and Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost taught from John 7:53-8:11, the evidence leads me to believe that is not true Scripture, so in obedience to 2 Timothy 2:15, I conscientiously choose not to preach or teach from that passage. (2) As an additional application, may we each conscientiously follow Scripture over what even reputable teachers believe or do.*