

How Should We Handle Unresolved Questions About the Bible?

When discovering more challenging passages, though, how should we proceed?

- **Clarify a passage by examining its** ⁽¹⁵⁾ _____ or by using clear passages to examine the unclear.
- **Absence of evidence isn't** ⁽¹⁶⁾ _____ of absence.
- **Be charitable toward the author.**
- **What the Bible** ⁽¹⁷⁾ _____ is often different from what it prescribes.
- **The author may be using a literary strategy**, making a particular ⁽¹⁸⁾ _____ point, or just observing; journalistic precision isn't always his concern.
- **We'll have to be content to live with unanswered questions.**

In Praise of Ancient Scribes

We cannot overstate the importance of early scribes. If we can learn more about them, surely this will help us appreciate how they have handed the Bible down to us.

- In making multiple copies, scribes wrote in a writing room or ⁽¹⁹⁾ _____, listening to the reader as he read aloud from his text.
- An end note, or ⁽²⁰⁾ _____, might include the scribe's name, and occasionally the place and date he finished the manuscript of the Bible.

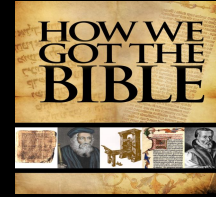


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Answers: 1-copyists 2-untrue 3-variants 4-context 5-men 6-Scripture 7-human-divine 8-original text 9-God 10-destroyed 11-one-eighth 12-98.33% 13-99.75% 14-superiority 15-context 16-evidence 17-describes 18-theological 19-scriptorium 20-colophon

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Pastors Jerry and Jeremy Johnston's *Sermonar*
Sunday, February 21, 2010
"Errors, Variants and Mistakes:
Can I trust the transmission of the Bible?"
Message #6 in the series, "How We Got the Bible"
Bible Text: 2 Peter 3:15-18 (NIV)

Bible Text: 2 Peter 3:15-18, p.2136 in the Nelson Study Bible

200,00 Errors in the Bible?

It is a fact that the New Testament text has been transmitted to us through the hands of ⁽¹⁾ _____. It is also a fact that, since these hands were human, they were susceptible to the slips and faults of all human hands.

- The Scriptures, although divine, have been handed down through the centuries by means of copies, just like any other ancient book.
- A failure to recognize this would mean that God would have to perform a miracle every time a scribe picked up a pen and ink.

Number of Variations

It is wholly misleading and ⁽²⁾ _____ to say that there are 200,000 errors in the text of the New Testament.

Actually, the word "error" is consciously avoided by textual critics; we prefer to use the term ⁽³⁾ _____ or variations.

This large number of 200,000 variations is gained by counting all the variations in all of the Bible manuscripts.

Key point: Except for a few instances, we have an unquestioned text; and even then not one principle of faith or command of the Lord is involved.



"The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation through out the centuries."
-Sir Frederic Kenyon

SKEPTIC'S Instructions for Reading the Bible:

- Always read it completely literally in isolation and never take into account the social, historical, literary and cultural (4) _____ in which it was written.
- Have a wrong concept of how God should have done things and then throw the baby out with the bath water when He does things differently - this is otherwise known as setting up a straw man and then knocking him down.
- Assume that God dictated it rather than using (5) _____ in the social, historical and cultural context of the day.
- If there is a difficult passage never consult a commentary written by someone who understands the social, historical, literary and cultural context.
- Never compare (6) _____ with scripture to find the meaning of difficult texts.
- Never use different bible versions, never check out the Greek or Hebrew.
- Always assume that if you cannot understand something then it cannot ever be true.
- Ignore the fact of progressive revelation.
- Never try to understand the (7) _____ nature of Jesus or the Trinity, never consult a theologian who can explain these difficult things.



“The untended garden will soon be overrun with weeds; the heart that fails to cultivate truth and root out error will shortly be a theological wilderness.”

-A.W. Tozer

How To Approach Bible Difficulties

The Bible: Errors, NO!

- Critics claim the Bible is filled with errors. Some even speak of thousands of mistakes. The truth is there is not even one demonstrated error in the (8) _____ of the Bible.
- The point is there are no actual errors in the Scriptures. Why? Because the Bible is the Word of (9) _____, and God cannot err.

Old Testament Variations:

- Did you know the variant readings of the Old Testament number only a few? This is for several reasons. Copies were made by an official class of sacred scribes who labored under strict rules.

- The Masoretes systematically (10) _____ all copies with “mistaken” or variant readings.
- The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran in 1947 helped to further substantiate the original Hebrew Text.

New Testament Variations:

Bible Scholars Westcott and Hort estimated that only about (11) _____ of all the variants had any weight, as most of them merely involve mechanical matters such as spelling or style.

- Mathematically that would compute to a text that is (12) _____ pure and accurate!

Bible Scholar Ezra Abbott gave similar figures, saying about 19/20 (or 95%) of the readings are various rather than rival readings, and of “the remainder are of so little importance that their addition or rejection makes no appreciable difference in the sense of the passage.

- Thus, according to Ezra Abbott, the purity of the Bible is (13) _____ accurate.



Bible Scholar Philip Schaff surmised that of the 150,00 variations known in his day, only 400 affected the sense; and of those, only 50 were of real significance; and of this total not one affected “an article of faith or a precept of duty which is not abundantly sustained by other undoubted passages, or by the whole tenor of Scripture teaching.”

A.T. Robertson suggested that the real concern of textual criticism is of a “thousandth part of the entire text.” That would make the text of the New Testament 99.9% free from real concern for the textual critic.



Key Thought: A simple comparison of the text of the Bible with the text of other religious, historical, and philosophical documents from the ancient past proves the vast (14) _____ of the biblical record.