

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

On November 2, 2014, we received the following comment and inquiry:

“I am sure you are aware of the beautiful compassion and mercy that Jesus revealed to us at John Chapter 8:1-11. What is your opinion, if you have one, why the Governing Body removed these verses from the current New World Translation? I always thought that these verses were an excellent example of how we should treat our fellow brothers and sisters, as well as other humans that we share this planet with. Thank you, and may God continue to bless your ministry. With Christian love, your brother.”

To the author, thank you for your email and brotherly love. The verses you refer to are the account of the woman caught in adultery where Jesus is said to have made the famous statement “Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.” According to the footnote in the *Revised New World Translation* at *John 7:53-8:11*, those verses were omitted because “a number of ancient and authoritative manuscripts omit them.” But, of course, this language correspondingly means that a number of ancient and authoritative manuscripts **do** contain those verses, and the Watchtower committee who created this revised translation decided to follow in the footsteps of those who omitted the verses.

It is interesting that the Watchtower committee who created the older version of the *New World Translation* reached a different conclusion, and decided to include those verses in the footnote, whereas the new Watchtower committee omitted them completely. This is not unusual for the Watchtower organization. They have a long public history of flip flopping on doctrines and policies, sometimes going back and forth on the same issue many times, as many long time Jehovah’s Witnesses well know.

As you said, the omitted verses are a beautiful compassionate account of Jesus’ mercy and a wonderful lesson in forgiveness for all. Who is not touched by the tenderness of the account and the stark contrast between the way a son of God responds to the sins of others and the way selfish intolerant hypocritical people respond. So whether this account is true or spurious, the lesson is of great value.

We are inclined to believe the account really occurred, even if it was not contained in some ancient manuscripts, because of its bold and unexpected wisdom, its profound insight, and its consistency with everything else Jesus taught. Recall that John wrote that the vast majority of the things Jesus said and did are not contained in writings of the day.

“There are also, in fact, many other things that Jesus did, which if ever they were written in full detail, I suppose the world itself could not contain the scrolls written.” – *John 21:25*

So the fact that some ancient manuscripts do not contain accounts that other manuscripts contain is not an automatic disqualifier of the accounts. The way we see it, because practically every Christian is familiar with this particular account, the outright omission of these verses from the *Revised New World Translation* may move many people to choose another Bible translation

for their personal study. We have made that decision for ourselves and only use the *New World Translation*, revised or older version, for the purposes of our ministry to Jehovah's Witnesses. In our personal study, we use various other translations so that we can get as broad an understanding of the scriptures as possible, and so that our understanding is not colored and dominated by the sectarian decisions of one group.

So, brother, even though the account is omitted from the *Revised New World Translation*, it is readily available in many other Bible translations such as the *New International Version*, the *Modern English Version*, the *Revised Standard Version*, the *Good News Translation*, the *King James Version* and many others. In truth, the lesson of the account is not lost to those who keep their minds open to the teachings of Jesus wherever they may be found, and who take his advice to keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking. (*Matthew 7:7-8*) When we understand the character of Jesus, it is not difficult to know what is true.

“I am the fine shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me,
. . . My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow
me.” — *John 10:14, 27*

“*Elaia Luchnia*”
