

DOES

JOHN 7:53–8:11

BELONG IN THE BIBLE?

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S P E C I A L - E D I T I O N B I B L E Q & A A R T I C L E # 9 6 0
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I. The *Pericope de Adultera*, John 7:53–8:11

Textual critics question two particular 12-verse sections of Scripture, Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53–8:11. (For a treatment of Mark 16:9-20, see our study by that name, linked at the end of this article.) Our current discussion regards John 7:53–8:11, commonly called the “*Pericope de Adultera*” (Latin, “Selection of Adultery”), the passage involving the adulteress brought before the Lord Jesus Christ. Were these verses ever part of John’s **original** Gospel Record, or were they added later via oral tradition? In this special-edition Bible Q&A article #960, we want to examine this issue and establish a sound conclusion. “*For what saith the Scriptures?*”

Here is the passage as found in the Authorized Version King James Bible:

[7:53] And every man went unto his own house. [8:1] Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. [2] And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. [3] And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, [4] They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. [5] Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? [6] This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. [7] So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. [8] And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. [9] And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. [10] When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? [11] She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”

We can now proceed to outlining and understanding the various observations concerning these 12 verses.

II. The Footnotes of Modern English Versions

Writing more than a half-century ago, Dr. Edward F. Hills commented:

“The story of the woman taken in adultery (called the *pericope de adultera*) has been **rather harshly treated by the modern English versions**. The RV [1881 Revised Version] and the ASV [1901 American Standard Version] put it in brackets; the RSV [1952 Revised Standard Version] relegates it to the footnotes; the NEB [1961 New English Bible] follows Westcott and Hort in removing it from its customary place altogether and printing it at the end of the Gospel of John as an independent fragment of unknown origin. The NEB even gives this familiar narrative a new name, to wit, *An Incident in the Temple*. But as Burgeson has reminded us long ago, **this general rejection of these precious verses is unjustifiable**” (*The King James Version Defended*,” page 197). (Bold emphasis mine.)

Due to liberal education in Bible college or seminary, modern “scholars” still have an overwhelming negative view of the *Pericope de Adultera*, John 7:53–8:11. A few favor it, of course, but most are in disbelief and therefore dismiss the passage as spurious or unauthentic, verses that were never part of John’s original Book. Here is a sample of the footnotes that modern English version translators and/or teachers offer their readers concerning the passage under consideration. As you will see, some of these statements are absolutely misleading; others are half-truths.

A. RYRIE STUDY BIBLE

The 1978 Ryrie NASB Study Bible provides this footnote: “7:53–8:11 This story, though probably authentic, is omitted in many manuscripts and may not have been originally a part of this Gospel.” (In other words, **these verses may or may not be inspired of God!** The reader is left with the matter unsettled, for the “experts” allow him or her to come to a personal conclusion.)

B. HOLMAN KJV STUDY BIBLE

The 2012 Holman KJV Study Bible has this footnote: “7:53–8:11 The story of Jesus and the adulteress may be authentic, but it is doubtful that the account is part of John’s original Gospel. Reasons include: (1) the account is absent from all the oldest copies of John; (2) where it does occur in later manuscripts, it is found at various places after John 7:36,44,52; at the end of John’s Gospel; or after Luke 21:38; (3) virtually every verse from 8:1–11 (except for 8:5) features words not elsewhere found in John’s Gospel, and standard vocabulary used in John is conspicuously absent; (4) the account appears to interrupt the narrative flow from 7:52 to 8:12, breaking the literary unit 7:1–8:59; and (5) the account was virtually unknown by early church fathers before the fourth century.”

C. NIV STUDY BIBLE

The 1995 NIV Study Bible offers this comment in a footnote: “7:53–8:11 This story may not have belonged originally to the Gospel of John. It is absent from almost all the early manuscripts, and those that have it sometimes place it elsewhere (e.g., after Lk 21:38). But the story may well be authentic.” (Again, **these verses may or may not be inspired of God!** The reader is left with the matter unsettled, for the “experts” allow him or her to come to a personal conclusion.)

D. LIBERTY UNIVERSITY KING JAMES STUDY BIBLE

The 2013 (Liberty University) King James Study Bible has this footnote: “7:53–8:11 Certain ancient manuscripts do not contain this passage, while others place it later in John’s gospel, or Luke’s. Certainly the passage records a historical event in the life of Jesus, so we need not doubt its authenticity.” (Here is one of the most honest statements of them all. This is ***faith, not doubt.***)

E. HENRY MORRIS KJV STUDY BIBLE

The (1995) Henry Morris KJV Study Bible contains this footnote: “This striking narrative from John 7:53–8:11 has been deleted from a few very ancient (but error-filled) Greek manuscripts. Accordingly, it has been deleted (or relegated to a footnote or special section) from most modern English translations. However, it is unreasonable to assume that someone would invent such a story and insert it in an accepted copy of John’s Gospel. Furthermore, these 12 verses do appear in the overwhelming majority of extant Greek texts. There is no good reason not to retain it as is.” (To Dr. Morris’ credit, this is actually one of the most honest statements of them all. Here is ***faith, not doubt.***)

F. MACARTHUR NKJV STUDY BIBLE

The (1997) John MacArthur NKJV Study Bible gives this malicious footnote:

“This section dealing with the adulteress **most likely was not a part of the original contents of John.** It has been incorporated into various manuscripts at different places in the gospel (e.g., after vv. 36,44,52, or 21:25), while one manuscript places it after Luke 21:38. External manuscript evidence representing a great variety of textual traditions is decidedly against its inclusion, for the earliest and best manuscripts exclude it. Many manuscripts mark the passage to indicate doubt as to its inclusion. Significant early versions exclude it. No Gk. church father comments on the passage until the 12th century. The vocabulary and style of the section also are different from the rest of the gospel, and the section interrupts the sequence of verse 52 with 8:12ff. Many, however, do think that it has all the earmarks of historical veracity, perhaps being a piece of oral tradition that circulated in parts of the western church, so that a few comments are in order. **In spite of all these considerations of the likely unreliability of this section, it is possible to be wrong on the issue, and thus it is**

good to consider the meaning of this passage and leave it in the text, just as with Mark 16:9-20.” (Bold emphasis mine.)

After going to great lengths to discourage faith in the passage, the “scholar” closes with an awkward disclaimer which can be paraphrased as follows: **“I may be wrong, so, by all means, believe the passage that I so methodically belittled point by point by point.”** Of course, this admission is offered so as not to hurt sales—those who hate John 7:53–8:11 have ammunition in the footnote and those who love John 7:53–8:11 are placated as they are encouraged to overlook the negative assessment! Everyone is happy, though deception and hypocrisy are turn-offs to the mature Bible-believer.

G. NEW AMERICAN (CATHOLIC) BIBLE

The (1970) Roman Catholic New American Bible places this information in a footnote:

“The story of the woman caught in adultery is a later insertion here, missing from all early Greek manuscripts. A Western text-type insertion attested mainly in Old Latin translations, it is found in different places in different manuscripts: here, or after 7, 36, or at the end of this gospel, or after Lk 21, 38, or the end of that gospel. There are many non-Johannine features in the language, and there are also many doubtful readings within the passage. The style and motifs are similar to those of Luke, and it fits better with the general situation at the end of Lk 21, but it was probably inserted here because of the allusion to Jer. 17, 13 (cf. the note on 8, 6) and the statement, ‘I do judge anyone,’ in 8, 15. **The Catholic Church accepts this passage as canonical scripture.**” (Bold emphasis mine.)

While “scholarly” jargon pervades the Roman Catholic position, the Church of Rome **actually has a higher opinion of John 7:53–8:11 being in a Protestant Bible than the average “Protestant” scholar!** The Roman Catholic accepts the *Pericope de Adultera* as “canonical scripture,” but, recalling the earlier modern version footnotes and marginal notes, we know the “scholarly” “Protestant” view is to consider it **“non-canonical” (does not belong in the Bible).**

H. ORIGIN OF THE NEGATIVE FOOTNOTES

In the original 1611 King James Bible, of which this author has a replica (published by Zondervan in 2011), there is absolutely no marginal note or footnote placed at John 7:53–8:11 expressing any uncertainty regarding the passage or any reasons for rejecting the passage. What happened to the English Bible in the last 400 years to give rise to such doubts?

Dean Burgon (1896) as cited in Fuller’s *“Counterfeit or Genuine?”* (1990), page 141, gives us a brief overview of how the aforementioned ominous, misleading footnotes ever

appeared in modern English versions. Drs. B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, to exhibit its so-called “inferior authority,” placed John 7:53–8:11 at the end of the Book of John in their 1881 Greek New Testament. Also, they enclosed these words of God in brackets, questioning their authenticity. Tischendorf, another 19th-century textual critic, said of the passage: “[it is] absolutely certain that this narrative was not written by St. John.” Scrivener, his contemporary, described it as follows: “...on all intelligent principles of mere criticism, the passage must needs be abandoned.” Tregelles, also from that period: “[I am] fully satisfied that this narrative is not a genuine part of St. John’s Gospel.” Alford bracketed off the text, and Tregelles placed it in a footnote.

Unbelieving scholars— influenced by 19th-century German rationalism and pro-Catholic Anglicanism (Church of England)— promoted themselves to the role of “Bible judges.” In the spirit of the Counter-Reformation (more on this later), they pass sentence on the Protestant Bible. Using nothing more than human viewpoint, they struggle in vain to make sense of what God the Holy Spirit has written and preserved through history (1 Corinthians 2:14). With Protestants moved from faith to doubt, they are ready to seek Roman Catholic traditions and Vatican manuscripts for clarification. Unfortunately, those who know this usually say nothing because they fear being ridiculed as “unscholarly,” “trouble-makers,” “old-fashioned,” et cetera. This is nothing new, for we read in John chapter 12: “[42] Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: [43] **For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.**”

Dr. Edward F. Hills writes in *“The King James Version Defended,”* page 202:

“The notes printed in the modern versions regarding John 7:53–8:11 are completely misleading. For example, the RSV states that most of the ancient authorities either omit 7:53–8:11 or insert it with variations of text after John 7:52 or at the end of John’s Gospel or after Luke 21:38. And the NEB says the same thing and adds that the *pericope de adultera* has no fixed place in the ancient New Testament manuscripts. These notes imply that originally the story of the adulteress circulated as an independent narrative in many forms and that later, when scribes began to add it to the New Testament, they couldn’t agree on where to put it, some inserting it at one place and others at another.

“Von Soden (AD 1902) showed long ago that the view implied by these notes is **entirely erroneous.** Although this scholar denied the genuineness of John 7:53–8:11, nevertheless, in his monumental study of this passage he was eminently fair in his presentation of the facts. After mentioning that this section is sometimes found at the end of the Gospel of John and sometimes in the margin near John 7:52 and that in one group of manuscripts (the Ferrar group) the section is inserted after Luke 21:38, von Soden continues as follows: **‘But in the great majority of the manuscripts it stands in the text between 7:52 and 8:12 except that in at least half of these manuscripts it is provided with deletion marks in the margin.’** Thus the usual location of the *pericope de adultera* is in John between 7:52 and 8:12. The manuscripts which have it in any other place are exceptions to the rule.” (Bold)

emphasis mine.)

III. The Manuscript Evidence for the *Pericope de Adultera*

Dr. Thomas Holland (2000) provides us with this introduction to the manuscript evidence of John 7:53–8:11:

“The passage is included in numerous uncials such as D05, G, H, K, M, U, and Γ. Among the minuscule or cursive manuscripts it is in 28, 700, 892, 1009, 1010, 1071, 1079, 1195, 1216, 1344, 1365, 1546, 1646, 2148, and 2174. Most Greek manuscripts contain this passage. It also is in early translations such as the Bohairic Coptic Version, the Syriac Palestinian Version and the Ethiopic Version, all of which date from the second to the sixth centuries. It is clearly the reading of the majority of the Old Latin manuscripts and Jerome’s Latin Vulgate. The passage has patristic support: Didascalia (third century), Ambrosiaster (fourth century), Ambrose (fourth century), the Apostolic Constitutions (which are the largest liturgical collections of writings from Antioch Syria in about 380 AD), Jerome (420 AD), and Augustine (430 AD).

“Most textual scholars consider the evidence against it to be overwhelming and reject the reading as original. Yet, the passage still finds its way into the text of the majority of contemporary translations. Unlike John 5:4, which is confined to a footnote, this passage is retained in the text but usually separated with brackets (as with Mark 16:9-20). If the evidence against it is so convincing and the text is not considered genuine, should not this entire passage be removed from the text itself as other shorter passages are? If one is to remove smaller sections, would not consistency demand the same be done with larger sections if the amount of textual evidence is either the same or greater? Perhaps it is a matter of acceptance. Since this passage is beloved by the majority of the Bible reading public, to remove it from the text would be unthinkable” (“Crowned With Glory,” page 155). (Bold emphasis mine.)

Dr. Edward F. Hills relays the following information for John 7:53–8:11:

“That early Greek manuscripts contained this *pericope de adultera* is proved by the presence of it in the **5th-century Greek manuscript D**. That **early Latin manuscripts also contained** it is indicated by its actual appearance in the Old Latin codices *b* and *e*. And both these conclusions are confirmed by the statement of **Jerome (circa AD 415)** that ‘in the gospel according to John in **many manuscripts, both Greek and Latin**, is found the story of the adulterous woman who was accused before the Lord.’” (“The King James Version Defended,” page 198) (Bold emphasis mine.)

According to the NKJV marginal note, the *Pericope de Adultera* is found in **over 900 manuscripts of John**. Dr. Floyd Nolen Jones reports that, based on Dr. Maurice A. Robinson’s 1998 findings, 81% (**1,350 out of 1,665**) of Greek New Testament manuscripts collated had the *Pericope* (“Which Version is the Bible?,” pages 229-230).

The next several paragraphs have been gleaned from Dr. Fuller's "Counterfeit or Genuine?" (1990), pages 142-147.

Textual critic Tischendorf boasted these Greek NT manuscripts omit Jn. 7:53–8:11: Aleph (Sinaiticus), A (Alexandrinus), B (Vaticanus), C, L, T, X, Δ, plus 70 cursives. Burgon claims A and C are "defective" here, so "it is therefore no longer possible to know with certainty what they either did or did not contain." In fact, Burgon argues that 2 whole leaves of Codex A have been lost—from chapter 6, verse 50, to chapter 8, verse 52. Therefore, anyone who places Codex A in the anti-*Pericope* category with firm conviction is "incorrect and unfair." Also, witnesses L and Δ have a blank space after John 7:52, **signifying their editors or copyists were aware of omitted text** (just like B/Vaticanus has a conspicuous blank space after Mark 16:8, its editor signifying he was aware of verses 9-20 but left them out—see our Mark 16:9-20 study). Dissenting from Tischendorf's assessment of the manuscripts, Burgon sees L and Δ as **favorable** to the authenticity of Jn. 7:53–8:11. As for manuscript X, it was merely a commentary on John as read in church, so it lacked the *Pericope de Adultera*. Contrary to Tischendorf's assertion, Burgon argues **only 3 uncials** (uppercase manuscripts) leave out the *Pericope de Adultera*: **Aleph, B, and T.**

Dean Burgon, as cited in Fuller (bold emphasis mine):

"We cannot forget moreover that the two former of these copies [Aleph/Sinaiticus and B/Vaticanus] enjoy the unenviable distinction of standing alone on a memorable occasion: they alone exhibit St. Mark's Gospel mutilated in respect of its twelve concluding verses.

"But I shall be reminded that about seventy MSS [manuscripts] of late date are without the *Pericope de Adultera*; that the first Greek Father who quotes the *Pericope* is Euthymius in the twelfth century; that Tertullian, Origen, Chrysostom, Cyril, Nonnus, Cosmas, and Theophylact knew nothing of it; and that it is not contained in the Syriac, Gothic, or Egyptian Versions.

"Concerning every one of these statements I remark over again that no sincere lover of truth, supposing him to understand the matter about which he is disputing, could so exhibit the evidence for this particular problem. The first reason is because so to state it is to **misrepresent the entire case**. The next reason is because some of the articles of indictment are **only half true—in fact, are untrue**. But the chief reason is because in the foregoing enumeration certain considerations are actually suppressed which, had they been fairly stated, would have been found to reverse the issue. Let me now be permitted to conduct this inquiry in my own way....

"The *Pericope* is observed to stand in situ in Codices b c e ff g h j. Jerome (A.D. 385), after a careful survey of older Greek copies, did not hesitate to retain it in the Vulgate. It is freely referred to and commented on by himself in Palestine; whereas Ambrose at Milan (374) quotes it at least nine times, as well as Augustine in North

Africa (396) about twice as often. It is quoted besides by Pacian in the north of Spain (370), by Faustus the African (400), by Rufinus at Aquileia (400), by Chrysologus at Ravenna (433), and by Sedulius, a Scot (434).

"The unknown authors of two famous treatises written at the same period largely quote this portion of the narrative. It is referred to by Victorius of Victorinus (457), by Vigilius of Tapsus (484) in North Africa, by Gelasius, Bishop of Rome (492), by Cassiodorus in southern Italy, by Gregory the Great, and by other Fathers of the Western Church. (All references above referred to are found in *Causes of Corruption in the Traditional Text*, by Burgon and Miller.)

"To this it is idle to object that the cited authors all wrote in Latin. For the purpose in hand their evidence is every bit as conclusive as if they had written in Greek—from which language no one doubts that they derived their knowledge, through a translation. But in fact we are not left to Latin authorities. (Out of thirty-eight copies of the Bohairic version the *Pericope de Adultera* is read in fifteen, but in three forms which will be printed in the Oxford edition. In the remaining twenty-three, it is left out.) How is it intelligible that this passage is thus found in nearly half the copies, except on the hypothesis that they formed an integral part of the Memphitic version? They might have been easily omitted, but how could they have been inserted? Once more. The Ethiopic version (fifth century), the Palestinian Syriac (which is referred to the fifth century), the Georgian (probably fifth or sixth century), to say nothing of the Slavonic, Arabic, and Persian versions, which are of later date, all contain the portion of narrative in dispute. The Armenian version (fourth-fifth century) also originally contained it, though it survives at present in only a few copies. **Add that it is found in Codex D, and it will be seen that in all parts of ancient Christendom this portion of Scripture was familiarly known.** But even this is not all. Jerome, who was familiar with Greek MSS [manuscripts] (and who handled none of later date than B and Aleph), expressly related that the *Pericope de Adultera* 'is found in many copies both Greek and Latin.' Whence is it—let me ask in passing—that so many critics fail to see that positive testimony like the foregoing far outweighs the adverse negative testimony of Aleph B T, yes, and of A C to boot, if they were producible on this point? How comes it to pass that the two codices, Aleph and B, have obtained such a mastery—rather exercise such a tyranny—over the imagination of many critics as quite to overpower their practical judgment?

"We have at all events established our first proposition: **namely, that from the earliest period to which testimony reaches, the incident of 'the woman taken in adultery' occupied its present place in St. John's Gospel.** The critics eagerly remind us that in four cursive copies (13, 69, 124, 346) the verses in question are found tacked onto the end of St. Luke 21. But have they then forgotten that 'these four codices are derived from a common archetype' and therefore represent one and the same ancient and, may I add, corrupt copy?

"The same critics are reminded that in the same four codices (commonly called the Ferrar Group) 'the agony and bloody sweat' (St. Luke 22:43, 44) is found thrust into St.

Matthew's Gospel between chapter 26:39 and 40. Such licentiousness on the part of a solitary exemplar of the Gospels no more affects the proper place of these or of those verses than the superfluous digits of a certain man of Gath avail to disturb the induction that to either hand of a human being appertain but five fingers and to either foot but five toes!

"It must be admitted then that as far back as testimony reaches, the passage under discussion stood where it now stands in St. John's Gospel. And this is my first position. But indeed, to be candid, hardly anyone has seriously called that fact in question. No, nor do any (except Dr. Hort) doubt that the passage is also of the remotest antiquity. Adverse critics do but insist that however ancient, it must needs be of spurious origin or else it is an afterthought of the Evangelist."

"Church Father" Augustine (c. A.D. 400) claimed John 7:53–8:11 was omitted from certain manuscripts because copyists thought it encouraged adultery ("Counterfeit or Genuine?", ed. Fuller, page 148). Burgeson not only agreed with Augustine's explanation, but also cited Nicon (9th century) who thought this was why the Armenian version also omits the *Pericope*.

Dr. Edward Hills writes along the same lines:

"The facts of history indicate that during the early Christian centuries throughout the Church adultery was commonly regarded as such a serious sin that it could be forgiven, if at all, only after severe penance. For example, Cyprian (circa AD 250) says that certain bishops who preceded him in the province of North Africa 'thought that reconciliation ought not to be given to adulterers and allowed to conjugal infidelity no place at all for repentance.' **Hence offence was taken at the story of the adulterous woman brought to Christ, because she seemed to have received pardon too easily.** Such being the case, it is surely more reasonable to believe that this story was deleted from John's Gospel by over-zealous disciplinarians than to suppose that a narrative so contrary to the ascetic outlook of the early Christian Church was added to John's Gospel from some extra-canonical source. There would be a strong motive for deleting it but no motive at all for adding it, and the prejudice against it would make its insertion into the Gospel text very difficult" ("Defending the King James Version," page 200).

Back in 1917, when Dr. Scofield released the second edition of his eponymous study Bible, he placed this footnote at John 7:53:

"John 7.53–8.1-11 is not found in some of the most ancient manuscripts. Augustine declares that it was stricken from many copies of the sacred story because of a prudish fear that it might teach immorality! But the immediate context (vs. 12-46), beginning with Christ's declaration, 'I am the light of the world,' seems clearly to have its occasion in the conviction wrought in the hearts of the Pharisees as recorded in verse 9; as, also, it explains the peculiar virulence of the Pharisees' words (v. 41)." (Bold emphasis mine.)

Dr. Holland, citing Augustine:

“This proceeding, however, shocks the minds of some weak believers, or rather unbelievers and enemies of the Christian faith: inasmuch that, after (I suppose) of its **giving their wives impunity of sinning, they struck out from their copies of the Gospel this that our Lord did in pardoning the woman taken in adultery**: as if He granted leave of sinning, Who said, ‘Go, and sin no more!’” (*Crowned With Glory*,” page 156). (Bold emphasis mine.)

Before the advent of the printing press (c. A.D. 1437), lectionaries were useful in the early churches. Lectionaries are similar to the “responsive readings” in the back of our modern hymnal. They are collections of Scripture verses—not entire Bibles, please note—arranged to be read in local churches on specific holidays. Lectionaries seemed to have contributed significantly to the **false** notion that John 7:53–8:11 was not originally part of John’s Gospel Record.

Dr. Fuller, quoting Dean Burgon (“*Counterfeit or Genuine?*,” pages 148-149), educates us in the matter:

“In the meantime the Church, for an obvious reason, had made the choice of St. John 7:37–8:12—the greater part of which is clearly descriptive of what happened at the Feast of Tabernacles—for her Pentecostal lesson. **And she judged it expedient, besides omitting as inappropriate to the occasion the incident of the woman taken in adultery, to ignore also the three preceding verses, thus making the severance begin, in fact, as far back as the end of chapter 7:52.**

“The reason for this is plain. In this way the allusion to a certain departure at night and return early next morning (St. John 7:53, 8:1) was avoided, which entirely marred the effect of the lection as the history of a day of great and special solemnity—‘the great day of the feast.’ **And I thus it happens that the gospel for the day of Pentecost was made to proceed directly from ‘Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet,’ in chapter 7:52, to ‘Then spake Jesus unto them, saying, I am the light of the world,’ in chapter 8:12, with which it ends.”** (Bold emphasis mine.)

Attesting to Burgon’s belief that lectionaries introduced confusion regarding the *Pericope*, Dr. Henry A. Scrivener (1883) wrote on pages 612-613 of “*A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*:”

“In the Lectionaries, as we have had occasion to state before (p. 79, note), this section was never read as a part of the lesson for Pentecost but was reserved for the festivals of such saints as Theodora Sept. 18, or Pelagia Oct. 8 (see p. 85, notes 2 and 3), and in many Service-books, whose Menology was not very full (e.g. 150. 189. 257. 259), it would does be omitted all together. Accordingly, in the remarkable Lectionary, the Jerusalem Syriac (see p. 331), the lesson for Pentecost ends at viii. 2, the other verses (3—11) being assigned to S. Euphemia’s day (Sept. 16).”

If John 7:53–8:11 was not an authentic part of the Bible, why was this passage read in churches on these feast days? How strange it would be for someone to insert John 7:53–8:11 into the Bible, knowing full well the corruption would be evident to all, for the verses before and after were so familiar having been read publicly. Dr. Hills will say more about this shortly.

The following paragraphs were taken from Dr. Edward Hills' *"The King James Version Defended"* (pages 204-207) (bold emphasis mine):

"The Silence of the Greek Fathers Explained. The arguments of naturalistic critics against the genuineness of John 7:53–8:11 are largely arguments from silence, and the strongest of these silences is generally thought to be that of the Greek Church Fathers. Metzger (AD 1964) speaks of it as follows: 'Even more significant is the fact that no Greek Church Father for a thousand years after Christ refers to the pericope, including even those who, like Origen, Chrysostom, and Nonnus (in his metrical paraphrase) dealt with the entire Gospel verse by verse. Euthymius Zigabenus, who lived in the first part of the twelfth century, is the first Greek writer to comment on the passage, and even he declares that the accurate copies of the Gospel do not contain it.'

"This argument, however, is not nearly so strong as Metzger makes it seem. In the first place, as Burgon pointed out long ago, we must knock off at least three centuries from this thousand-year period of which Metzger speaks so ominously. For **Tischendorf lists 9 manuscripts of the 9th century which contain the *pericope de adultera* in its usual place and also one which may be of the 8th century. And so the silence of the Greek Church Fathers during the last third of this thousand year period couldn't have been because they didn't know of manuscripts which contained John 7:53–8:11 in the position which it now occupies in the great majority of the New Testament manuscripts. The later Greek Fathers didn't comment on these verses mainly because the earlier Greek Fathers hadn't done so.**

"But neither does the silence of the earlier Greek Fathers, such as Origen (circa AD 230), Chrysostom (circa AD 400), and Nonnus (circa AD 400), necessarily imply that these ancient Bible scholars did not know of the *pericope de adultera* as part of the Gospel of John. **For they may have been influenced against it by the moralistic prejudice of which we have spoken [the adulteress pardoned, and Jesus being less severe with her than expected—Shawn Brasseaux] and also by the fact that some of the manuscripts known to them omitted it.** And Burgon mentions another very good reason why these early Fathers failed to comment on this section. Their commenting was in connection with their preaching, and their preaching could be affected by the fact that the *pericope de adultera* was omitted from the ancient Pentecostal lesson of the Church.

"(Hills quoting Burgon) 'Now for the first time, it becomes abundantly plain, why Chrysostom and Cyril, in publicly commenting on St. John's Gospel, pass straight from

John 7:52 to John 8:12. Of course they do. **Why should they,—how could they,—comment on what was not publicly read before the congregation?** The same thing is related (in a well-known ‘scholium’) to have been done by Apolinarius and Theodore of Mopsuestia. Origen also, for aught I care,—though the adverse critics have no right to claim him, seeing that his commentary on all that part of St. John’s Gospel is lost,—but Origen’s name, as I was saying, for aught I care, may be added to those who did the same thing.’

“At a very early date it had become customary throughout the Church to read John 7:37–8:12 on the day of Pentecost. This lesson began with John 7:37-39, verses very appropriate to the great Christian feast day in which the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is commemorated: *In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink... But this spake He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive. Then the lesson continued through John 7:52, omitted John 7:53–8:11, and concluded with John 8:12, Again therefore Jesus spake unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. Thus the fact that the *pericope de adultera* was not publicly read at Pentecost was an additional reason why the early Greek Church Fathers did not comment on it.*

Why was the story of the adulteress omitted from the Pentecostal lesson? Obviously because it was inappropriate to the central idea of Pentecost. But critics have another explanation. According to them, the passage was not part of the Gospel of John at the time that the Pentecostal lesson was selected. **But, as Burgon pointed out, this makes it more difficult than ever to explain how this passage came to be placed after John 7:52. Why would a scribe introduce this story about an adulteress into the midst of the ancient lesson for Pentecost? How would it occur to anyone to do this?**

“Moreover, although the Greek Fathers were silent about the *pericope de adultera*, the Church was not silent. **This is shown by the fact that John 8:3-11 was chosen as the lesson to be read publicly each year on St. Pelagia’s day, October 8.** Burgon points out the significance of this historical circumstance. ‘The great Eastern Church speaks out on this subject in a voice of thunder. In all her Patriarchates, as far back as the written records of her practice reach,—and they reach back to the time of those very Fathers whose silence was felt to be embarrassing,—**the Eastern Church has selected nine out of these twelve verses to be the special lesson for October 8.**’

“The Internal Evidence. Naturalistic critics have tried to argue against the genuineness of John 7:53–8:11 on the basis of the internal evidence. Colwell (AD 1952), for example, claims that the story of the woman taken in adultery does not fit its context and that it differs in its vocabulary and general tone from the rest of John’s Gospel. **But by these arguments the critics only create new difficulties for themselves. For if the *pericope de adultera* is an interpolation and if it is so markedly out of harmony with its context and with the rest of the Gospel of John, why was it ever placed in the position which it now occupies?** This is the question which Steck (AD 1893) asked long ago, and it has never been answered.

"Actually, however, there is little substance to these charges. Arguments from literary style are notoriously weak. They have been used to prove all sorts of things. And Burgon long ago pointed out expressions in this passage which are characteristic of John's Gospel. 'We note how entirely in St. John's manner is the little explanatory clause in John 8:6,—'This they said, tempting Him that they might have to accuse Him.' We are struck besides by the prominence given in John 8:6 and John 8:8 to the act of writing,—allusions to which, are met with in every work of the last Evangelist.'

"As for not fitting the context, Burgon shows that the actual situation is just the reverse. When the *pericope de adultera* is omitted, it leaves a hole, a gaping wound that cannot be healed. 'Note that in the oracular Codexes B and Aleph immediate transition is made from the words 'out of Galilee ariseth no prophet,' in John 7:52, to the words 'Again therefore JESUS spake unto them, saying,' in John 8:12. And we are invited by all the adverse Critics alike to believe that so the place stood in the inspired autograph of the Evangelist. 'But the thing is incredible. Look back at what is contained between John 7:37 and John 7:52, and note—(a) That two hostile parties crowded the Temple courts (John 7:40-42); (b) That some were for laying violent hands on our LORD (John 7:44); (c) That the Sanhedrin, being assembled in debate, were reproaching their servants for not having brought Him prisoner, and disputing one against another (John 7:45-52). How can the Evangelist have proceeded,—'Again therefore JESUS spake unto them, saying, I am the light of the world? What is it supposed then that St. John meant when he wrote such words?'

"Surely the Dean's point is well taken. Who can deny that when John 7:53—8:11 is rejected, the want of connection between the seventh and eighth chapters is exceedingly strange? The reader is snatched from the midst of a dispute in the council chamber of the Sanhedrin back to Jesus in the Temple without a single word of explanation. Such impressionistic writing might possibly be looked for in some sophisticated modern book but not in a book of the sacred Scriptures.

"The Negative Evidence of the Manuscripts and Versions Explained. It is not surprising that the *pericope de adultera* is omitted in Papyri 66 and 75, Aleph B W and L. For all these manuscripts are connected with the Alexandrian tradition which habitually favored omissions. When once the Montanists or some other extreme group had begun to leave the story of the adulteress out of their copies of John's Gospel, the ascetic tendencies of the early Church were such that the practice would spread rapidly, especially in Egypt, and produce just the situation which we find among the Greek manuscripts. For the same reason many manuscripts of the Coptic (Egyptian) versions, including the recently discovered Bodmer Papyrus III, omit this passage, as do also the Syriac and Armenian versions. All these versions reflect the tendency to omit a passage which had become offensive. And the fact that the section had been so widely omitted encouraged later scribes to play the critic, and thus were produced the unusually large

number of variant readings which appear in this passage in the extant manuscripts. And for the same cause many scribes placed deletion marks on the margin opposite this section.

"None of these phenomena proves that the *pericope de adultera* is not genuine but merely that there was a widespread prejudice against it in the early Church. The existence of this prejudice makes it more reasonable to suppose that the story of the adulteress was omitted from the text of John than to insist that in the face of this prejudice it was added to the text of John. There would be a motive for omitting it but no motive for adding it."

IV. The Pericope de Adultera Explained

Since ancient times, like all Scripture, John 7:53–8:11 has often not been approached dispensationally. (The same is true of Mark 16:9-20, another 12-verse section of God’s Word that scholars overwhelmingly reject because they fail to “*study... rightly dividing the word of truth*” (2 Timothy 2:15]. See our study on the subject.) Consequently, the *Pericope de Adultera* has not been appreciated and is still frequently dismissed from “scholarly” circles as “an appendix from oral tradition” or “definitely not part of John’s original.” That is nothing more than unbelief and outright heresy—and, we must add, **such careless words inflict more damage on the Church the Body of Christ than 1,000 atheists, agnostics, and other “freethinkers!”**

Now, this author would like to demonstrate how John 7:53–8:11 supplies us with a great deal of spiritual light. We lose much if we relegate it to anything less than the very words of God.

Chapter 7 closes with the unbelieving members of the Sanhedrin (Jewish Supreme Court, religious leaders) fighting with each other: “[45] *Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him?* [46] *The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.* [47] *Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?* [48] *Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?* [49] *But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.* [50] *Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) [51] Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?* [52] *They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.* [53] **And every man went unto his own house.**” **Verse 53 is necessary to dismiss the council from the record of Scripture here.**

As chapter 8 opens, we see the Lord Jesus Christ retreating to the Mount of Olives for the night, to the east of Jerusalem and not far from the city: “*Jesus went unto the mount of Olives*” (verse 1). Now, verse 2: “*And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.*” This is the day following the day of verses 37-53 in chapter 7. Christ returns to the Jerusalem Temple and teaches the common people again (cf. John 7:14). As He leads Bible study, His critics interrupt Him with a most embarrassing situation. They seek to use an adulteress to publicly discredit Him, for they have grown tired of Him getting all the attention.

John chapter 8, verses 3-4: “*And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.*” Please note that **none** of these works-religionists are believers, and it is abundantly clear from this passage they are not honest seekers of the truth (see verses 5-6). Having located a woman caught in the act of adultery, they bring her before the Lord and the crowd in the Temple to shame her and entrap Him. Maybe she is scantily dressed—perhaps even naked.

Verses 5-6: “Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.” Indeed, the Law of Moses was quite clear in executing anyone guilty of adultery.

“And the man that committeth adultery with another man’s wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death” (Leviticus 20:10). “If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel. If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour’s wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you” (Deuteronomy 22:22-24).

John 8:5 again: “...But what sayest thou?” By asking Jesus to render a verdict, the scribes and Pharisees seek to portray Him as either anti-Moses (“do not stone her”) or anti-Roman (“stone her”). Remember, since the Jews are under Roman rule, they cannot put anyone to death without official governmental sanction. “Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him [Jesus], and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, **It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:** That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die” (John 18:31-32).

The Bible says in John 8:6: “This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.” Regardless of the Lord Jesus’ reply, He will appear to be an independent authority and thus either offend Jews or Romans. His critics have devised what they think is an ingenious plan to discredit Him, but He is privy to their scheme and will outwit them to their embarrassment. “But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.” This was not random doodling. What did the Lord write? The Holy Spirit through John kept it a secret, but we have every reason to believe Christ Jesus wrote Scripture on the ground (He will write again in verse 8).

It is a fascinating parallel that the 10 Commandments were “written with the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 9:10). The Lord Jesus Christ was writing the inspired Word of God, ignoring the wicked religious leaders who were challenging Him. It is possible He wrote Leviticus 20:10 on the Temple floor: “And the man that committeth adultery with another man’s wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour’s wife, **the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.**” The scribes and Pharisees were hypocritical because, if the woman had been caught “in the very act of adultery” (verses 3-4), the man should have been apprehended and taken to Jesus for execution too! Where was the adulterer? Could he have been one of these very religious leaders—or, at least, someone they knew all too well? These are devious circumstances

indeed.

John chapter 8, verse 7: “So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.*”

They were relentless in dealing with the matter because they thought they had finally outsmarted Christ! Unintimidated, He rises from writing on the ground, proclaiming, “*He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.*” Contrary to popular belief, this was not a demand for sinless perfection, but rather ***blameless with respect to the woman caught in adultery.*** Where were the two or three eyewitnesses the Law of Moses required to carry out the death penalty?

“*At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death*” (Deuteronomy 17:6). “*One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established*” (Deuteronomy 19:15).

Additionally, the men who actually saw the adulteress committing that heinous deed were required to throw the first stones at her. “*But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people*” (Deuteronomy 13:9). “*The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you*” (Deuteronomy 17:7). If the two or three witnesses were not present, the Law of Moses could not be enforced with respect to the adulteress of John chapter 8. The witnesses refused to step forward because they would also have to identify the adulterer or man—and, true to their double standard, this they were not inclined to do.

Additionally, **these false or unrighteous witnesses could have been put to death themselves**, which is why they ultimately left (verse 9)!

“*Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment:.... Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked*” (Exodus 23:1-2,7).

“*One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established. If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot*” (Deuteronomy 19:15-21).

Back to John chapter 8, verse 8 now: *“And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.”* Christ writes on the ground a second time, presumably Scripture as before. What could He have written now? He may have written what the Law of Moses stipulated concerning the independent testimonies of two or three witnesses. Maybe He wrote about these false or unrighteous witnesses condemned to die. Or, perhaps He wrote a verse about Israel’s forgiveness (more on this later). Whatever He wrote, it reinforced what He said, for the accusers were convicted in their conscience and departed!

John chapter 8, verse 9: *“And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.”* The words Jesus spoke and wrote definitely pricked their conscience to the point of them leaving the area one by one, the *“eldest”* (or most highly reputed, and the first one who should have cast stones) man going away first and the younger ones following him. Only Jesus Christ (the Saviour) and the adulteress (the sinner) remain.

Verses 10-11 of John chapter 8: *“When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”* No eyewitnesses came forward so the adulteress was not put to death. She has no accusers; addressing Jesus as *“Lord,”* we see her as representing Israel’s believing remnant. *“Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”* Lacking witnesses, the Lord Jesus Christ will not put her to death either. Again, it is **not** that “the Lord let her off easy.” **In no way was He diminishing the severity of adultery (ancient scribes and copyists failed to see this and therefore dropped the passage from some New Testament witnesses).**

Remember, Christ told her to *“sin no more”*—adultery is wrong, plain and simple, an obvious violation of the Seventh Commandment (Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18). The adulteress was to permanently leave her old ways, her old identity, behind. In this account, Israel’s corrupt religious leaders condemn others as *“sinners”* (Matthew 9:10-11; Matthew 11:19; Mark 2:15-16; Luke 5:30; Luke 7:34; Luke 15:2) yet they overlook their own faults (chiefly, the sin of unbelief). Recall the Parable of the Two Sons in Matthew 21:28-32, how *“sinners”* are coming to faith in Jesus Christ but the corrupt religious leaders are **not**.

Here in John chapter 8, these apostate religious leaders of Israel thought they could entrap the Lord Jesus Christ, but He exposed their hypocrisy. The adulteress symbolizes Israel, unfaithful to JEHOVAH God because of her worshipping and serving pagan idols—having other gods before the LORD God, breaking the First Commandment (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:6-7). Throughout the Old Testament economy, Israel repetitively committed spiritual adultery with pagan idols and the evil world system (Jeremiah 2:20; Jeremiah 3:1,6,8-9; Jeremiah 5:7; Ezekiel 16:15-16,28,32,41; Ezekiel 23:5,19,37,44; Hosea 1:1-2; Hosea 2:5; Hosea 3:3; Hosea 4:13,15). Israel habitually cheated on JEHOVAH God with idols, and He ultimately divorced her via the Captivities

(Jeremiah chapter 3), but He will remarry her at Christ's Second Coming under the New Covenant (Isaiah 66:1-5; Hosea 2:14-20), and she will never again sin because of the indwelling Holy Spirit given to her (Ezekiel 36:25-28).

Israel's corrupt religious leaders are just as much to blame as the common Jewish people with regards to their millennia-long spiritual adultery. Under the Old Covenant, the Law of Moses, Israel is worthy of death and damnation. Nevertheless, with the grace of the New Covenant (see John 1:16-17), Israel—that is, the believing remnant or "*Little Flock*" (Luke 12:32)—will be forgiven and restored in the Kingdom (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-13; Hebrews 9:11-17; Hebrews 10:15-17; cf. Acts 3:19-21; Romans 11:25-27). Satan and other sinners can no longer condemn Israel because God has declared her permanently righteous by virtue of Jesus Christ's shed blood (Zechariah 3:1-10; 1 John 2:1-2; Revelation 12:10; also true of us in Romans 8:31-34).

It is interesting how the Lord's conduct here in John 8:1-11 some 2,000 years ago outlines what He will do future from our own day: standing on the Mount of Olives at His Second Coming (Zechariah 14:4), He heads to the Jerusalem Temple (Malachi 3:1) to declare believing Israel redeemed! Thus begins the Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ, and Israel finally being God's kingdom of priests in the Earth. Of course, if we throw away John 7:53–8:11, then we lose all this, and we deserve whatever darkness that subsequently envelops us. May we take the spiritually mature position concerning the *Pericope de Adultera*. If we eliminate the passage, the Lord does **not** declare Israel righteous!

V. The Errors of Textual Criticism, Defined and Corrected, in Brief

More than 100 (!) English Bible versions are currently marketed and sold as “the Word of God.” Contrary to popular belief, they do not “say the same thing.” After all, they have their unique copyrights, proving they are separate and distinct works. How can the Christian church expect unity when it has **multiple conflicting textbooks**? Many non-Christians are definitely aware of this folly, and it is one of the reasons Christianity is ridiculed and spurned. Resolving any doctrinal disputes is therefore impossible, for every church member has his or her own “preferred translation.” From where did this confusion originate? Why, Satan, of course—and sinful men who cooperate with him in disregarding the Creator and doing “their own thing” with regards to the translation of the Holy Scriptures. **Textual criticism** is technical name for this field of study.

One basic false premise of textual criticism is the belief that the Bible is just an ordinary book, subject to mistakes and worthy of correction. (Yes, **this** is what is taught in the vast majority of Bible colleges and seminaries. If you doubt this, ask the “scholars” yourself!) Instead of the Holy Spirit guarding and preserving the text by a multiplication of manuscript copies, scholars believe their natural-man thinking can enable them to reconstruct the “lost original Bible manuscripts.” They tend to favor a corrupt minority of manuscripts due to their supposed “old age.” As noted earlier in this study, the chief representatives of this Alexandrian Text or Critical Text manuscript family are “fourth-century” (?) *Codices Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus*—two Roman Catholic witnesses or Greek Bibles that disagree amongst themselves **over 3,000 times in just the Four Gospel Records alone**. Modern English versions are translated from these texts with the assumptions of “oldest is best” and “shorter reading is preferred.” Hence, modern English versions often eliminate words, phrases, or even whole passages (Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11, for example) that our Authorized Version King James Bible preserves. The King James Bible’s New Testament is based on the *Textus Receptus* (Latin for “Received Text”), a set of Greek manuscripts that is vastly different from the Alexandrian text, Thus explaining why the modern English versions produced during the last 140 years have innumerable readings unlike those of the King James Bible.

As stated already, another erroneous idea in textual criticism is that, concerning manuscripts, “oldest is best.” Since the oldest manuscript would be closer to the first century when the original Bible manuscripts were written, it is assumed an ancient manuscript has superior readings to those of a recent manuscript. **Yet, no one using the Bible itself—any Bible!—would ever come to that conclusion.** There were false teachers in the days of the Prophets and Apostles, whether Old or New Testament times (see Deuteronomy chapter 13; Jeremiah chapter 23; 2 Timothy chapter 2; 2 Peter chapters 2-3; the Book of Jude; et al.). The Apostle Paul claimed people were trying to pass off a false manuscript as though it had apostolic authority (2 Thessalonians 2:2)—**and this was when the Bible canon was still being written 2,000 years ago.** “Oldest is best” is a simplistic concept rooted in **human speculation, not the Bible.**

Consequently, textual critics are **wrong** to apply it to the Bible: **it is doubt, not faith.**

Furthermore, we would expect good Bible manuscripts to wear out due to constant usage—just like someone’s personal Bible would tear and fall apart after being flipped through for years. The only reasons we have “old” Alexandrian manuscripts (modern versions) and “recent” Antiochian manuscripts (King James) is **not** because the Alexandrian manuscripts are God’s preserved Word and the Antiochian manuscripts are “later additions.” Firstly, the Alexandrian (error-filled) manuscripts were **not** widely used, so they are still in relatively good physical condition despite being over a millennium old. Secondly, Antiochian (good) manuscripts disintegrated because of continuous handling, but their texts survive today via thousands of manuscript copies; the Alexandrian (error-filled) manuscripts, for the most part, were **not** copied (unless by false teachers), so they are few in number (Minority Text). Thirdly, heretics and Bible-haters burned the Antiochian (good) manuscripts, but they left the Alexandrian (error-filled) manuscripts alone because Christians were not using them anyway; this explains why the Antiochian are relatively “late” compared to the Alexandrian, for the Antiochian manuscripts needed time to be re-multiplied after they were diminished during the persecutions. Lastly, Alexandria/Egypt has a drier climate than Syria/Antioch so manuscripts would fare better physically in Egypt.

Intellectuals have always been seeking ways to overthrow the **authority of the Holy Bible**. These sinners refuse to submit to a holy God and His Book. Also, remember, for 500 years now, the Roman Catholic Church has endeavored to entice Protestants to return to the Pope and “Holy Mother Church.” The Counter-Reformation, designed to reverse the progress of the Reformation, is a three-pronged attack. Firstly, the Council of Trent (1545–1563) intimidated and condemned anyone who left the Church of Rome because of the Protestant Reformation. Secondly, Ignatius Loyola founded “the Society of Jesus”—commonly called “the Jesuits”—in 1540 to create a group of Catholic scholars who would then infiltrate Protestants seminaries and local churches, bringing people back in line with Vatican dogma. Thirdly, the Douay-Rheims Bible (New Testament 1582; Old Testament 1610), the first Roman Catholic English Bible, was translated and published so as to compete with the Protestant English Bible.

Ever since King Henry VII broke from the Pope to form the Church of England (1536), the Vatican has relentlessly attempted to bring the English people back to the fold of Rome. Between 1800 and 1850, the Tractarian or Oxford Movement was initiated to permeate the Church of England with Roman Catholic doctrine. This influenced two Anglican scholars (we have heard of them already), Drs. B. F. Wescott (1825–1901) and F. J. A. Hort (1828–1892), who may have actually been (Roman Catholic) Jesuits in disguise. Westcott and Hort despised the Protestant King James Bible, and its underlying Greek *Textus Receptus*, so they began working on a new Greek New Testament (using the aforementioned Alexandrian texts). It did not matter if these Alexandrian texts were corrupt or of questionable origin, so long as they were presented to be superior to the Protestant Bible. Westcott and Hort wanted to “Romanize” the Anglicans—**and they did.**

When the apostate Church of England convened to “correct” the English King James Bible in 1870, Westcott and Hort ensured their Greek text was used to overthrow God’s Word. A brand-new English translation, from a brand-new Greek text, resulted. In 1881, the Revised Version was released, and for almost 150 years now, over 100 “new and improved” modern English versions (predicated on Westcott and Hort’s faulty Greek text and heretical translation philosophy) have brought the Church the Body of Christ to more and more unbelief (and closer to the Church of Rome).

Scholars advise us that we **cannot** trust our King James Bible—and, as stupid as it sounds—what they offer in its place is **100 modern English versions that they do not believe are perfect either**. (Again, if you doubt this, ask the “scholars,” and you will hear it yourself.) Sadly, let it be restated, this is exactly the information taught in most seminaries and Bible colleges. Those students are taught in class **not** to trust the Scriptures. Once they graduate, they proceed to write books and preach sermons offering “better translations.” They still do **not** know what the original Bible manuscripts said (for they disintegrated long ago), **but these “scholars” can all agree that the King James Bible is WRONG**. For them to admit that they are wrong, however, would mean a renunciation of over a century of their anti-King James rhetoric. They would have to recant all their lies, retract their “scholarly” works, and confess their theological degrees are but foolishness in the eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If we are **truly Bible-believers**, we will **believe what the Bible says about itself**—otherwise we are just as much “Bible-believers” as atheists, agnostics, and other skeptics! Believers were first called Christians at Antioch (Acts 11:26), so is it **faith** to reject the Antiochian Text? No, it is doubt, it is unbelief, and it is the position of the “scholars.” Antioch of Syria played an important role in Christianity during New Testament times. The Apostle Paul and others conducted ministries that resulted in more than 100,000 Christians living in Antioch, Syria, during the A.D. first century. The King James Bible is derived from manuscripts known as “the Antiochian Text.”

Concerning Alexandria, Egypt, the home of the Critical Text (the underlying manuscripts of modern English versions), the Bible has a **negative** view of this locale. As far as the Scriptures are concerned, no local churches were ever founded in Alexandria or Egypt as a whole. Alexandria is mentioned in the context of **false teaching and Bible confusion** (see Apollos in Acts 18:24-28). Egypt is the Bible’s symbol for the world, sin, satanic deception, and spiritual slavery. Israel was held in captivity there, and thus God titled Egypt “*the house of bondage*” (Exodus 13:3,14; Exodus 20:2; Deuteronomy 5:6; Deuteronomy 6:12; Deuteronomy 8:14; Deuteronomy 13:5,10; Joshua 24:17; Judges 6:8). **God told Israel never to return to Egypt.** Would you really want a Bible from Egypt? If you use a modern English version, **you have it**—and the scholars encourage you to keep it, despite the fact that the Bible (whatever version or manuscript family) always takes a negative view of Egypt and Alexandria but a positive view of Syria and Antioch.

Either we believe the scholars, or we believe the Bible. We should stop trying to seek a compromise. Doctrine matters, sound Bible doctrine is at stake, and we dare **not** let someone replace God’s preserved words with their own words. This is faith. **Anyone**

who says “the Bible versions issue does not matter” is someone who advertises Bible ignorance, demonstrating himself or herself to be completely unqualified to say anything eternally meaningful on the subject.

VI. Conclusion

Dear friends, may we take the position of faith, trusting the King James Bible rightly divided. John 7:53–8:11 is inspired of God the Holy Spirit, belongs in the Bible, has always been a genuine portion of the Gospel Record of John, and is worthy of our belief and acceptance.

It is found in 81% (**1,350 out of 1,665**) of Greek New Testament manuscripts. This *Pericope de Adultera* was deleted from some New Testament witnesses or questioned because it was offensive to those manuscript copyists and church fathers who were too spiritually immature to fully appreciate it. Another reason why it was severed from John's Gospel Record was that it was excluded when John chapters 7 and 8 were publicly read from lectionaries during early church services on holidays.

John 7:53–8:11 is a valuable part of the Bible that should **never** be disregarded or dismissed as “oral tradition” or a “later and spurious addition.” It documents the nation Israel’s transition from condemnation under the Old Covenant or Law of Moses because of spiritual adultery, to the forgiveness of the New Covenant because of Jesus Christ’s shed blood. We must handle this passage dispensationally, or we will wind up in unbelief (which is where the “scholars” are and where they want us to join them!).

Without the *Pericope de Adultera*, there is an abrupt change from chapter 7, verse 52, to chapter 8, verse 12. If we leave these 12 verses where they are in our King James Bible, however, the flow of the narrative is smooth. The “*again*” of John 8:12 corresponds to Jesus speaking in John 8:2 instead of John 7:37.

By retaining John 7:53–8:11, we can see the wonderful prophecy laid out concerning Jesus’ Second Coming and subsequent restoration of Israel. He leaves the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4; John 8:1-2) to arrive at the Jerusalem Temple (Malachi 3:1), upon which He pronounces Israel forgiven under the New Covenant and ready to be His kingdom of priests in the Earth. **Here is faith.**

NOTE: For our Mark 16:9-20 study, see this link:
<https://forwhatsaiththescriptures.org/2021/03/28/mark-16-9-20/>

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