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5 MINUTE LESSONS ON THE KINGDOM OF GOD

It's All Greek to Me!

In the Summer of 1999 at the height of Bible software, Bible knowledge was expanding rapidly. Logos Bible Software seemed to be leading the way along with Nelson, Zondervan and other manufacturers in the field.

An article was sent to me from Logos that has helped me through the years. The information was something that I had never heard in the church, nor in any Bible College I was familiar with. I share this information; hopefully it will be helpful to you.

The Mystery of the Missing Autographs!

The mystery of the missing autographs may not be a mystery at all. By autograph we mean the original manuscript written by the original author, for example, Paul's letter to the Romans written and hand signed by Paul. This document was probably passed around so many times that it finally fell apart or got lost among its own copies. The point is, we don't have any known autographs, just copies and copies of copies and the copy machines in those days had legs and could walk.

The Apostle got in his boat and sailed off in all directions...

The manuscripts and their copies spread throughout the entire known world. The manuscripts that went north and west became known as "Byzantine" or "western" texts. Those that traveled south and east became known as "Alexandrian" or "eastern" texts. These are the two basic text families.

More Scribes prefer the Northwest

The manuscripts that propagated in the north and west were copied extensively as Christianity spread throughout Europe. The manuscripts in the south on the other hand were copied infrequently and spent centuries in storage. As a result there are many recent (middle ages) manuscripts in the west and a few ancient (third or fourth century) manuscripts in the east. These eastern manuscripts were re-discovered in the 1800's with the result that nearly every Bible translated since that time has been based on the older eastern manuscripts to the near total abandonment of the western manuscripts of the Middle Ages. Many manuscripts make one text. Collections of manuscripts and manuscript fragments are necessary to put together whole testaments and whole Bibles. It takes a complete collection to make a text. The best known western text is the Textus Receptus. The best known eastern text is called the "Critical Text." It is also known by the names of the scholars who have worked on the text, including Wescott and Hort, Nestle-Aland and Metzger. The Textus Receptus is the basis for the King James Bible and the

Critical Text is the basis for virtually every modern Bible translation in the years since the eastern manuscripts were rediscovered.

Which Text is the Correct Text?

Let us be perfectly clear. We don't know. There are many books written on the subject of which family of texts more accurately reflects the original autographs.

Coming from the "western manuscript tradition," the Byzantine majority Greek text is put together from hundreds of fragments and pieces, it represents the "text" that agrees in the numerical majority with most, if not all, known western manuscripts and partial manuscripts. It is from this family of "western" or "Byzantine" texts that the King James Version came into being.

Sometimes referred to as the "critical text" or the "eastern manuscript tradition," this is the Greek text most widely used today. It is the basis for nearly every modern Bible translation. It is the text used in most seminaries, and Bible Colleges. The Greek text is identical to that of the Nestle-Aland 26th edition.

Coming from the "western" or "Byzantine" manuscript tradition, the Textus Receptus 1550 Greek text is best known as the basis for the King James Version or Authorized Version of the English Bible completed in the year 1611.

Today with most modern English translations based on the "eastern" manuscripts there is renewed curiosity and interest in the western text.

What is the Text of My Choice?

It is easier to study the issue with a full set of tools. The Greek used in both eastern and western manuscripts, and the Bible translations using the western and eastern manuscripts for their translations. This way comparisons can easily be made.

The western manuscripts contain about 15% more material than the eastern manuscripts.

The eastern manuscripts rely heavily on only a few manuscripts, Vaticanus and Sinaiticus — discovered in the late 1800's. These two manuscripts often disagree with one another, and Sinaiticus exhibits excessive omission - as much as 5337 deletions.

Matthew 17:21, Matthew 18:11, Mathew 23:14, Mark 7:16, Mark 9:44, 46, Mark 11:26, Mark 15:28, Luke 17:36, Luke 23:17, John 5:3b-4, Acts 8:37, Acts 15:34, Acts 24:6b-7, Acts 28:29, Romans 16:24, and 1 John 5:7b-8a will not be found in most modern translations using the eastern texts. Yet we are told the eastern texts are older, so they must be better and most accurate.

The late Edward W. Goodrick, a translator for the New International Translation, makes this profound statement, *"Nor should the textual critic go by the age of the manuscript alone as if the older would always be the better, for we don't know how old the parent manuscript was when its offspring was born. A seventh century manuscript might have*

been copied from a sixth century manuscript, but a fifteenth century manuscript might have been copied from a third century manuscript.” (Is My Bible the Inspired Word of God? p.55)

My thoughts are: (1) The western manuscripts must have been added to (down through the centuries). Or, (2) The eastern manuscripts that rely on two manuscripts that often disagree, are a set of incomplete manuscripts. I favor the second option. Why? If you compare the omissions with the fuller western manuscripts (containing 15% more material than the eastern manuscripts) you will find a fuller understanding of the text.

Example: Acts 8:36-38 in the King James Version states,

“³⁶And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? ³⁷And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. ³⁸And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.” (Acts 8:36-38 KJV)

Acts 8:36-38 in the New International Version states,

“³⁶As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?” ³⁸And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.” (Acts 8:36-38 NIV)

Did you notice what is missing? (the eunuchs profession of faith) The whole verse in Acts 8:37. I have found these kinds of things many times. That’s why I prefer the fuller text, the western text (I don’t want to miss anything).

Note: John R. Kohlenberger, III in his “Contemporary Parallel New Testament” with eight translations states, “Differences between texts may affect the way you interpret a specific passage, but they will not affect your overall theology. No major doctrine stands or falls on a variant reading.”

Questions

1 What is an autograph?

- A. the signature of Elvis Presley on a piece of paper
- B. the original manuscript written by the original author
- C. a person’s signature

2 The two basic text families are:

- A. the northern text
- B. the eastern text
- C. the western text

3 If your Bible does not have Acts 8:37, then it has been translated from:

- A. the western text
- B. Germany
- C. the eastern text

4 The best known western text is the Textus Receptus.

True or False

5 The western manuscripts contain about 15% more material than the eastern manuscripts.

True or False

6 Matthew 17:21, Matthew 18:11, Matthew 23:14, Mark 7:16, Mark 9:44, 46, Mark 11:26, Mark 15:28, Luke 17:36, Luke 23:17, John 5:3b-4, Acts 8:37, Acts 15:34, Acts 24:6b-7, Acts 28:29, Romans 16:24, and 1 John 5:7b-8a will not be found in most modern translations using the eastern texts.

True or False

7 Differences between texts may affect the way you interpret a specific passage, but they will not affect your overall theology. No major doctrine stands or falls on a variant reading.

True or False

We want to hear from you!

We would love to hear your feedback on these lessons and how you use them in your own study or in discipling others. If you have any thoughts, stories, testimonies, comments, or questions we would love to hear them!

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Answer Key

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- A. the northern text
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 - C. the western text**
- 3** If your Bible does not have Acts 8:37, then it has been translated from:
- A. the western text
 - B. Germany
 - C. the eastern text**
- 4** The best known western text is the Textus Receptus.
- True**
- 5** The western manuscripts contain about 15% more material than the eastern manuscripts.
- True**
- 6** Matthew 17:21, Matthew 18:11, Matthew 23:14, Mark 7:16, Mark 9:44, 46, Mark 11:26, Mark 15:28, Luke 17:36, Luke 23:17, John 5:3b-4, Acts 8:37, Acts 15:34, Acts 24:6b-7, Acts 28:29, Romans 16:24, and 1 John 5:7b-8a will not be found in most modern translations using the eastern texts.
- True**

7 Differences between texts may affect the way you interpret a specific passage, but they will not affect your overall theology. No major doctrine stands or falls on a variant reading.

True