What do we do with John 7:53-8:11?

1. Textual Criticism and the Reliability of the Scriptures in Our Possession

*“We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.” (The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, Article X)*

* 1. Survey of witnesses to the New Testament text
     1. Ancient Greek manuscripts (5,000+)
        1. Papyri (~A.D. 100-A.D. 400)
           1. 𝔓66 (~A.D. 200)
           2. 𝔓75 (~A.D. 200)
        2. Uncials (~A.D. 400-A.D. 800)
           1. א (Sinaiticus) (~IV Cent.)
           2. B (Vaticanus) (~IV Cent.)
        3. Minuscules (~A.D. 800 - 1300).
     2. Translations into ancient languages (Old Latin, Coptic, Syrian, Armenian, Georgian, etc.)
     3. Quotations by early Church Fathers

*“If all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, they [the Patristic quotations] would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the entire New Testament.” (Metzger)*

* 1. The basics of textual criticism
     1. External evidence must be weighed
        1. The date of the witness
        2. The families of witnesses or text types
        3. The geographical distribution
     2. Internal evidence must be weighed (vocabulary of an author, grammar and syntax, and context of a passage)
  2. Summary points
     1. There exists no discrepancy which affects a single point of doctrine.
     2. The large majority of the text of the NT is the same. The variants usually concern individual words, spellings, or phrases.
     3. The best reading is often very obvious when weighing the evidence.
     4. In those rare cases in which there is no strong consensus, the variant changes nothing of any doctrinal significance.

*“For over 99 percent of the words of the Bible, we know what the original manuscript said. Even for many of the verses where there are textual variants…the correct decision is often quite clear, and there are really very few places where the textual variant is both difficult to evaluate and significant in determining the meaning.” (Grudem)*

*"We deny that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.” (The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, Article X)*

1. Textual Criticism and This Passage (6 Reasons for Not Affirming this Passage as Original)
   1. It is lacking in the best Greek manuscripts (those of the earliest date and the best text family).

*“One would hardly expect so many early manuscripts to omit such an important story about Jesus were it in their text.” (Keener)*

* 1. *“No Greek Church Father prior to… (the twelfth century) comments on the passage, and [the one who does] declares that the accurate copies of the Gospel do not contain it.” (Metzger)*
  2. It is missing in many of the early translation into other languages (Syriac, Coptic, and some Old Latin translations).
  3. This story has floated around in various places before finally settling here (sometimes in John 7:36, 44; 21:25; Luke 21:38).
  4. It abruptly interrupts the passage which flows from 7:52 directly into 8:12.
  5. The style and vocabulary differ greatly from John’s.

*Three Magnificent Statements Which Display the Glory of Christ in the Story of The Adulterous Woman*

1. The display of the glory of Christ’s wisdom (vv.6-8; cf. Deut. 22:22-24; Deut. 13:9; 17:7)

*“But by designating as the first the one “who is without sin,” Jesus faces them with the full and final seriousness of the law, not so as to lay down conditions that would make all human administration of justice impossible, but in order to confront all who, ignoring their own sin, want to judge and condemn others without mercy, to confront such judges with what awaits them if the heavenly judge should some day judge them by the same standard (cf. Mt. 7:1ff).” (Herman Ridderbos)*

*“Judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy”* (James 2:13).

“*Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things*” (Rom. 2:1).

1. The display of the glory of Christ’s compassion (vv.9-11a; cf. John 3:17-18)

“*As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?”* (Ezek. 33:11)

1. The display of the glory of Christ’s life-transforming message (v.11b; John 5:14)

*“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).*