
CAN WE KNOW THE EXACT WORDS OF SCRIPTURE?

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TERMINOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

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- Original text < Original wording
- Original manuscripts < Original wording
- Bible < Scripture
- Inspired < God-breathed
- Autographs < Wording on the autographs

AIMS

- For NT: original wording
 - With authority of those Christ commissioned
- For OT: final and original wording
 - Authority recognized by God's chosen people Israel

KNOW

- 'Know' got redefined in recent centuries
- Know ≠ shorthand for nearly 100% certainty
- Know = warranted true belief
- Knowing upheld by God

KNOWING

- Shift from presumed original to not original until proven
- We can have legitimate disprovable presumptions
- God's voice can be recognized
- It's in fact often easier to understand divine intention than human intention



ARGUMENTS FOR TEXTUAL RELIABILITY

MANUSCRIPT = CONFUSING WORD

- Papyri (up to seventh century)
- Parchment / leather
- Paper
- Stone
- Pottery

- Codex
- Scroll

- Majuscule / uncial
- Minuscule

- Continuous text
- Lectionary
- Extract

- Complete
- Fragmentary

F.F. BRUCE'S APOLOGETIC

- 1. Classical scholars accept authenticity of classical works attested by only a few late manuscripts
- 2. NT manuscripts are earlier and more numerous
- 1 + 2: We should accept NT
- This is an argument for consistency

ARGUMENT AS SOMETIMES PRESENTED

- The NT has more manuscripts than any other work
- Therefore it should be accepted as authentic

- Problems:
 - There are more copies of yesterday's newspaper
 - This is a foundational argument



ARGUMENT FROM VINDICATED TRUST

TRUSTING WITHOUT ARCHAEOLOGY

- Wycliffe, Hus, Luther, Tyndale, Calvin, Wesley, Whitfield, etc.
- 17 centuries of Martyrs
- Ordinary Christians from first century to 1800s.

13 **C** Now * in the fourteenth yeere
of king Hezekiah, did † Sennacherib
king of Assyria come by against all the
fenced cities of Judah, and tooke them.

14 And Hezekiah king of Judah sent
to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying,
I have offended, returne from me: that
which thou puttest on me, will I beare.
And the king of Assyria appointed vn-
to Hezekiah king of Judah, three hun-
dred talents of silver, and thirtie talents
of gold.

15 And Hezekiah gaue ^{him} all the sil-
uer that was found in the house of the
L O R D, and in the treasures of the
kings house.

BIBLICAL CLAIMS

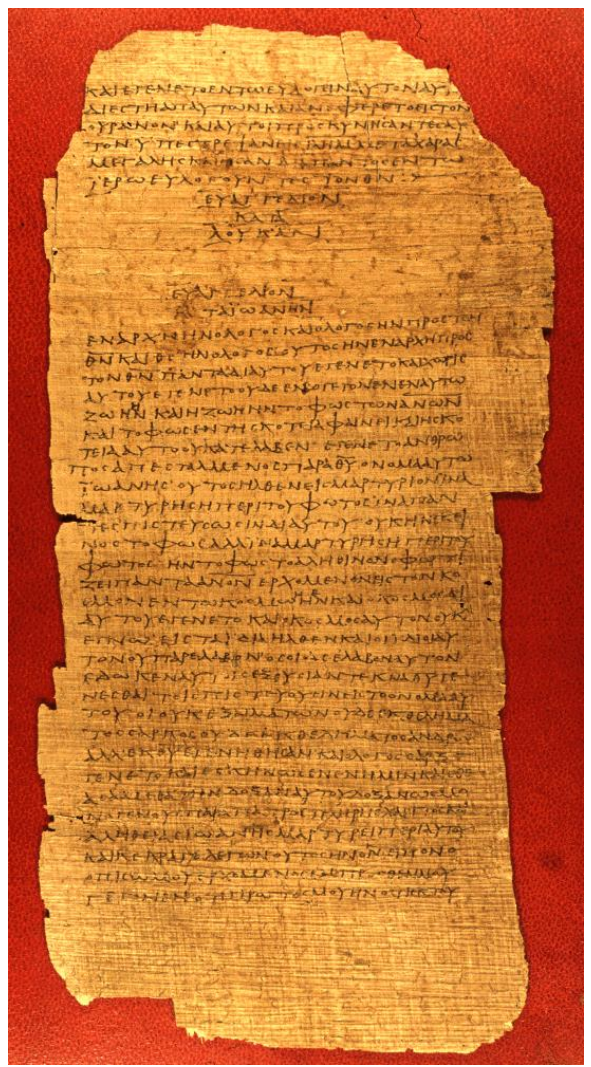
- There was a Judaeen King Hezekiah
- All the fortified cities of Judah were captured
- Except Jerusalem
- This was by Sennacherib king of Assyria
- Sennacherib particularly fought against Lachish
- Hezekiah was fined 30 gold talents
- Hezekiah was fined 300 silver talents
- Hezekiah gave all the silver in the king's house and temple

SENNACHERIB'S ACCOUNT

- As for Hezekiah, the Judaeen, I besieged 46 of his fortified walled cities. ... I conquered them and took out 200,150 people ... He himself, I locked up within Jerusalem, his royal city, like a bird in a cage Hezekiah was overwhelmed by the splendour of my lordliness and he sent me ... 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver ...



Ν ἀρχὴ ἡμῶν ὁ λόγος, ὁ λό-
γος ἡμῶν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θε-
ὸς ἡμῶν ὁ λόγος. ὅστος ἡμῶν ἐν ἀρ-
χῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. πάντα δι-
'αυτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐ-
δέ ἓμ, ὁ γέγονεμ. ἐμ' αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἡμῶν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ
ἡμῶν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ
σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτοῦ οὐ κατέ-



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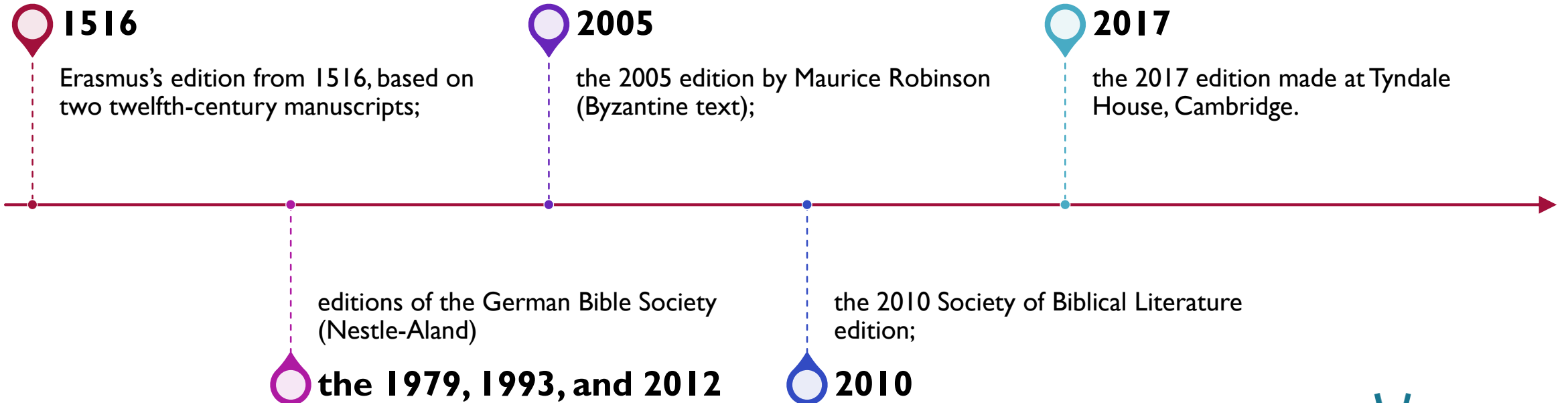
JOHN 1:1-14

182 words

812 letters

Tyndale
House
edition 2017

JOHN 1:1-14 IDENTICAL



DES· ERASMI RO·

TERODAMI IN NOVVM TESTAMENTVM

Annotationes, ab ipso autore iam quartum recogni-
tae, & ex Graecis codicibus quos postea nactus est
auctario neutiq̃ poenitendo locupletatae.



APVD INCLYTAM RAVRACORVM

BASILEAM, AN· M· D· XXVII.

tarum inde iurrexit, quasi legerit & ipse iurrexit.

Et reuerſi ſunt unusquiſq; in domum ſuam.) Hæc clauſula nõ additur apud Chryſoſto-
mum, ne apud Theophylactum quidem.

EX CAPITULO OCTAVO.



*Historia de
muliere adul-
tera in multis
non est.*

Dducunt autem ſcribæ & phariſæi mulierem.) **H**istoria de muliere adul-
tera, non habetur in plerisq; Græcis exemplaribus. In nonnullis adiecta erat
in calce. Atq; adeo Chryſoſtomus nullam facit huius mentionem, edifferens
euangelium Ioannis, legens hoc contextu, Scrutare & uide, quia à Galilæa
propheta non ſurgit. Rurſum igitur Ieſus illis loquutus eſt, dicens, Ego ſum
lux mundi, &c. Et ad eundem modum legit Theophylactus, cum alioqui perpetuam in
totum Ioannis euangelium commentationẽ ſcripſerit. Tametsi diuus Auguſtinus hunc
locum & charrat in commentarijs, & ſubinde citat in operibus ſuis. Quin & diuus Hiero

CONFIDENCE IN GOSPEL TEXT

- Erasmus knew about the textual uncertainty concerning 77% of the verses in the TR which modern texts tend to omit/question.
- If he'd been willing to break from the Vulgate, he could have got much closer to a modern text.
- The Reformation was complete in Soteriology, but not immediately complete in the area of Bible text.
- Result: range of uncertainty about NT text is lessened.

WHEN MANUSCRIPTS DISAGREE

- Positive textual criticism (look for good testimony)
- Negative textual criticism (identify corruption)
- We're *only* editors / translators / interpreters
- Not called to definitive identification of all inspired verbal sequences
- Focus on what you are most certain about



AS THE GAP GETS SMALLER, DOUBT
GETS BIGGER



EVANGELICALS & THE OT TEXT

COMMON VIEW OF OT TEXT

- Medieval Hebrew copying could be extraordinarily accurate
- Pre-AD 70 consonantal text much more varied
- Variant Greek forms may be earlier than Hebrew
- NT writers preferred the Septuagint for quotation
- **Problem: OT text not fixed prior to Jesus's use of it**

MY CONTENTIONS

- OT was fixed by time of Jesus
- Evidence for drastic change round AD 70 exaggerated
- Evidence for strict consonantal and vocalic copying goes back earlier
- Evidence from 1st century BC of Greek translations conforming to strict Hebrew through literal translation
- No NT writer thought there was something called 'the Septuagint'

HOW THE 'SEPTUAGINT' WAS INVENTED

- 72 + noun → 70 + noun
- 70 + noun → 70 with no noun
- 70 people → 70 = a thing
- 70 plural → singular
- Pentateuch → Other OT books
- Other OT books → Apocryphal translated books
- Apocryphal translated books → Apocryphal non-translated books
- Non-translated books → parts of NT & post-Christian literature

SEVENTY BECOMES A SINGULAR

- Latin *Septuaginta* ‘seventy’
- French *Les Septante* → *La Septante*
- German *Die Septuaginta* (pl.) → *Die Septuaginta* (f.sg.)
- English *The Septuagint* (people) → *The Septuagint* (thing)
- Italian *i Settanta* (pl.) → *la Settanta*
- Spanish *los Septuaginta* (pl.) → *la Septuaginta*

blíotheca reponí. At uerò libri extra canonē: quos eccle
sía potius ad edificationē populi: q̄ ad auctōritatē eccle
siasticorū dogmatū confirmandā recipit: Græcā tm̄ hñt
scripturā: sed cū duplici latína inter̄ptatione: altera beati
Hieronymi: altera iterlineari de verbo ad verbū: eo mo

COMPLUTENSIAN POLYGLOT

Printed 1517, imprimatur 1520

IOSVE.
ΙΗΣΟΥΕ.

Incipit liber iosue.
Cap. i.

A

Et factū est post mortē moy
Αι εφητο μετα τη ελευτην μου
si serui dñi: et locut⁹ est dñs
ση δούλου κυρίου, και ειπε κυριος τω
iosue filio nuni ministro moy
ισου ου βιαϊαυμ τω υπουργω μωυση

Factū ē post mor
tē moyſi ſerui dñi
ut loqueretur dñs
ad iosue filium
nuni miniſtrum moyſi: & di
ceret ei. Moyſes ſeruus
meus mortuus ē. Surge
& trāſi iordanem iſtum:
tu & ois ppſs tecū: i ter
ram quam dabo filiis iſrael.
Omnem locū quē calcauerit veſti
giū pedis veſtri vobis tradā:
ſicut locus tuus ſum a deſerto
& libano vſq; ad fluuiū mag
nū euphratē omnis terra
etheorū vſq; ad mare magnū
cōtra ſolis occaſum erit ter
minus veſter. Nullus poterit
vobis reſiſtere cunctis diebus
viſite tue. Sicut fui cum moy
ſe: ita ero tecū.

ויהי אחרי מות משה עבד יהוה
ויאמר יהוה אל יהושע בן נון
משרת משה לאמרו משה עבדי
נת ועתה קום עבר את הירדן הזה
אתה וכל העם הזה אל הארץ אשר
אנכי נתן להם לבני ישראל כל
מקום אשר תדרך כף רגלכם בו
לכם נתתיו כאשר דברתי אל
מיטהו מהמדבר והלבנון עד
הנהר הגדול נהר פרת כל ארץ
החתיים ועד הים הגדול מנא השמש
יהיה גבולכם לא יתיצב איש
לפניך כל ימי חייך כאשר הייתי
עם משה אהיה עמך לא ארפך

יהוה
שרת
סות
קום
גם
דבר
גבול
בוא
היה גבול
יצב פנה
יום היה

diebus: moyſes ſeruus meus mortuus est: nunc iſt
λέγων, μωυσης ο θεράπων μου τετελευτηκει, νυν ουν ετα
gea. trāſi iordanē tu et ois ppſo hic in
5ας διαβηθι τον ιορδανην συ και πας ο λαος υτος εις την
terra: q̄ ego vo eto. oia locus ad que ambulauerit
γη, ην εγω διδωμι αυτοις. πας ο τοπος εφ' ον αν επιβη η
vestigia pedū vſq; vobis dabo est: ſicut lo
ιχτη των παδων υμων, υμιν δωσω αυτον, ον τροπον ει
cut sum moyſi. deſertū et antilibanū vſq; ad
ρηια τω μωυση. την ζρημον και τον αντιλιβανον εις του
fluuiū magnū fluuiū euphratē: oēm tē
ποταμιου του μεγαλου ποταμου ευφρατου, πασα γη
etheorū et vſq; ad mare magnū: a ſolis oc
ι τοιων και εις της θαλασσης της μεγαλης, αφ' ηλιου δυ
caſu erit terminuſte. nō reſiſtet hō co.
σμων εις αι τα ορια υμων. ουκ αντισιſτει ανθρωπος και
rum vobis elictis dieb⁹ vite tue. et
τεν ωπιον υμων πασας τις ημερας της ζωης σου. και
ſicut fui cum moyſe: ita ero et tecum:
ωσπερ ημην μετα μωυση, ουτως εσομαι και μετα σου,
et nō deſpiciam te: neq; deſpiciam te: cōfo: taſ et
και ουκ εγκαταλειψω σε ουδ' υπεραυμουσι σε. ουκ ερι

Deut. 11. 6.

Infra. 1. 6.

A

MACCABEORVM secundus.

ΜΑΚΚΑΒΑΙΩΝ δευτερον.

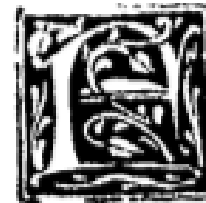
Ratribus sunt p

Τοις ἀδελφοις τοις κατ'
egyptū iudeis και
αίγυπτου Ιουδαίοις και
dere: fratres qui in hic-
rosolymis iudei τ και
σελύμοις Ιουδαίοι και οι

In regione iudee pace bonā.
in τῇ χώρᾳ τῆς Ιουδαίας εἰρήνην ἀγαθὴν.
et bona faciat vobis deus. et meminerit
και ἀγαθὰ ποιῆσαι ὑμῖν ὁ θεός. και μνησθεῖν
testamenti sui quod ad abrahā et
τῆς διαθήκης αὐτοῦ, τῆ πρὸς ἀβραάμ και
isaac et iacob suorum suorum fide
Ἰσαὰκ και Ἰακώβ τῶν δούλων αὐτοῦ τῶν πι-
sifi. et deo vobis cor ostendit ad
σῶν. και δὲ ὑμῖν καρδίαν πᾶσι εἰς τὸ
colendū est et faciendū est vobis
σεβέσθαι αὐτὸν και ποιῆν αὐτοῦ τὰ θελή-
tate corde magno et aia volē-
ματα καρδία μεγάλη και ψυχῇ βουλομέ-
te. et adaperiat cor vestrum ut in
νη. και διανοίξαι τὴν καρδίαν ὑμῶν ἐν τῷ
lege sua et in preceptis: et
νόμῳ αὐτοῦ και ἐν τοῖς προσάγμασι, και
pace faciat et exaudiat vobis
εἰρήνην ποιῆσαι και ἐπακούσαι ὑμῶν τῶν

Incipit liber secundus machabeorū.

RATRIBVSQVI Sunt



per egyptum iudeis salute
dicunt fratres qui sunt in hic
rosolymis iudei: & qui in re
gione iudea: & pacem bonā.
nam. Benefaciat vobis deus & memine
rit testamenti sui quod locutus est ad
abraam & isaac & iacob seruatorum suo
rum fidelium: & det vobis cor omnib⁹
ut colatis eum: & faciatis eius volunta
tem corde magno & animo volenti.
Adaperiat cor vestrum in lege sua & in
preceptis suis: & faciat pacem. Exaudi
at orationes vestras: & reconcilietur vo
bis: nec vos deferat in tempore malo.
Et nunc hic sumus orantes pro vobis.
Regnante demetrio anno centesimo se
xagesimo nono: nos iudei scripsim⁹ vo
bis in tribulatione & impetu qui super
uenit nobis in istis annis ex quo recessit
iason a sancta terra & a regno. Porta
succenderunt & effuderunt sanguines
innocentem. Et orauimus ad dominū
& exauditi sumus: et obtulimus sacrifici
um & similaginem: & accendimus lu
cernas & proposuimus panes. Et nunc
frequētatē dies scenophegie mēsis cal
leu. Anno centesimo octogesimo octa
uo: populus qui est hierosolymis & in

gnificat gratias agim⁹ ei: ut pote extra te
γάλας ἐν χάριτι οὐ μὲν αὐτῷ, ὡς ἀντὶ πρὸς βα-
σιλέα διηκῆται. ἵπερ ἐν ἐβουλίᾳ ἐποίησε
σιλέα παρατασόμενοι αὐτῷ ἵνα ἐξέβρασι
eos & pugnaverit in sancta ciuitate.
τοὺς παραταξαμένους ἐν τῇ ἁγίᾳ πόλει
in grida certatio est donec
εἰς τὴν περὶ ἰδα φρόνιμος ἵνα ὁ ἡγεμὼν και
circa ipm irresistibilis apparere esse exer
η πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀνυπόστατος δοκοῦσα εἶναι δὲ
cit⁹: πενήτη ἵνα ἵνα ἵνα
ναίμεις, κατεκόπησαν ἐν τῷ τῆς ναυαγίας ἐπι-
deceptione utent⁹ ἵνα εἰς circa
παραλογισμῷ χρησάμενοι τῶν πρὸς τὴν
ναυαγίας sacerdotib⁹. ἀναμῆ. ἵνα ἵνα
ca ad
ναυαγίας ἀγίερον. ὡς πρὸς συνακτῶν αὐτῶν πα-
venit ἵνα loci ἵνα ἵνα
ρηθῆτο εἰς τὸν τόπον ὅ, τε ἀντίοχος και οἱ
est eo amicit: ut acciperet pecū
σὺν αὐτῷ φίλοι, χάριν τῆ λαβῆν τὰ χρημά-
tias in dotio rone. et si proposuissatis
τα εἰς φερῆς λόγον. και προθείτω αὐτὰ τῶν
sacerdotum nauci: et ille igressus esset est
ἱερέων τῆς ναυαγίας, κακείνου προσελλούτος με-
rauco intra ambitū sancti et in
τῶν ἁγίων εἰς τὸν περίβολον τῆς τεμενίου, συν-
dēta ἵνα ἵνα ἵνα
κλείσαντες τὸ ἱερόν ὡς εἰσῆλθεν ἀντίοχος,
apertis ἵνα ἵνα
occulis: πο-
ἀνοίξαντες τὴν τῆς φατνάματος κρυφῆν αὐ-
est ἵνα ἵνα ἵνα

B

PSALM 2:9: GREEK 'SHEPHERD'

- 'You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.' (Psalm 2:9 ESV, from Hebrew)
- 'He who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces.' (Revelation 2:26-27 ESV)
- 'break' = r'' / 'shepherd' = $r'h$

BREAK OR SHEPHERD?

■ Break:

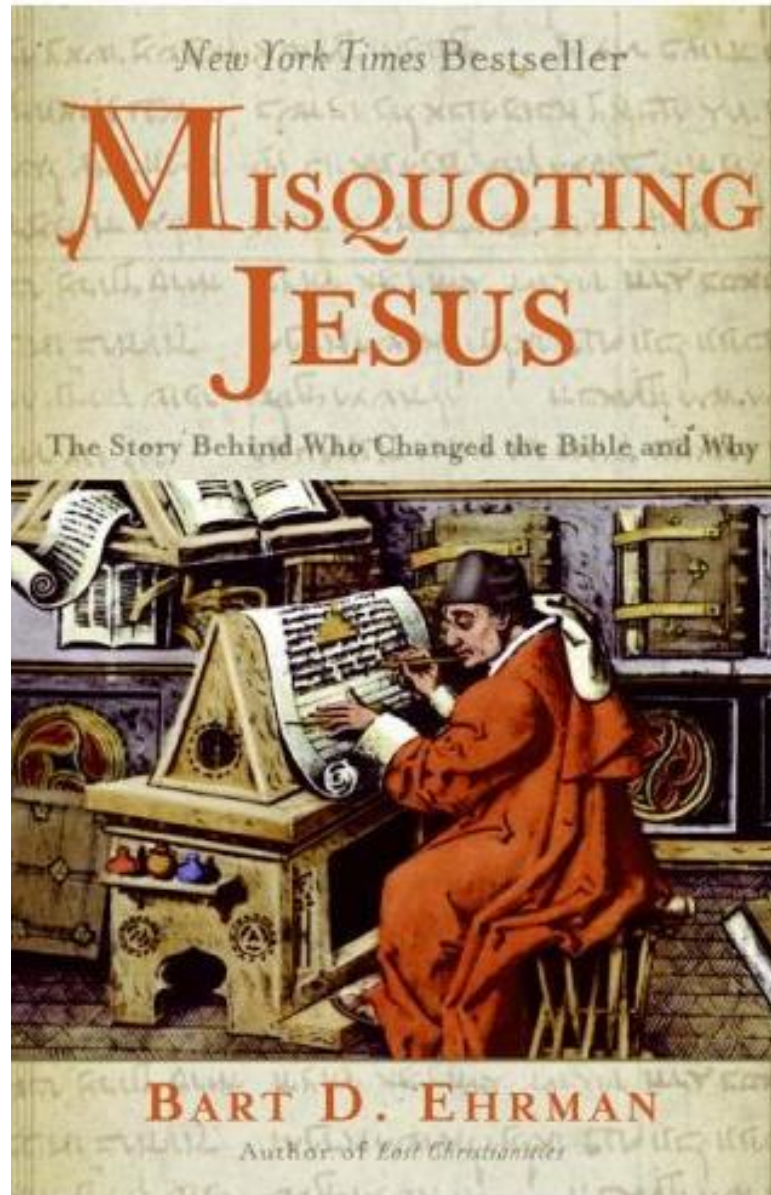
- Parallelism with 'smash'
- Hebrew root *r*'
- Works well with 'iron'
- Works well with potter's vessel

■ Shepherd:

- Ruling animals (Psalm 2:3)
- Royal rule often likened to shepherding
- God presented as shepherd-king in OT
- Fits well with invitation to kings and final 'blessed are all those who put their trust in him'



BART EHRMAN & THE NT TEXT



EHRMAN'S QUESTION

- I kept reverting to my basic question: how does it help us to say that the Bible is the inerrant word of God if in fact we don't have the words that God inerrantly inspired, but only the words copied by the scribes—sometimes correctly but sometimes (many times!) incorrectly? What good is it to say that the autographs (i.e., the originals) were inspired? We don't *have* the originals! We have only error-ridden copies, and the vast majority of these are centuries removed from the originals and different from them, evidently, in thousands of ways. (Bart Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, p. 7)

EHRMAN'S QUESTION

- I kept reverting to my basic question: how does it help us to say that the Bible is the inerrant word of God if in fact we don't have the words that God inerrantly inspired
 - **Who says we don't?**
 - **Even if we don't, a doctrine of scripture doesn't require availability (cf. Josiah's discovery of the book of the law)**
- but only the words copied by the scribes—sometimes correctly but sometimes (many times!) incorrectly?
 - **The words are the inspired thing and don't get less inspired when copied**
 - **Many miscopyings do not destroy the words**

EHRMAN'S QUESTION

- What good is it to say that the autographs (i.e., the originals) were inspired? We don't have the originals!
 - **Sorry, we've been using unclear terminology**
- We have only error-ridden copies
 - **Augustine was aware of that and still believed in complete scriptural truthfulness**
- and the vast majority of these are centuries removed from the originals and different from them, evidently, in thousands of ways.
 - **Something all Christian scribes were aware of**

SAYINGS WE SHOULD CHALLENGE

- We do not have the originals
 - **Either irrelevant or misleading**
- We do not have the original text
 - **Can you prove that?**
- The text is uncertain
 - **God is quite certain of the text, but you are uncertain about it**
- The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain
 - **God is also quite certain of the meaning**

EHRMAN'S QUESTION

- “We don’t have the originals of any of the books of the New Testament”
- Implies that we are supposed to have autographs
- But Christians have never believed this
- What matters is ‘wording’
- He hasn’t shown that we don’t have original wording

SO MANY DIFFERENCES?

- “There are more differences in our manuscripts than there are words in the New Testament”
- Ehrman implies this is bad
- Doesn't highlight where all manuscripts agree
- 300,000 variants; 134,000 words in the NT; 2,600,000 pages of NT manuscript
- In his method, the more witnesses there are the less certain something is!
- John Mill, 1707, 100 mss: 30,000 variants; why do we have 55x more mss and only 10x more variants?

DELIBERATE CHANGE?

- Scribes deliberately changed scripture
- Ehrman always prefers to accept deliberate change over chance change
- Like having Intelligent Design as default explanation
- It's amazing how few examples of deliberate change he can find across all mss in all of NT
- There are plenty of explanations he doesn't consider

THE BIBLE AS MAGIC BOOK

- “What good does it do to say that the words are inspired by God if most people have absolutely no access to these words, but only to more or less clumsy renderings of these words into a language, such as English, that has nothing to do with the original words?” (*Misquoting Jesus*, p. 7)
- Spells don’t work if you get a word wrong
- Scripture does
- Christians have always believed that scripture is effective in translation

CONCLUSIONS

- How can we know we have the very words of God?
- By trusting reliable testimony
- There's lots of evidence of good testimony
- Testimony should be rationally analysed
- Knowing is warranted true belief
 - It is effectively immediate, not result of mediation by something which can be separately established
 - Is not overturned by our fallibility



THE END

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