

Why I did not preach on John 7:53-8:11 – Carey Hughes

Here are seven pieces of evidence as to why I believe this section should not be considered original to the Gospel of John.

External Evidence

1. This section of text is completely absent from any pre-fifth-century A.D. manuscripts, including the very best ones (P⁶⁶, P⁷⁵, N, B, A & C). So, for the first 500 year of church history this story appears not to have been part of John's Gospel.
2. When this story does appear in later manuscripts it is not consistently located in the same place in the book. In fact, it is found in no fewer than five different places in the manuscript evidence. It appears after John 7:36, 44 or 52 and at the very end of John's Gospel and even after Luke 21:38. Thus clearly there was much confusion as to where it actually belonged demonstrating its late arrival and questionable authenticity.
3. Even when this section does appear in later manuscripts it is quite frequently accompanied by an asterisk indicating a hesitation as to its authenticity.
4. All early church fathers omit this narrative: in commenting on John, they pass immediately from 7:52 to 8:12.

Internal Evidence

5. When it comes to the vocabulary in this section there is an obvious lack of congruence with the rest of the book. Virtually every verse in this section (7:53-8:11) contains a word or words found nowhere else in John's Gospel. Further there is a conspicuous lack of vocabulary typical of John throughout the story.
6. Key features of John's writing style are also distinctly missing from this section.
7. The story seems to very clearly interrupt the narrative flow of 7:1-8:59 breaking up a literary unit which is focused on one specific historical event – that of Jesus interacting with the feast of Tabernacles.

These notes have been adapted from the comments of Andreas Kostenberger and D. A. Carson. If you would like fuller explanation, please see their fine commentaries (listed Below).

D.A.Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), pages 333-337.

Andreas J. Kostenberger, *John, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic – a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2004) pages 245 – 249.