

The Transmission of the New Testament (part 2)

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[0 : 00] So, we left off last time looking at the transmission of the New Testament.! Specifically, we began to consider some of the more notable textual variants,! and how textual critics today can determine from those variants what the autographs or the original writings of the New Testament actually said.

And again, I'll remind you that the vast, vast majority of differences between the manuscripts are virtually meaningless. They are mostly spelling errors and very obvious mistakes.

And even among these so-called meaningful differences, not one affects any foundational doctrine of the church. So, even with these differences, Christianity has not changed in the least.

So, I said I would give you six examples of some of the more notable textual variants. We've looked at one of them in John chapter 5. Next, let's go to Luke chapter 23.

And I will tell you from the start that of all of the textual variants throughout the New Testament manuscripts that have any significance at all, this one has proven to be perhaps the most difficult.

[1 : 21] And by difficult, I mean scholars are completely divided as to whether or not this statement is original to Luke's Gospel. So, the textual variant is found in the first half of verse 34.

In the ESV, we read, And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do. Of course, this is a very well-known statement from Jesus while he was hanging on the cross.

But in the manuscript evidence, it's questionable as to whether Luke actually recorded Jesus saying this. And Luke is the only one who potentially recorded Jesus saying this.

So, if the manuscript evidence shows that this is not original to Luke's Gospel, we would have no biblical evidence whatsoever of Jesus actually saying this on the cross.

So, what does the manuscript evidence tell us? Well, for that, let's go back to our conceptual table of manuscripts. You may remember how we took all of the manuscripts still available to us today, and we laid them out on the table, and then we arranged them chronologically, and then we arranged them by categories.

[2 : 38] We have all of the Greek manuscripts together. We have all of the translations into other languages. Then we also have the writings of the early Christians, who frequently quoted the New Testament.

We also categorized the manuscripts by region, so we can see how widespread a textual variant may have gotten. So, we're going back to that table now to see what happened to Luke 23, 34, throughout the history of the New Testament's transmission.

Now, in the case of John 5, 4, which we looked at last time, the evidence was pretty straightforward. We couldn't find that verse in any of the earliest sources for centuries.

Then one version of it appeared before a second was finally inserted and transmitted through the later manuscripts, but Luke 23, 34 is a bit more challenging.

So, as we're looking at our table of manuscripts here, the copies from the 2nd and 3rd centuries do not contain this saying of Jesus.

[3 : 48] However, both Irenaeus and Origen, from the same time period, allude to this statement made by Jesus on the cross. It would seem that they were well aware of it, either by oral tradition or by copies they possessed of Luke's gospel.

Then we get into the 4th century. We see some of our best and most reliable manuscripts omit it, while other manuscripts during the same time period include it.

We also see in the 4th century that most Latin translations include it. And this pattern continues into the 5th and 6th centuries. Some manuscripts include it.

Some manuscripts omit it. Some translations include it. Some translations omit it. Then by the time we get to the medieval period, most manuscripts and translations include it.

So what exactly happened? Well, there are two prevailing theories as to how these two streams came into existence. Some scholars believe that Jesus actually said this and that Luke recorded it, but then scribes somewhere along the way omitted it.

[5 : 06] And why would they omit it? Well, according to the theory, it was either because they found it troubling that Jesus would so readily forgive those who were crucifying him, or they were troubled by the fact that his prayer may have gone unanswered.

And what makes them think his prayer would have gone unanswered? Well, it's primarily because God allowed the Romans to destroy Jerusalem in that judgment in AD 70.

Now, the other theory goes that Luke did not originally write this, but that a scribe later added it. And why would a scribe add it? Well, it certainly sounds like something Jesus would say, doesn't it? And perhaps the scribe either learned it from oral tradition or he maybe borrowed it from Luke's other writing, the book of Acts, where Stephen offers a very similar prayer as he's being stoned to death.

As I said, this is a very difficult variant for scholars. The external evidence is not the clearest in the world. You don't see it in the very earliest manuscripts, but you do see it very soon after.

[6 : 18] And you see the earliest Christian writers alluding to it, referencing it. And its inclusion or its omission is not limited to any geographical location.

Both are very widespread. So which is it? Does it belong or not? Unfortunately, I don't have a definitive answer. However, I will say two things about it.

First, with or without this statement, it doesn't change anything truly meaningful. While it certainly bolsters an aspect of Jesus' character, we don't necessarily have to rely on this one statement to know that about Jesus' character.

I mean, everything we know about Jesus points to his willingness to forgive. And second, for whatever you think this is worth, I'm relatively convinced that this is an original statement by Jesus recorded by Luke.

When we think back to those rules of textual criticism we talked about last time, I find it far more convincing that a scribe might remove this statement than add it, especially given some of the animosity between Jews and Christians during that time period.

[7 : 39] It makes more sense to me that if it were even intentional, that a Christian would be tempted to diminish Jesus' compassion for the Jews in this case than intentionally add to the Word of God to amplify it.

And this has clearly been the consensus of most Bible translators, which is why it remains in our New Testament today. And I'll add that it's perfectly consistent with Luke's gospel, which has this primary theme of Jesus' compassion and forgiveness for people who everyone was surprised to see he would forgive and show compassion to.

Well, next, let's jump over to Acts chapter 8. There we go.

This is the story of Philip baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch. So, Philip finds this man reading the book of Isaiah. He has questions about what he's reading, and Philip explains it to him.

And in the ESV we read, And as they were going along, this is verse 36, by the way, As they were going along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, See, here is water.

[9 : 00] What prevents me from being baptized? And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. But if you're familiar with the King James Version, you will likely notice that part of the conversation appears to be missing.

According to the footnote in the ESV, some manuscripts add all or most of verse 37, and Philip said, If you believe with all your heart, you may.

And he replied, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. So what happened here? In this case, it appears that modern versions of the Bible have removed a verse of the Bible.

But that's not really the case. And even if that were the case, you'll notice how honest they are about the manuscript evidence. Even when they have determined that a verse that appeared in an older translation of the Bible, such as the King James Version, is not original to the text, they still supply it in the footnote.

They still give those words to you. So clearly, this is not an attempt to deceive anyone. Well, this brief conversation between Philip and the eunuch does not appear in any surviving Greek manuscript until the 6th century.

[10:29] It does not appear in most of the translations either. However, Irenaeus seems to quote it in the latter part of the 2nd century, and it does appear in some, not all, but some 2nd and 3rd century Latin copies.

So when we combine the evidence, we can safely conclude that it's not original to the text of Acts, yet it is a very early edition. Namely, within the Western Latin tradition.

And if we had to speculate where it comes from, it was probably a very early baptismal liturgy where the one baptizing would ask, do you believe with all your heart?

And the one being baptized would say, yes, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And then scribes, reading the story of Philip and the eunuch, realizing that the eunuch doesn't make any kind of profession of faith here, they insert the church's commonly used liturgy.

Or it's also possible that a scribe made a margin note about this baptismal formula, and a later scribe mistakenly included it in the text. Now what's really interesting about this particular addition to the text is that it did not get perpetuated like so many others did.

[11:59] What we often see is that an addition gets made, sometimes relatively early on, and then it becomes nearly universal by the time we get to those later Byzantine manuscripts, which again are the majority of our surviving Greek manuscripts.

It's like the change in the text gets codified. But in this instance, that didn't really happen in the Greek manuscripts.

Most of the Byzantine manuscripts do not contain verse 37. So how did it end up in the King James Version? As I said last time, the King James Version was translated primarily from a handful of those later Byzantine manuscripts.

Well, if those manuscripts didn't have verse 37, why was it in the King James Version? Well, this brings us to a Catholic priest by the name of Desiderius Erasmus.

He was a contemporary of Martin Luther. In fact, they had quite an ongoing theological debate with one another over total depravity, free will, and so on.

[13:12] Well, the Catholic Church had used a Latin translation of the Bible for more than a thousand years by the time Luther and Erasmus came along. This was called the Latin Vulgate.

But Erasmus was well aware that the Vulgate contained errors. Like every other manuscript tradition, it had been hand-copied for all of those many, many years.

So it contained all of the scribal mistakes you would expect. And Erasmus decided he wanted to produce a fresh Latin translation from the Greek manuscripts since the Greek was the original language of the New Testament.

So to make a long story short, Erasmus collects all of the Greek manuscripts he can get his hands on. Unfortunately, he didn't have that many. He had maybe eight.

Some have estimated as high as 12. And all of them were those later Byzantine manuscripts after many additions had been made to the text over the years and then kind of standardized in those manuscripts.

[14:20] Now, arguably, that's better than having a translation that has been hand-copied for more than a thousand years. But still, it's not ideal because it's not as though he could compare it with older manuscripts that come a little closer to the original autographs.

Plus, I should mention, that Erasmus was in a hurry. He was actually competing with someone else to produce a new Latin translation and get it to the newly invented printing press first.

So, he was motivated to work very quickly. I should also mention that he did not have a complete copy of the New Testament in Greek.

So, as convoluted as it sounds, when he was missing passages, namely in the book of Revelation, he simply back-translated the Latin Vulgate into Greek before re-translating it back into Latin.

And if you're wondering why he would even bother to do that, it's because he wanted to produce a parallel Bible, if you will, with the Greek text on one side and the Latin on the other side.

[15:39] So, he needed a Greek version of the text. Well, Erasmus ended up producing five editions of the New Testament. He created the first, he made some revisions, he produced the second, made a few more revisions, and so on.

And all of this is relevant because the Greek New Testament he produced would eventually become the underlying text of the King James Version, the New Testament anyway.

Technically, a couple of other men would go on to revise Erasmus' text before it was translated into the King James Version, but Erasmus' New Testament is essentially the New Testament of the

King James Version.

Okay? Now, let's go back to that textual variant in Acts chapter 8. As I said, you won't find verse 37 in most of the Byzantine manuscripts.

However, of the small handful of Byzantine manuscripts that Erasmus was working with, it was found in one of the manuscripts, but only as a margin note.

[16:53] It was not in the text. And you may wonder, if that's the case, why did Erasmus include it in the text? Of course, his inclusion of it would later be carried over into the King James Bible.

Well, it's primarily because it was in the Latin Vulgate text. And as much as he wanted to correct the errors in the Vulgate, he was under immense pressure to avoid changing the Vulgate as little as possible.

You have to remember that this was the translation used by the Catholic Church for more than a thousand years. And I think we all know what happens when you mess with tradition, especially traditions regarding the Bible itself.

So despite the fact that the evidence is overwhelmingly against including verse 37, verse 37, and the evidence was against it even in Erasmus' day, he included it, likely to spare himself some trouble and get the approval he needed for this new translation.

Then, of course, that addition was carried over into the King James Bible. So again, it may appear that we have missing verses from our modern Bibles, but the truth is it was an addition to the Bible that has since been removed or at least relegated to the footnotes.

[18:19] Next, let's look at another textual variant that also involves Erasmus. This one is found in 1 John 5. In the ESV, we read, However, much like the last example, anyone familiar with the King James Version might detect that something is missing here.

And that is because in the KJV, these verses read, For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one, and there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one.

Now, what might strike you first about this particular variant is that I have repeatedly said that no variant in the Bible affects any Orthodox teaching of the church.

And yet, here we have this undeniably clear statement regarding the Trinity that has evidently been removed from modern versions of the Bible.

So how can I possibly make the claim that no variant affects foundational Christian doctrine? Well, before I answer that, let's look at how this variant happened.

[19:55] First, if we go back to our conceptual table of manuscripts, and we look exclusively at the Greek manuscripts of 1 John, we do not find this clear Trinitarian statement in a single copy until the 10th century.

However, the statement is not included in the actual text of 1 John. Rather, it's written in the margin. Then we have a few more just like that from the 12th through the 15th century.

The statement is a margin note, not in the text. Now, we do have one Greek manuscript from the year 1215 that actually includes that statement in the text.

However, we can't give this particular manuscript much weight because it's actually a Greek translation of a Latin manuscript. It was not a word-for-word Greek copy of a Greek copy.

So let's set that one aside for a moment. Now, in the 14th century, we have yet another Greek manuscript with that statement in the text, but once again, it appears to be a copy from a Latin manuscript.

[21:12] So we'll set that one aside. In short, we do not have evidence of a single Greek manuscript that was actually copied from a Greek manuscript that includes this Trinitarian statement in 1 John 5 until the year 1520.

Now, remember that date because it will be relevant in just a moment. 1520 is the first copy. Well, going back to our table, we can look at translations of the Bible throughout history.

Do we find that statement in any of the early translations? Well, it first appears in 5th century Latin manuscripts, not all, but some.

Then over time, it became more popular within the Latin tradition and eventually embedded itself permanently in the Latin Vulgate, which, as I've mentioned, became the most popular version of the Bible for more than a thousand years, primarily because it was the Bible of the Catholic Church. and that explains why some of those later Greek manuscripts had that statement written in the margin and others, the Greek translations from Latin had it in the text.

[22 : 33] In short, this statement got added to some Latin Bibles and was perpetuated throughout this Latin streams of Bible, Bible, but it never really affected the Greek stream of manuscripts at all, which is very telling.

I mean, this may be one of the most obvious textual variants that was not original to, in this case, 1 John. John did not write this.

But if we want even more evidence, let's go back to our table and see what early Christian writers said. Keep in mind that men like Athanasius were embroiled in debates and heresies regarding the Trinity.

And I think this may be the most compelling evidence. Athanasius in particular, if anyone would have cited this clear Trinitarian proof text found in the King James Version of the Bible, it would have been him.

And he would have cited it often. If that verse had been in early copies of Scripture, he would have quoted it. But he didn't. no one did until it began appearing in some of the Latin manuscripts.

[23 : 46] So where did it come from? Well, a footnote in the Net Bible says this, the reading seems to have arisen in a 4th century Latin homily in which the text was allegorized to refer to members of the Trinity.

And from there, it made its way into copies of the Latin Vulgate, the text used by the Roman Catholic Church. In other words, someone thought the Spirit, the water, and the blood may have been referring to the Trinity in some allegorical terms, so perhaps margin notes were added to someone's copy of Scripture, or maybe someone very intentionally inserted the Trinity into the text. Regardless, it's not original to 1 John. well, now we have to ask, how in the world did this statement end up in the King James Bible? I mean, the statement is not found in any legitimate Greek manuscript until 1520.

We've talked about how the majority of Greek manuscripts! are of that later Byzantine text type, but that statement is not in those Byzantine manuscripts. And we've talked about how the King James Bible was essentially translated from those handful of Byzantine manuscripts, so how did it get into the King James Bible?

Well, this takes us again back to Erasmus. When he published the first edition of his New Testament, he did not include this Trinitarian statement found in 1 John.

[25 : 24] He also did not include it in his second edition. Why not? It wasn't in the manuscripts. But this created a pretty big problem for him, even more so than Acts 837.

You see, Erasmus, he had competing interests with his Catholic counterparts. Again, Erasmus' goal was to fix the errors in the Latin Vulgate, that Latin Bible that the church had been using for so long. His mantra was, to the source. In other words, let's go back to the Greek and retranslate the Latin Bible from scratch. But the Catholic Church essentially responded, well, that's great and all, we support it, as long as you don't change the Vulgate.

You can see the problem here. Well, what do you suppose people said when they read 1 John in Erasmus' New Testament and realized and realized that he had essentially removed this all-important Trinitarian creed?

Well, they effectively said, how dare you? They accused him of heresy, they accused him of denying the Trinity, but Erasmus, he was very quick to defend himself, and his argument was very simple.

[26 : 43] If it had been in a single manuscript that was there before my eyes, it would have been in my edition of the New Testament. It was just that simple.

He was not trying to promote heresy, he was not trying to deny the Trinity, he was not trying to omit things from the Bible, he was simply trying to be as faithful and accurate to the Greek text as possible.

He even went as far as to challenge his critics, saying, if you find me one Greek manuscript with that reading, I will include it. Well, would you care to guess what happened?

Sure enough, someone comes along and says, here it is, I have one for you. Do you remember that date I told you to remember? Erasmus published his first edition of the New Testament in 1516.

The sole Greek manuscript that includes the Trinitarian phrase is dated 1520. And even Erasmus was well aware that this newly found manuscript was likely dubious.

[27 : 52] He knew it was a fake. Even so, he caved and he added it to his third edition. And in the third edition, he includes a note that says, I have restored the text so as to not give anyone an

occasion for slander.

And then he writes, but to return to the business of the reading, that is the reading itself, from our remarks, it is clear that the Greek and Latin manuscripts vary, and in my opinion, there is no danger in accepting either reading.

In other words, the Latin had the phrase, he knew that much, the Greek did not, he also knew that. But, even though he did not believe it should be included, he also felt that it was ultimately harmless.

Then, of course, the King James translators would primarily use Erasmus' text to form their New Testament, and that was pretty much true for all of the Reformation-era Bibles, with the exception of maybe Luther's.

Well, that brings us back to the claim that no textual variant in the Bible affects Christian orthodoxy. How can we make that claim in light of this particular variant?

[29 : 13] On the one hand, this variant does touch on Christian orthodoxy. That much is true. On the other hand, with or without this Trinitarian phrase in 1 John, the Bible still teaches the Trinity.

Remember that Athanasius and so many others were teaching and defending the doctrine of the Trinity long before this phrase ever made its way into the Bible.

So as convenient as this verse is to have, the doctrine of the Trinity does not stand or fall on this one verse. With that, I want to look at two more notable textual variants, and these are by far the two biggest ones.

And by biggest, I mean longest. So the first is found in John chapter 8. This is the story of the woman caught in adultery, and you'll remember that as the crowd was ready to stone her, Jesus says, let him who is without sin cast the first stone.

And then Jesus spins down, and he begins writing in the dirt, and many, many people have speculated as to what he was writing. But by the time he looks up again, everyone has dropped their stones and left.

[30 : 40] Then he says to the woman, go and sin no more. Of course, this has long been a beloved story of Jesus for a long time, and I know what some of you are thinking, please don't ruin this for me.

I love this story, and I want to believe it belongs in the Bible. Well, I actually have good news and bad news on that front, but let's start with the manuscript evidence.

This story is absent from the Greek manuscripts until between the 8th and 10th centuries. Now, having said that, we do have evidence that this story was being passed down through oral tradition as early as the 4th century.

Augustine, for example, he was well aware of this story, in fact, he believed it should be in the Bible, and assumed that maybe earlier scribes had removed it because they feared it might encourage more women to commit adultery.

Now, as far as I know, he didn't have any evidence that it was actually in any biblical manuscript, but that just goes to show you how popular and how powerful this story has been for a very long time.

[32 : 01] It also explains why the story was included in at least some of the Latin manuscripts starting in the 5th century. Now, once it begins showing up in the Greek manuscripts, it does something very unusual.

It moves. In other words, it's not always in the same place, and that's a pretty big red flag that says this text may not have been original to John's gospel.

In one of the manuscripts, it appears after John 7:36. Close. In others, it comes after John 21-25, at the end of the book.

In others, it appears after John 8-12, and in some of the manuscripts, it's actually tacked onto the end of Luke's gospel. It's not in John at all. And all of this before it finally settles into place at the end of John chapter 7, where we find it.

So evidently, it was not original to John's gospel, or any of the gospels for that matter, but it was a well-known story and well-beloved by the church for a very long time.

[33 : 16] So we see scribes continually trying to find a home for it somewhere in the New Testament. of it. So if you love this story and wish it belonged in the Bible, well, the bad news is, I don't think it does.

It's not original to John, but here's the potentially good news. It is well within the realm of possibility that this is, in fact, a true story that has been passed down through oral tradition.

John himself writes, there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

I firmly believe that this story captures the true nature of Jesus, even though I don't believe it was divinely inspired. Well, quickly, let's look at the last example, and this is the ending of Mark's gospel. So this brings us to where we kind of started. So the text in question is verses 9 through 20, which are placed in brackets in most of our Bible.

[34 : 29] Some translations will italicize the entire thing. This entire passage is a textual variant. Now, to summarize the evidence, we really don't have any Greek manuscripts that contain verses 9 through 20 until the 5th century.

Interestingly, in the 4th century, Eusebius notes that he is well aware of the longer ending of Mark, but he had not personally seen any of those manuscripts.

Jerome basically says the same thing in the late 4th or early 5th century. Now, once we reach the 5th century, there is an explosion of manuscripts that contain one of two alternate endings.

Obviously, some of them still end at verse 8. Others have what we call the shorter ending of Mark, and here's how that one goes. But they reported briefly to Peter and those with him all that they had been told.

And after this, Jesus himself sent out by means of them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation. The end.

[35 : 50] And I shall also note that there are variations of that shorter ending, but that pretty well captures it. So, throughout the 5th century, most of the manuscripts end at verse 8, while some have the shorter ending, and some have the longer ending, verses 9 through 20.

And that's pretty much how it goes until we get to those later Byzantine family of manuscripts essentially standardizing the longer ending. And even then, we see manuscripts with markings or symbols to indicate that that ending was not believed to be original to Mark.

Now, beyond the external evidence, there are also internal reasons to believe that this was not original to Mark. The first is simply vocabulary and style.

The vocabulary and style of this longer ending do not match the rest of Mark's gospel. The second issue is that the longer ending presents us with some subtle contradictions.

Maybe contradictions too strong of a word. There's some tension here created by the longer ending. For example, you'll notice how Mary is essentially reintroduced.

[37 : 14] Now, she's already been talked about through Mark's gospel, and yet Mark waits until now, this last mention of her to give us her backstory? That seems odd.

Another thing we see here is that Mark tells us in chapter 14 how Jesus promised to appear to his disciples in Galilee, but in the longer ending, evidently borrowing from some of the other gospel accounts, he only appears to them in Jerusalem.

Then we have that strange statement in verse 18. which says, they will pick up serpents with their hands, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them.

Now, the mention of serpents or snakes may very well be borrowed from the story of the snake biting Paul in the book of Acts. We don't know where the idea of poison comes from, but snakes casting out demons, speaking in tongues, and some of the other things that are mentioned here, they appear to be more like reflections on the apostolic age recorded in the book of Acts than anything found in the gospels.

And we could go on, but there are other examples that would call into question this longer ending of Mark, but really it's just piling evidence on top of evidence. Nearly everything about this longer ending tells us that it's not original to Mark.

[38 : 48] Now, the third issue relates back to those principles of textual criticism we talked about last time. Do you remember the golden rule of textual criticism?

Generally speaking, the reading that best explains why the other readings exist is likely the original. So, what happens in many cases is that a scribe along the way, he comes across a difficult passage and he attempts to smooth it out in one way or another.

Rarely do we see scribes attempting to make a passage more difficult to read. Well, in the case of Mark's ending, let's look at it and assume that it should end at verse 8.

Verse 8 says, And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment has seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

The end. Not only is that very abrupt, but it feels completely unresolved, doesn't it? Especially when we compare Mark with some of the other Gospels, which we have much fuller accounts of the resurrection and what followed in those other Gospels.

[40 : 08] So, which scenario seems more likely? Did Mark originally write the longer ending, and a scribe came along and decided to remove it for whatever reason?

Or did Mark end at verse 8, and a scribe decided to add a less abrupt, more resolved ending that better matched the other Gospels?

Well, once all of the evidence is combined, it becomes pretty clear that Mark did not write this longer ending. Now, you may wonder, why do our Bibles continue to publish these longer variants, and simply put brackets around them, rather than remove them entirely, or relegate them to the footnotes?

Well, they don't remove them entirely, because again, they want to be honest about the manuscript evidence. They want the reader to plainly see that the text of Scripture that is in their hands, that they are reading, did not fall from the sky that way.

God has been working providentially throughout history. And the reason they don't simply put these longer variants in the footnotes is similar to the reason that Erasmus allowed these readings from the Vulgate to be published in his New Testament without any Greek manuscript support.

[41 : 36] These longer passages are firmly embedded in tradition, primarily because of our long-standing familiarity with the King James Bible.

Okay, well, I'd hope to move into translations of the Bible today, but we're going to extend this series by one more week. We'll talk about the various kinds of translations.

Why does the NIV say one thing while the ESV says another? What are the philosophies behind these various translations? And before we bring this study to an end, perhaps the most important issue that I want to address is the issue of inerrancy.

Can we call the Bible inerrant after we've seen all of these textual variants? And what about those passages in the Bible that seem to indicate that God's Word would never change?

Well, we'll come back to that next week. Let's pray. Father, we thank You for preserving Your Word throughout the centuries and for giving Your church confidence that the Scriptures are true and trustworthy.

[42 : 46] Make us a people who tremble at Your Word while rejoicing in its promises. Let what we have considered this morning fix our eyes more clearly on Christ who is revealed to us in these Scriptures.

And we ask this in His name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.