

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 134 – May 14th – John 7:53-8:20

Works frequently referenced in these notes on John

Barrett, CK	<i>The Gospel According to John</i> , London, SPCK, 1967
Beasley-Murray, GR	<i>John</i> , <i>Word Bible Commentary</i> , vol 36, Word Books, 1987
Carson, DA	<i>The Gospel According to John</i> , Leicester, IVP (Apollos), 1991

Textual Note on 7:53-8:11

This entire passage is omitted by many early Greek MSS including p^{66,75} ⳧ A B C W Θ, some of which have a space after 7:52 indicating that the copyist knew of the passage but thought it right to omit it. Other MSS include the verses but mark them with asterisks or obeli. Of those MSS that include the verses, a few locate them elsewhere:

- After Jn 21:25 f¹, arm
- After Lk 21:38 f¹³
- After Lk 24:53 1333
- After Jn 7:36 225

Metzger believes that the passage bears all the hallmarks of historical veracity though it is lacking from the best manuscripts and does not seem to have been widely known until the twelfth century. He considers that it was a piece of 'floating tradition', which circulated in certain parts of the Western Church and eventually became fixed in this part of John's gospel.

Barrett similarly states "It is certain that this narrative is not an original part of the gospel." Nevertheless he believes it to be of historical value since:

- "i) It clearly resembles in form and style the synoptic narratives (especially the style of Luke...)
- "ii) It represents the character and method of Jesus as revealed elsewhere."

Beasley-Murray comments, "It is clear that the story was not penned by the Fourth Evangelist (or any of the other three Gospel writers), yet there is no reason to doubt its substantial truth. The saying that it preserves is completely in character with what we know of our Lord, and quite out of character with the stern discipline that came to be established in the developing Church... We may regard the story as one those incidents in the life of our Lord that circulated in the primitive Church and did not come to the notice of our Evangelists ... it was saved from oblivion by some unknown Christian, who wrote it down. If we ask why it was set in its present place, the answer must be a genuine sense of fitness of context. The theme of judgment is strong in chaps. 7–8; the story could well be regarded as illustrative of 7:24 and 8:15–16; and we note the opposition of the Pharisees to Jesus in 7:46–52 and 8:13."

Verse 53

Ἰκαὶ ἐπορεύθη ἕκαστος εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ·
 πορευομαι go, proceed, travel
 ἕκαστος, ἡ, ον each, every

Beasley-Murray comments, "The opening sentences are uncommonly reminiscent of Luke 21:37–38; they are similarly akin to the situation described in Luke 19:47–48, which finds instant illustration in Luke 20:1–2. This has confirmed many in their belief that the incident concerning the adulterous woman took place about the same time in the ministry of Jesus."

Verse 1

Ἰησοῦς δὲ ἐπορεύθη εἰς τὸ ὄρος τῶν Ἐλαιῶν.
 ἐπορεύθη Verb, aor pass dep indic, 3 s
 πορευομαι
 ὄρος, ος n mountain, hill
 ἔλαια, ας f olive tree

Verse 2

Ὅρθρου δὲ πάλιν παρεγένετο εἰς τὸ ἱερόν, καὶ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς ἤρχετο· καὶ καθίσας ἐδίδασκεν αὐτούς.

ὄρθρος, ου m early morning
 πάλιν again, once more
 παραγινομαι come, arrive, appear
 λαος, ου m people, a people
 καθίζω sit down, take one's seat

"This verse contains several points of contact with the Lucan writings, as follows. (a) ὄρθρος occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only at Luke 24:1; Acts 5:21. (b) παραγινεσθαι is a Lucan word (Luke 8 times, Acts 20; John 2 (including this verse); rest of the New Testament 7). (c) λαος is a Lucan word (Luke 37(36) times, Acts 48; John 3 (including this verse); rest of the New Testament 56(55), of which 22 are in Hebrews and Revelation). (d) καθίσας ἐδίδασκεν. Cf. Luke 4:20; 5:3 (καθίσας ... ἐδίδασκεν)." Barrett.

"The outer court served as the venue for many scribes to gather their students around them and expound the law to them. Jesus used the same facilities, even if his content could not easily be compared with what the others taught." Carson.

Verse 3

ἄγουσιν δὲ οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι πρὸς αὐτὸν γυναῖκα ἐν μοιχείᾳ καταλήφθεισαν· καὶ στήσαντες αὐτήν ἐν μέσῳ,

γραμματεὺς, εως m scribe, expert in Jewish law
 μοιχεια, ας f adultery

Instead of μοιχεία D reads ἀμαρτία. This has encouraged the belief that the story about the woman accused of 'many sins' before the Lord, ascribed by Eusebius to the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, was this narrative.

κατελιημμένην Verb, perf pass ptc, f acc s καταλαμβάνω seize
 στήσαντες Verb, aor act ptc, m nom pl ἵστημι set, place, stand
 μεσος, η, ον middle; ἐν μ., in the middle, among

Verse 4

λέγουσιν αὐτῷ, πειράζοντες· Διδάσκαλε, αὕτη ἡ γυνὴ κατελήφθη ἐπ' αὐτοφόρῳ μοιχευομένη.

διδασκαλος, ου m teacher
 κατείληπται Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s καταλαμβάνω
 αὐτοφορος, ον in the act
 μοιχευω commit adultery

The man who must also have been a party to the act appears nowhere in this drama.

Verse 5

ἐν δὲ τῷ νόμῳ Μωσῆς ἡμῖν ἐνετείλατο τὰς τοιαύτας λιθοβολεῖσθαι· σὺ οὖν τί λέγεις;

νομος, ου m law

Cf. Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22-24. It has been suggested that this woman was betrothed rather than married, since stoning is not explicitly commanded in the case of the latter. If this were the case, this would have been a young girl rather than a woman. However, Blinzler argues that μοιχεύειν and its derivatives are used in the LXX and related Greek writings exclusively of adulterous actions of *married* persons. Whatever the case, the law clearly commanded that the man should suffer the same punishment along with the woman.

ἐνετείλατο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s ἐντελλομαι command, order
 τοιοῦτος, αὐτη, οὗτον correlative pronoun and adjective such, of such kind
 λιθαζω stone

Historical evidence suggests that the death penalty was rarely enforced.

Verse 6

τοῦτο δὲ ἔλεγον πειράζοντες αὐτόν, ἵνα ἔχωσιν κατηγορεῖν αὐτοῦ. ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς κάτω κύψας, τῷ δακτύλῳ ἔγραφεν εἰς τὴν γῆν, μὴ προσποιούμενος.

πειραζω test, put to the test

Cf. Mk 3:2; 10:2 also Lk 6:7.

κατηγορεω accuse, bring charges against

"There is no question of their seeking his advice; they simply wish to discredit him publicly. If he upholds the Law, he contradicts his way of life and his preaching; if he maintains his outlook and preaching regarding sinners and denies Moses, he shows himself a lawless person and perverter of the people who must be brought to justice." Beasley-Murray.

κάτω down, below, beneath
 κύψας Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s κυπτω bend or stoop down

δακτυλος, ου m finger

καταγραφω write

γη, γης f earth, land

προσποιούμαι act as if, give the impression that

Barrett comments, "It is fruitless to ask what Jesus wrote on the ground. His action was simply a studied refusal to pronounce judgement; cf. 8:15 ἐγὼ οὐ κρίνω οὐδενά."

A longstanding interpretation in the church has been that Jesus wrote part of Jeremiah 17:13: 'Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the LORD, the spring of living water.' However, it is also possible here to see a symbolic reference to the giving of the Law mentioned in v.5. The Law was written with the finger of God. Now God has appeared in Christ and written a new law of the kingdom – the law of love and humility – though he may not have written any specific words.

Verse 7

ὡς δὲ ἐπέμενον ἐρωτῶντες αὐτόν, ἀνακύψας εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς· Ὁ ἀναμάρτητος ὑμῶν, πρῶτον ἐπ' αὐτήν τὸν λίθον βαλέτω.

ἐπιμενω remain, stay, persist in
ἐρωταω ask, request, urge
ἀνακυπτω straighten up, stand up, look up
ἀναμάρτητος, ον sinless, innocent
πρωτος, η, ον first

"This recalls Deut 13:10(9); 17:7, The hand of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death." Barrett.

Beasley-Murray writes concerning the witnesses who would have been required to cast the first stone, "The word of Jesus challenged their behavior, their motives, and their life in the sight of God, and they failed the test."

βαλέτω Verb, aor act imperat, 3 s βαλλω
throw

λιθος, ον m stone

Verse 8

καὶ πάλιν κάτω κύψας ἔγραφεν εἰς τὴν γῆν.

παλιν again, once more
κατακυπτω bend down

Some MSS add after the end of v 8, ἐνὸς ἑκάστου αὐτῶν τὰς ἀμαρτίας, 'the sins of each one of them.'

Verse 9

οἱ δὲ, ἀκούσαντες, καὶ ὑπὸ τῆς συνειδήσεως ἐλεγχόμενοι, ἐξήρχοντο εἰς καθ' εἷς, ἀρξάμενοι ἀπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων· καὶ κατελείφθη μόνος ὁ Ἰησοῦς, καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἐν μέσῳ οὖσα.

εἰς καθ εἰς one by one

Cf. Mk 14:19. Many MSS add ὑπὸ τῆς συνειδήσεως ἐλεγξόμενοι, 'being convicted by their conscience.'

ἀρξάμενοι Verb, aor midd ptc, m nom pl
ἀρχω midd begin
πρεσβυτερος, α, ον elder, eldest

After πρεσβυτέρων some MSS add ἕως τῶν ἐσχάτων, 'to the youngest,' others πάντες ἀνεχωρησαν, 'so that all went out.'

κατελείφθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s

καταλειπω leave

μονος, η, ον adj only, alone

"The woman is no longer, 'in the midst' in the proper sense (as in v.3), but she remains standing, as it were, in the centre of the stage." Barrett.

Verse 10

ἀνακύψας δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, καὶ μηδένα θεασάμενος πλὴν τῆς γυναικός, εἶπεν αὐτῇ· Ποῦ εἰσιν ἐκεῖνοι οἱ κατήγοροί σου; Οὐδεὶς σε κατέκρινεν;

ἀνακυπτω see v.7

ποῦ interrogative adverb where

οὐδεις, οὐδεμα, οὐδεν no one, nothing

σε Pronoun, acc s συ

κατέκρινεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s

κατακρινω condemn, pass judgement
on

"Coming from the man whom people called *the* prophet (6:14; 7:40), and some the Messiah, but who in reality was the Redeemer-Revealer with authority bestowed by God, it was an assurance of the mercy of God upon her." Beasley-Murray.

Verse 11

ἡ δὲ εἶπεν· Οὐδεὶς, κύριε. εἶπεν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· Οὐδὲ ἐγὼ σε κρίνω· πορεύου καὶ μηκέτι ἀμάρτανε.]]

οὐδε neither

σε Pronoun, acc s συ

μηκετι no longer

ἀμαρτανω sin, commit sin

"No extenuation of the offence is implied; Jesus has come to save, not to condemn (3:17). Yet his very presence has the effect of judging the self-righteous bystanders; cf. 8:15. I judge no man; yet if I judge, my judgement is true." Barrett.

Forgiveness is to lead to transformation. "Whoever first recounted the story intended us to understand the word of forgiveness as a means of release for new life... In the nature of the case the power of the command is unexpressed, but the Gospel in which the incident has been set makes it clear that the grace of forgiveness is accompanied by the grace of new life by the Spirit. The Lord lifted up to heaven for the sin of the world sent the promised Spirit to enable the righteousness of God to be lived in the world. Life in the Kingdom of God is for kingdom of God *living*. To that the woman was sent into the world, as is every justified sinner." Beasley-Murray.

Postscript

Beasley-Murray comments, "The story is a superb illustration of the dictum of 3:17, of which (with the continuing vv 18–21) the whole account of Jesus at Tabernacles in chaps. 7–8 may be viewed as exposition. It serves both as a model for the Church's attitude to prodigal sons and daughters and as an illustration of the gospel. As Schnackenburg saw, "The point is not the condemnation of sin but the calling of sinners: not a doctrine but an event. Jesus accepts sinners in God's name; his will is not to judge but to save'."

Verse 12

Πάλιν οὖν αὐτοῖς ἐλάλησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων· Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου· ὁ ἀκολουθῶν ἐμοὶ οὐ μὴ περιπατήσει ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ, ἀλλ' ἔξει τὸ φῶς τῆς ζωῆς.

παλιν again, once more

Carson comments, "If we assume that when John wrote his Gospel he did not include (and may not have known the material of) 7:53–8:11, then 8:12 attaches itself to 7:52. Further, if the uncertainty that finds expression in 7:40–44 and the sharp exchanges in the Sanhedrin in 7:45–52 are removed from Jesus' public utterances, then 8:12 follows on nicely from 7:37–39. That is what is indicated by the word *again* (πάλιν, which is the first word in the Gk text of 8:12): *again* he spoke to the people, still in the context of the Feast of Tabernacles."

λαλεω speak, talk

ἐγὼ εἰμι the second of the 'I am' statements.
Cf. notes on 6:35.

φως, φωτος n light

The theme of light, which plays an important part in John's gospel, may here have been suggested by the use of light in the festival of Tabernacles (for detailed description see Strack & Billerbeck and other commentaries such as Beasley-Murray). Beasley-Murray comments, "As 7:37–38 had immediate reference to the water-drawing ceremony of the festival, and showed Jesus as fulfilling all that it signified of Israel's experience of and hope for the salvation of God, so 8:12 has immediate reference to the joyous celebration each night in the light of the lamps, with all that it connoted of Israel's experience of the shining of God upon them for their deliverance and hope of future salvation... As with the water-drawing ceremony, the celebration in the light of the lamps will have been associated with recollection of the nation's experience at the Exodus and the hope for a second Exodus. In the wilderness wanderings, the presence of the Lord with his people was manifested in the Shekinah cloud – the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night – which saved them from would-be-destroyers (Exod 14:19–25) and guided them through the wilderness to the promised land (Exod 13:21–22). It is linked with the OT faith in the Lord as the Light of his people (Ps 27:1), which for the Jew connoted not so much the being of God as his saving activity. 'Light is *Yahweh in action*,' said Conzelmann (*TDNT* 9:320). Ps 44:3 gives a remarkable expression of this concept, and it was ever before the eyes of the Israelites in the representations of theophany, both for revelation (Ezek 1:4, 13, 26–28) and for salvation (Hab 3:3–4). God's 'shining' for their salvation at the Exodus encouraged prayers for the like 'shining' of his face in the predicaments of the faithful (e.g., Ps 80:1–7, 14–19), and was matched by their expectation of that same light shining for their salvation in the coming kingdom of God (e.g., Isa 60:19–22). Zech 14:5b–7 is especially important here, for the description of the continual light of 'that day' is immediately followed by that of the living waters that are to flow from Jerusalem, a passage read at Tabernacles and one of those assumed in the saying of 7:37–38."

ἀκολουθεω follow, accompany, be a
disciple

ἐμοὶ Pronoun, dat s ἐγὼ

περιπατεω walk, live

σκοτια, ας f darkness

Cf. 1:5; 12:35,46. "When the original setting of 8:12 is seen in the Feast of Tabernacles, it is understood why the imagery of 'following' the Light is employed instead of *receiving* it, or *walking in* it, or the like: this is what Israel did in the wilderness! The people followed the Light as it led from the land of slavery through the perilous wilderness to the promised land." Beasley-Murray.

ἔξει Verb, fut act indic, 3 s ἐχω
ζωη, ης f life

Verse 13

εἶπον οὖν αὐτῷ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι· Σὺ περὶ σεαυτοῦ μαρτυρεῖς· ἡ μαρτυρία σου οὐκ ἔστιν ἀληθής.

εἶπον Verb, aor act indic, 1s & 3pl λεγω
σεαυτου, ης reflexive pronoun yourself
μαρτυρεω bear witness, testify
μαρτυρια, ας f testimony, witness
ἀληθης, ες true, truthful, genuine

The subject of chapter 8 is the authority of Jesus. The issue is triggered by Jesus' words concerning himself. See also Jesus' own words in 5:31, "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid." Are Jesus' words being thrown back at him here?

In vv 13, 14, 17 testimony that is, or is not ἀληθής is spoken of, in v 16 the judgment of Jesus is ἀληθινή; while some view the two terms in this context as interchangeable it is better to understand the former as 'true,' in the sense of 'valid,' and the latter as 'just' or 'authentic,' as having behind it the verdict of God himself." Beasley-Murray.

Verse 14

ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· Κὰν ἐγὼ μαρτυρῶ περὶ ἐμαυτοῦ, ἀληθής ἐστιν ἡ μαρτυρία μου, ὅτι οἶδα πόθεν ἦλθον καὶ ποῦ ὑπάγω· ὑμεῖς δὲ οὐκ οἴδατε πόθεν ἔρχομαι ἢ ποῦ ὑπάγω.

ἀπεκρίθη Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s
ἀποκρινομαι answer, reply, say
καν (και εαν) even if, and if, even
οἶδα know, understand
ποθεν interrog adv. from where
ἦλθον Verb, aor act ind, 1s & 3pl ἔρχομαι
ποῦ interrogative adverb where
ὑπάγω go, go one's way, depart
ἢ or

"Man as such is a creature of the present; that is why his testimony about himself is unreliable. He does not know what brought him to the present hour or where the next moment will find him. Jesus on the other hand knows whence he came, and therefore fully understands himself, and whither he goes, and is therefore subject to no temptation to conceal or twist the truth; hence his own witness regarding himself is true. He is not as other men – ὑμεῖς δε οὐκ οἴδατε. The Jews are not in themselves qualified to bear true self-testimony; nor can they understand why Jesus is so qualified. The ensuing discourse traces their complete ignorance of the origin, destiny and significance of Christ, and of their own." Barrett.

Verse 15

ὑμεῖς κατὰ τὴν σάρκα κρίνετε, ἐγὼ οὐ κρίνω οὐδένα.

σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, human nature

I.e. by what they see, by what is external – seeing merely the human person of Jesus and nothing of the Word become flesh. Cf. 7:24; 2 Cor 5:16.

κρίνω judge, pass judgement on
οὐδεις, οὐδεμια, οὐδεν no one, nothing

The pericope concerning the woman taken in adultery may have been added into the beginning of chapter 8 because it illustrates what Jesus says here. Carson, however, argues that the meaning here is that Jesus "does not judge anyone at all *the way his opponents do* – i.e. he does not appeal to superficial, 'fleshly' criteria, and accordingly mark people up or down. If that is what his opponents mean by judging, Jesus does not do any of it."

Verse 16

καὶ ἐὰν κρίνω δὲ ἐγὼ, ἡ κρίσις ἢ ἐμὴ ἀληθινή ἐστιν, ὅτι μόνος οὐκ εἰμί, ἀλλ' ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πέμψας με πατήρ.

ἐαν if
κρισις, εως f judgement, act of judgement
ἐμος, η, ον 1st pers possessive adj my, mine
ἀληθινος, η, ον real, genuine, true

"Jesus does not issue such judgements as do the Jews, but he cannot be made to deny altogether that he has the right to judge; only his judgement is of a different kind. It is also ἀληθινή (see on 1:9; here synonymous with ἀληθης)." Barrett.

μονος, η, ον adj only, alone
πεμπω send

God alone has the right to judge men. Jesus emphasises that in his judgements he and the Father are one. "According to John, judgement, by the Father's will, belongs equally to the Father and the Son (and to the Holy Spirit, 16:8,11)." Barrett.

Verse 17

καὶ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ δὲ τῷ ὑμετέρῳ γέγραπται ὅτι δύο ἀνθρώπων ἡ μαρτυρία ἀληθῆς ἐστίν.

νομος, ου m law

ὑμετερος, α, ον possessive adj of 2 pl your

Barrett thinks that Jesus would not have referred to *your* law. He argues that it reflects the later debate between church and synagogue. But it is better understood simply as a polemical point. Jesus appeals to the one authority that they do acknowledge.

γέγραπται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γραφω
write

δύο gen & acc δύο dat δύοσιν two

Verse 18

ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ ἐμαυτοῦ καὶ μαρτυρεῖ περὶ ἐμοῦ ὁ πέμψας με πατήρ.

Note John's use of ἐγώ εἰμι (cf 6:35). "For the Father's witness to the Son cf. 5:37; comparison of the language of that verse with this suggests equivalence of function and status between the Father and the Son." Barrett. Cf. 5:19-30; 36-37.

Verse 19

ἔλεγον οὖν αὐτῷ· Ποῦ ἐστὶν ὁ πατήρ σου; ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς· Οὐτε ἐμὲ οἴδατε οὔτε τὸν πατέρα μου· εἰ ἐμὲ ᾔδειτε, καὶ τὸν πατέρα μου ἂν ᾔδειτε.

ποῦ see v.14

οὔτε not, nor (οὔτε ... οὔτε neither ... nor)

ἐμὲ Pronoun, acc s ἐγώ

"The foolishness of the question about the Father proves that the questioners do not understand Jesus himself. They judge him *κατα τὴν σάρκα* (v.15), and therefore entertain similar views about the Father. But if they had rightly understood him, had known whence he came and whither he went, they would have known the Father also (cf. 1:18; 14:7,9)." Barrett.

ᾔδειτε Verb, pluperf act indic, 2 pl οἶδα
ἂν particle indicating contingency

"If they had really recognised who he was, they would have known the Father also – not only because Jesus reveals the Father, so that truly to know Jesus is to know the Father, but also because special revelation from God is required to know who Jesus is (6:44,45)." Carson.

Verse 20

ταῦτα τὰ ῥήματα ἐλάλησεν ἐν τῷ γαζοφυλακίῳ διδάσκων ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ· καὶ οὐδείς ἐπίασεν αὐτόν, ὅτι οὐπω ἐληλύθει ἡ ὥρα αὐτοῦ.

ῥημα, ατος n word, thing

λάλεω speak, talk

γαζοφυλακίον, ου n Temple treasury

Barrett says that the sense in which γαζοφυλακίον (cf. Mk 12:41,43) is used is unclear. He suggests that it may refer to the area where the "Shofar-chests" or offertory boxes were situated and that this may have been in the court of the women.

διδάσκω teach

ἱερον, ου n temple, temple precincts

οὐδείς, οὐδεμα, οὐδεν no one, nothing

πιάζω seize, arrest

οὐπω not yet

ἐληλύθει Verb, pluperf act indic, 3 s ἐρχομαι

ὥρα, ας f hour, moment, time

Cf. 7:30; 2:4.