

A New Look at the Woman Caught in Adultery

Message of Life

Dr. John Niemelä at Jansen (NE) Bible Church

March 19, 2016

Introduction

Does John 7:53–8:11 Belong in Our Bible? Unequivocally, Yes!

1. The Majority Text includes it (with **m** symbol = Majority + Western families united).
2. Internal Evidence: John 7:53 and the seventh night of the feast of Tabernacles.

(8:2-6a) Early in the morning as Jesus taught crowds that gathered, some Pharisees stood a woman in the midst of the crowd and asked Jesus whether He would obey Moses by ordering her to be stoned, so they could accuse Him.

To understand this, we must look at how capital cases were tried. The Jewish Mishnah explains the rules that were in effect at the time of Jesus.

Capital cases required a sanhedrin with twenty-three members.

Mishnah (Sanhedrin 1₄) says, “Cases involving capital punishment [are decided] by twenty-three judges.

Jews were quite concerned with obeying Exodus 23:2: “You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert *justice*.” [NKJ]

The way that they sought to prevent one judge from swaying others was to have the least-senior members vote “Guilty” or “Not-Guilty” first.

Misnah (Sanhedrin 4₂) says, “In property cases concerning defilement and cleanness [the judges] begin [to ask for opinions] from the eldest, [but] in capital cases the commence [asking views] from [those that are seated at the side [[e.g., the youngest members]].

They had not yet conducted their trial, because (if they had) punishment could not be postponed by stopping at the Temple to talk with Jesus. Furthermore, they had not brought the man before Jesus, so any pronouncement of guilt by Jesus would be premature. They would rightly claim that Jesus would have violated Exodus 23:2.

(8:6b-8) Jesus wrote on the floor while they pressed Him for an answer, so He finally said that the sinless one among them should cast the first stone, and He resumed writing on the floor.

Isaiah 11:1-4a, especially 11:3b-4a.

(8:9-10) After they all (starting with the eldest) had left Jesus and the woman in the midst of the crowd that He was teaching, Jesus asked the woman about none of her accusers remaining to condemn her.

(8:11) The woman replied that she had no one condemning her, to which Jesus added that He did not condemn her either and for her to avoid sin.

This message of avoiding sin is like what Jesus said to the man in John 5:14. It is a message that would be given after someone had believed in Jesus (not before).

Conclusion

Appendix: Features of the Feast of Tabernacles Pertaining to John 7:53

	Number of Animals Sacrificed				Other Features			
	Day	Bulls	Rams	Lambs	Goats	Water?	Lights?	Booths?
	1	13	2	14	1	Yes	Yes	Yes
	2	12	2	14	1	Yes	Yes	Yes
	3	11	2	14	1	Yes	Yes	Yes
(John 7:14: Midpoint of Feast)	4	10	2	14	1	Yes	Yes	Yes
	5	9	2	14	1	Yes	Yes	Yes
	6	8	2	14	1	Yes	Yes	Yes
(John 7:37: Great Day of Feast)	7	7	2	14	1	Yes	Yes	NO
(John 8:2ff)	Sabbath	1	1	7	1	NO	NO	NO
<i>Totals:</i>		71	15	105	8			