

“Caught In The Act”

John 8:2-11

- I) Background: The oldest manuscripts (closest to the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry and considered by most scholars to be closest to the original autographs) DO NOT include this story. Therefore this may not actually be Scripture. The most influential skeptic in America, Bart Ehrman, states that there are roughly 400,000 variants in the text of the New Testament. The English New Testament contain roughly 170,000 words. Thus there are more variants than there are words. Dallas Theological Seminary Professor of New Testament and Greek scholar, Dan Wallace says that these statistics are basically true. What does this mean for you and I who believe that Scripture is inerrant (without error)?

The only way anyone even knows that there ARE variations in the text is because we have so many manuscripts of the New Testament... currently we have over 5,800, with the earliest (P-52) dating to around 125 AD. This is less than 100 years after the resurrection. A Biblical study discipline of these manuscripts has developed called “Textual Criticism” This IS NOT criticizing the Scriptures, it the study of the Greek in all of these manuscripts to be sure that Bible translations are as close to the original writing as possible. Textual Criticism is carried out by Greek scholars, who eat, sleep and poop Greek, who then compare the thousands of surviving manuscripts to determine which words or phrases are the closest to the original Koine Greek penned by the writers of the Scripture. These “Textual Critics” generally operate under the assumption that the earlier the manuscript is the less likely it is to have material added or changed by scribes. Furthermore, the massive number of manuscripts currently found, makes it way easier to figure out which word or phrase in these papyrus and parchment manuscripts is likely to have been in the original writings. We need to understand several things: 1. Most scribes were METICULOUS in their duties. Paid by the piece (NOT by the line), they had a vested interest in the ACCURACY of their copies and NOT being found to have errors in their work! 2. The discovery of the oldest manuscripts corroborate that most scribes were indeed very conscious regarding the above-mentioned meticulousness. 3. The afore-mentioned facts make noticing errors or additions MUCH easier for Textual Critics. 4. Scribes wanted to make sure that ALL SCRIPTURE was preserved, thus when they were copying and they found additions (such as this story in John), they usually copied it along into Scripture. Therefore, if you think of Scripture as a jigsaw puzzle, we have MORE pieces than the puzzle should have, NOT less than God gave to the writers!

“Misquoting Jesus” by Bart Ehrman (Probably the most widely known Bible skeptic in America)

{From the appendix of the paperback edition, p. 252}

“Question: Why do you believe these cardinal tenants of Christian orthodoxy to be in jeopardy due to the scribal variants you have discovered in the Biblical manuscripts?

Answer: ...essential Christian beliefs are NOT affected by textual variants in the manuscript tradition of the New Testament.”

The appearance of this story here would be a problem IF this were to only place is Scripture where sin, repentance, mercy and fighting against the sin nature was mentioned. Yet this is NOT the case. Jesus had just brought up these very topics in the Sermon on the Mount earlier in John, and in other verses.

In modern day translations, because of Textual Criticism, these verses will usually be bracketed and/or have a footnote explaining that they were not contained in the oldest manuscripts. Some version, in an attempt to be closer to the original Greek will omit them.

2) Read John 8:2–11

v. 2:

Jesus is teaching... giving light, living water and eternal bread [doing God’s work] to ordinary people [sinners].

v. 3:

The religious elites interrupt Jesus [doing Satan’s work].

v. 4:

They bring a woman “caught in the very act of adultery” [this phrasing is important] and make her the center of attention and ridicule, as a means to trap Jesus.

v. 5:

The Pharisee’s frame their question to Jesus from the Law of Moses...

“To stone or not to stone.”

(Read *Deuteronomy 19:15-19*)

[Accusations must be brought by 2 or 3 witnesses; FALSE accusers are to be put to death]

(Read *Exodus 31:18; 34:1; 34:6-9*)

[God writes with His finger on tablets of STONE; God has to REWRITE His commandments because of HIS people’s SIN; God reaffirms HIS “khesed” toward His people, NOT the other way around. Humans don’t have “khesed”, they are STIFF-NECKED!] The idiom “Written in stone” means NOTHING!

v. 6:

The religious elites pick and choose which laws they follow. (Read *John 18:31 & Deuteronomy 22:22*) [What was the particular sin committed by the religious elites? They didn't bring THE MAN CAUGHT IN THE VERY ACT OF ADULTERY! [Why not? Because the man was part of a set up plot to trap Jesus] [All of these false witnesses involved are to be stoned to death according to the Torah which they accuse Jesus of not obeying!] Jesus squats and writes in the dust with His finger the first time. [This scene pictures the finger of God the Son writing the Old Commandment stone for stiff-necked humans.]

v. 7:

When the religious elites didn't understand the meaning of His actions, Jesus stands up and quotes the Law to them. (Read *Deuteronomy 17:7*)

v. 8:

Jesus squats and again, writes in the dust. [This scene pictures God the Son writing the New Commandment of hearts of flesh.] (Read *Genesis 2:7; Ezekiel 36:26-27; Hebrews 8:10*) [Jesus writes with His finger (as God the Father did on the tablets of stone) in dust (which humans are made from), writing His commandments on our hearts of flesh!]

v. 9:

All the Pharisees left because of recognizing their sin but being unwilling to be healed of that by accepting Jesus as Yahweh. (*Matthew 13:14-15*)

v. 10:

Jesus asks the woman, "Where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

v. 11:

She said "No one, Lord" (She does what the religious elites refused to do and acknowledged Jesus as Yahweh!) [Do YOU or I behave as those who believe Jesus is God and Lord of our lives?] Jesus says "Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more."

[You don't "get right" TO RECEIVE God's pardon... you "get right" BECAUSE you HAVE RECEIVED God's pardon!] God's forgiveness should prompt us to die to self, crucify the old man and live as a slave to Christ! (Read *Romans 6:6 & 11; 1 Corinthians 7:22-23*)

