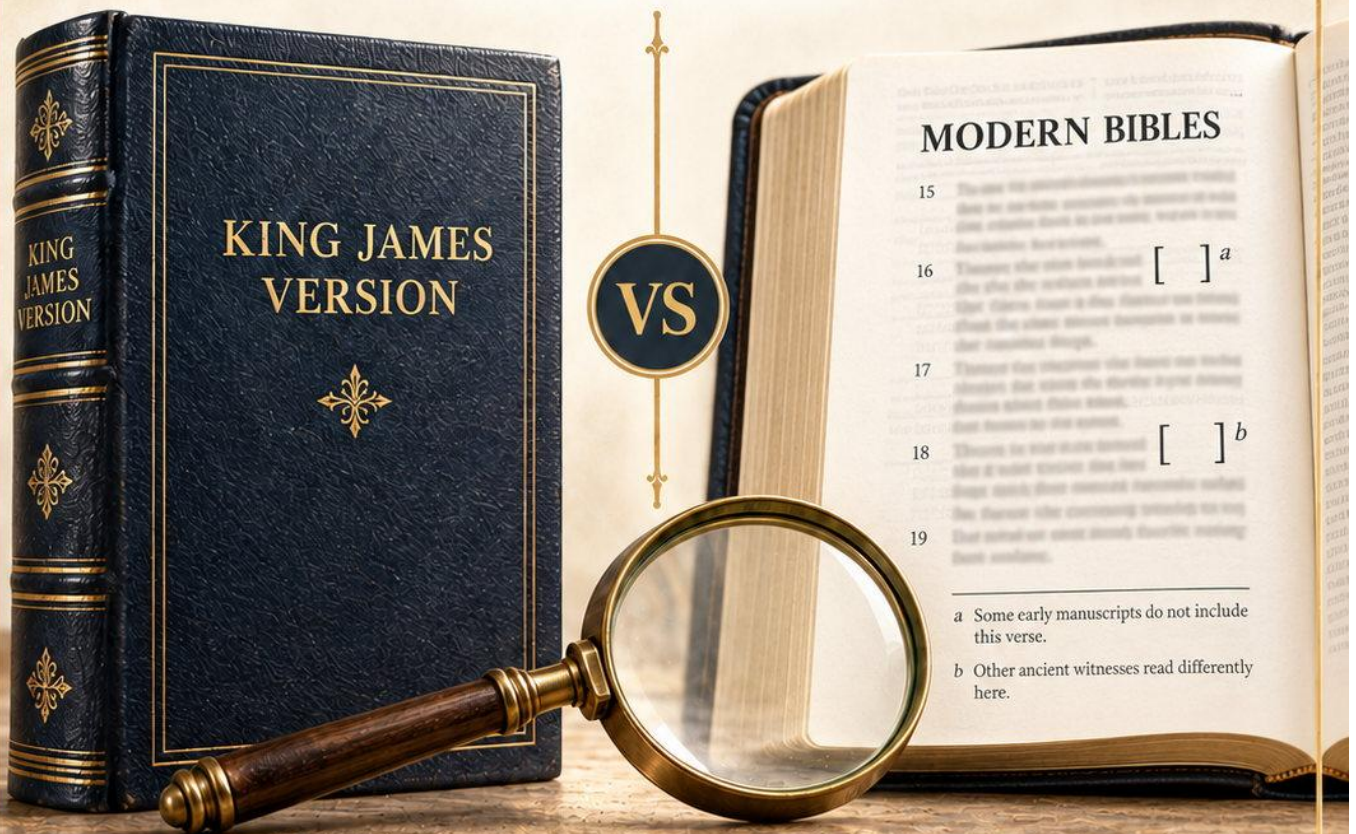


REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

THE BIBLE TRANSLATION QUESTION

A TEN-PART SERIES | PART THREE OF TEN

WHY DO MODERN BIBLES LEAVE OUT CERTAIN VERSES?



DR. THOMAS W. HAWKSLEY

TRUSTING GOD'S WORD THROUGH CAREFUL EXAMINATION

REASON TOGETHER CHURCH
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**WHY DO MODERN BIBLES
LEAVE OUT CERTAIN VERSES?**

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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www.ReasonTogether.Church

*Bring your questions. Open your Bible.
Let's Reason Together the Word of God.*

Aloha.

Welcome to Reason Together Church.

Whether you are here every week or whether this is your first visit, we are grateful that you are with us.

At Reason Together Church we say, Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let's Reason Together the Word of God.

If you are our honored guest, we do not want anything from you today.

We want something for you.

We want you to know that you are welcome, that your questions are welcome and that Jesus Christ is the center of everything we do.

Our guest card asks only for your first name and your email address.

That gives us a simple way to thank you for coming and to stay in touch without pressuring you.

Our Keiki Kids Center is prepared to care for and teach our children in a safe, joyful environment.

After our service, please join us at the Reason Together Café.

The word COFFEE reminds us that Christ Offers Forgiveness For Everyone Everywhere.

The coffee is free and so are the refills on conversations.

Let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us Your Word.

Thank You for the faithful believers who copied it, carried it, translated it and taught it across generations.

Give us humble minds today.

Protect us from fear, exaggeration and pride.

Help us to love truth more than slogans and Christ more than arguments.

Open our understanding by Your Holy Spirit.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Our Scripture reading begins in Acts chapter 8.

Acts 8:36 says, "And 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?"

The King James Version then gives verse 37.

"And 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."

Verse 38 continues, "And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."

May God bless the reading of His Word.

Before the message, let me say a word about giving.

We do not pass a plate.

Guests are never expected to give.

If you are a member of another church, we encourage you to support your home church.

For those who call Reason Together Church home, give only as the Lord leads you.

Second Corinthians 9:7 says, “God loveth a cheerful giver.”

There is a giving box in the back for those who wish to use it.

Now let us give the Lord something every one of us can give.

Let us give Him our attention as we open His Word.

If you followed our reading in the King James Version, verse 37 was right there.

If you followed in many modern translations, the printed text moved from verse 36 to verse 38.

Verse 37 may have appeared in a footnote.

That can feel alarming.

It can look as though someone opened the Bible, found a clear confession of Jesus Christ and removed it.

It can raise an honest question.

Why do modern Bibles leave out certain verses?

Some people answer that question in one sentence.

They say modern translators are taking words out of the Bible.

Other people answer in another sentence.

They say the King James Version added words that never belonged there.

Both sentences are too simple.

Both can become unfair.

The question is not merely, “Who took words out?”

The question is, “Which words were originally there?”

That is the question we will examine today.

This is Part Three of our ten-part series, The Bible Translation Question.

In Part One we asked, Can the King James Version of the Bible Be Fully Trusted?

Our answer was yes.

The KJV faithfully gives English readers the message, doctrine and gospel of the inspired Scriptures.

That confidence does not require us to claim that its translators were inspired apostles.

In Part Two we asked, Is the KJV We Read Today the Same as the 1611 KJV?

We learned that it has substantial translation identity without exact edition identity.

Spelling changed.

Printing errors were corrected.

Some wording and marginal notes changed.

Yet the translation remained recognizably the King James Bible.

Today we move one step behind English editions.

We move to the handwritten Greek copies from which New Testament texts are edited and translations are made.

Later studies will compare particular English versions in detail.

That work belongs later.

Today our subject is the manuscript evidence beneath the translations.

Let us begin with something simple but important.

The original parchment or papyrus page on which Paul wrote Romans has not survived.

The first physical copy of John's Gospel has not survived.

The page on which Mark first completed his Gospel has not survived.

Scholars often call those original written documents the autographs.

We do possess thousands of handwritten witnesses to the Greek New Testament.

We also possess early translations, quotations in Christian writers and lectionaries used in worship.

That is an enormous abundance of evidence.

It is also evidence that must be compared.

Before printing, every copy was made by hand.

A careful scribe might copy hundreds of lines correctly and still skip a line because two lines ended with the same words.

A scribe might write a familiar phrase from memory.

A marginal explanation might later enter the main text.

A worship reader might make a saying in one Gospel sound more like the familiar form in another Gospel.

Sometimes a spelling changed.

Sometimes word order changed without changing the meaning.

Sometimes one word or a sentence differed.

In a small number of places, a longer passage is disputed.

Those differences are called textual variants.

A textual variant is not automatically a theological conspiracy.

It is a place where surviving witnesses do not all have exactly the same wording.

Most variants are trivial.

They involve spelling, word order or synonyms that do not change what the verse teaches.

A much smaller group affects what is printed or footnoted.

That small group deserves careful attention because every word of Scripture matters.

God inspired the words that the Biblical writers gave.

Textual study asks which wording best represents those inspired words.

It does not create Scripture.

It examines the surviving evidence for Scripture.

Think of a missionary who writes one important letter to five churches.

Each church copies that letter for another congregation.

One copyist accidentally repeats a word.

Another skips a short phrase.

A third changes an uncommon expression into a familiar one.

Years later the original letter is gone, but many descendants of the copies remain.

How would you recover the earliest wording?

You would not merely choose the oldest sheet without asking how accurate its copyist was.

You would not merely count every surviving sheet as though each one were independent.

If fifty copies descended from the same altered ancestor, they would be fifty witnesses to one branch of the family.

Manuscripts are related witnesses, not independent voters.

You would ask which copies are early.

You would ask where they came from.

You would ask whether different regions preserve the same reading.

You would ask which copies share a common ancestor.

You would ask which reading best explains how the other readings developed.

That is why two popular slogans both need correction.

The first slogan says, "Older is always better."

No.

An older manuscript is closer in time to the original, so its age matters.

It has passed through fewer possible generations of copying.

But an old copy can contain an old mistake.

A later copy can preserve an ancient reading through a careful line of transmission.

Older deserves attention but not automatic obedience.

The second slogan says, "The majority must be right."

The number of manuscripts matters too.

A reading found in hundreds of copies cannot be dismissed casually.

But if those hundreds are closely related, the count does not tell the whole story.

More deserves attention but not automatic victory.

Age matters.

Distribution matters.

Genealogy matters.

The habits of scribes matter.

The way a reading fits the author's language and context matters.

None of those factors should rule alone.

That brings us to three names you may hear.

The first is the Textus Receptus.

Those Latin words mean received text.

The Textus Receptus is not one ancient manuscript.

It is a family of printed Greek New Testament editions that began in the sixteenth century.

Erasmus published an early edition in 1516.

Stephanus and Beza published later editions.

The King James translators worked mainly from editions in that printed tradition, especially Beza, while also consulting other sources.

The second name is the Majority Text.

That term usually refers to the reading found in most surviving Greek manuscripts, most of which belong to the Byzantine tradition.

The Textus Receptus and the Majority Text often agree.

They are not identical.

Acts 8:37 will show us an important place where they differ.

The third name is the modern critical text.

That is an edited Greek text produced by weighing the manuscript evidence, early translations, quotations and internal evidence.

It is not simply the private opinion of Westcott and Hort.

It is not simply Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus placed on a throne.

It is the result of continuing comparison across a much larger body of evidence.

Modern committees can be wrong.

Printed critical editions are not inspired.

Their decisions may be revised when evidence or judgment changes.

But disagreement with a decision is not evidence of dishonesty.

We should also be fair to the King James translators.

They did not pretend that every textual or translation question was certain.

The original KJV included marginal notes.

Some notes gave another possible English rendering.

Some said that another reading existed in Hebrew or Greek copies.

In their preface, The Translators to the Reader, they defended the value of marginal alternatives where certainty was not possible.

The translators who gave us the KJV were not frightened by a footnote.

They used footnotes.

They believed readers could be strengthened by knowing where evidence required care.

Modern translation committees commonly do something similar.

They place a passage in brackets.

They put it in the main text with a note.

They place the shorter reading in the text and the longer reading in a footnote.

You may disagree with the committee's judgment.

But a note that tells you the evidence is not concealment.

A footnote is often evidence of honesty.

Why do scribes tend to add explanatory words?

Imagine a reader reaching John chapter 5.

The sick people lie near the pool of Bethesda.

Verse 7 says the impotent man has no one to put him into the pool "when the water is troubled."

A later reader naturally asks why they believed the troubled water mattered.

The familiar KJV wording in John 5:4 supplies an answer.

It says an angel went down at a certain season and troubled the water and that the first person in was healed.

The earliest Greek witnesses do not contain that verse.

Later witnesses contain several forms of it.

That variation is exactly what we might expect if an explanation began beside the text and entered the text in stages.

The teaching is not that modern translators dislike angels or miracles.

The question is whether John wrote that explanatory sentence as part of his Gospel.

Consider Matthew 17:21.

The KJV reads, "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

The verse is absent from important early witnesses to Matthew.

The thought resembles Mark 9:29, where the manuscripts also differ over the words "and fasting."

A scribe who knew the familiar saying in Mark could naturally place it into Matthew.

Prayer remains Biblical.

Fasting remains Biblical.

The spiritual lesson may be true even if the sentence was not originally written at that location in Matthew.

Biblical truth and original placement are not always the same question.

Now return to Acts 8:37.

This is one of the most instructive examples in the entire discussion.

The confession, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," is ancient.

Early Christian writers and old Latin evidence show that the confession was known long before the medieval period.

We should not call it a modern invention.

Yet it is absent from the earliest major Greek witnesses and from most Greek manuscripts, including most Byzantine manuscripts.

That means the Textus Receptus includes it while the Majority Text generally does not.

So we cannot say Textus Receptus and Majority Text as though those terms mean exactly the same thing.

How might the verse have developed?

The church practiced confession before baptism.

A copyist or teacher may have supplied the baptismal confession that Christian practice expected between the question in verse 36 and the baptism in verse 38.

That is a reasonable scholarly explanation.

It is still a judgment about how the evidence developed.

Here is the important doctrinal point.

Do modern Bibles deny that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?

No.

John 20:31 says, “These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”

Acts 9:20 says that Paul “preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.”

First John 4:15 says, “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.”

The confession in Acts 8:37 is Biblical truth.

Its exact place in the original text of Acts is disputed.

No doctrine has disappeared.

Now consider First John 5:7 and 8.

The KJV reads, “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.”

Then it continues, “And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.”

The words about the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost are commonly called the Comma Johanneum.

Comma here means a short clause.

This is the clearest explicit Trinitarian wording among the disputed passages.

That makes the evidence especially important.

The long wording is absent from the early Greek manuscript tradition.

It developed chiefly in Latin transmission.

It entered a few late Greek manuscripts, sometimes in the margin and often under Latin influence.

Erasmus omitted it from his first and second printed Greek editions because he did not find it in his Greek manuscripts.

He included it in his third edition during controversy, while expressing doubts about its Greek support.

You may have heard that Erasmus made a promise to include the verse if anyone produced a Greek manuscript.

That story is often repeated.

The surviving evidence does not establish that promise.

We should not defend truth with a story we cannot document.

Does the textual question erase the Trinity?

No.

Matthew 28:19 commands baptism “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Second Corinthians 13:14 places the Lord Jesus Christ, God and the Holy Ghost together in one blessing.

John 1 teaches that the Word was with God and was God.

Acts 5 identifies lying to the Holy Ghost with lying to God.

The Trinity does not depend on one disputed clause.

No essential Biblical doctrine is hiding inside a disputed verse.

Now we come to Mark 16:9 through 20.

This is not one short sentence.

It is the familiar ending of Mark.

It reports appearances of the risen Christ, the commission to preach the gospel and the ascension.

It also contains the statements about signs, tongues, serpents and drinking deadly things.

The evidence is mixed and must be described carefully.

The two famous fourth-century Greek codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus end Mark at verse 8.

Some early versions and early Christian discussions also know copies that end there.

The vocabulary and transition raise internal questions.

Verse 9 introduces Mary Magdalene after she has already appeared in the preceding paragraph.

The subject changes abruptly from the women to Jesus.

At the same time, verses 9 through 20 are unquestionably ancient.

Irenaeus quoted Mark 16:19 in the second century.

Many Greek manuscripts contain the traditional ending.

Important early and later witnesses support it.

Some manuscripts preserve another shorter ending and one manuscript preserves an expanded form.

Those facts show that Christians very early knew more than one ending tradition.

What should we say?

We should not say that verses 9 through 20 were invented in the Middle Ages.

The evidence disproves that.

We should not say that their authorship by Mark is beyond all reasonable question.

The evidence does not permit that either.

The traditional ending is ancient and widely received.

Whether Mark wrote it as the original conclusion of his Gospel remains disputed.

Can it be preached?

Yes, with the textual question disclosed.

Should one build an unusual practice entirely on one disputed phrase?

No.

The resurrection appearances are firmly taught in Matthew, Luke, John and First Corinthians 15.

The Great Commission is firmly taught in Matthew 28 and Acts 1.

The ascension is firmly taught in Luke 24 and Acts 1.

Tongues appear clearly in Acts.

God protected Paul from a serpent in Acts 28.

But Scripture nowhere commands believers to handle snakes or drink poison as a test of faith.

The safest doctrine is doctrine taught across clear and undisputed passages.

Now turn to John 7:53 through John 8:11.

This is the account of the woman taken in adultery.

Jesus says, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

Later He says, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

It is a beautiful account of justice, mercy and repentance.

Again, the evidence deserves careful words.

The account is absent from the earliest surviving Greek copies of John.

When it appears in later manuscripts, it does not always appear in the same place.

Some place it after another verse in John.

Some place it at the end of John.

Some place it in Luke.

That movement is significant.

It suggests that copyists knew and valued the account while being uncertain where it belonged.

Its language also differs in some ways from the surrounding language of John.

What can we responsibly conclude?

The account may preserve an ancient and true memory of Jesus.

Many Christians have received and preached it for centuries.

Its original placement in John and its authorship by John remain uncertain.

That is more accurate than calling it a fraud.

It is also more accurate than pretending there is no serious textual question.

Notice that the account itself does not teach careless tolerance of sin.

Jesus refuses hypocritical condemnation and He commands the woman to leave her sin.

Grace does not rename sin.

Grace rescues sinners from condemnation and calls them into a changed life.

Several other whole verses follow familiar patterns and can be summarized.

Matthew 18:11 resembles Luke 19:10, “For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.”

Matthew 23:14 resembles the warning found in Mark and Luke about devouring widows’ houses and making long prayers.

Mark 7:16 repeats the familiar call, “If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.”

Luke 23:17 explains Pilate’s custom of releasing a prisoner at the feast, a fact stated in Matthew and Mark.

Acts 15:34 says Silas chose to remain.

Acts 24:6 through 8 contains a longer description of the attempt to judge Paul and the intervention of Lysias.

Acts 28:29 reports the Jews departing and reasoning among themselves.

Romans 16:24 repeats a benediction similar to verse 20.

Each deserves documentation.

Not every one requires equal pulpit time.

In many cases the longer reading resembles a nearby verse, a parallel Gospel or an explanatory detail.

That does not prove every case by itself.

It helps explain why scribes were more likely to expand a text than to remove an orthodox sentence for no reason.

Would a scribe ever omit words accidentally?

Certainly.

That is why shorter does not automatically mean original.

Would a scribe ever alter a text intentionally?

Yes, sometimes to correct grammar, harmonize accounts or defend what the scribe believed the text meant.

But intentional copying changes are not the same as a modern committee plotting to conceal doctrine.

The evidence must be assessed passage by passage.

What did the King James translators do when their evidence was uncertain?

They made judgments.

They compared printed Greek editions.

They consulted earlier English Bibles and other languages.

They placed alternatives in the margin.

They did not possess papyri discovered centuries later.

They did not possess photographs or electronic access to manuscripts around the world.

That is not an insult.

It is a historical fact.

What do modern committees do?

They also make judgments.

They consult a larger body of evidence.

They work within stated principles.

They use brackets and notes.

Different committees sometimes reach different decisions.

That difference reminds us that scholarship involves judgment.

It does not mean all judgments are equally strong.

Some variants have overwhelming evidence.

Some remain genuinely difficult.

Our language should reflect the degree of certainty.

Established fact: manuscripts differ at these places.

Established fact: the KJV and many modern versions sometimes print different readings.

Established fact: modern versions ordinarily mark the best-known longer passages and footnote many shorter ones.

Scholarly judgment: one reading best explains the origin of the others.

Unresolved question: in some places responsible scholars continue to disagree about the original wording.

Christians can disagree about textual method without treating one another as enemies of Scripture.

A believer may prefer the Textus Receptus because of its church reception and providential use.

A believer may prefer Byzantine priority because the Byzantine textual tradition dominates the surviving Greek manuscripts.

A believer may prefer the modern critical text because it weighs early, diverse and genealogically related evidence.

Each position should state the others accurately.

Each should admit where its own conclusions require judgment.

None has permission to accuse another Christian of deceit merely because a footnote reaches a different textual decision.

Do modern translations conceal these verses?

Usually they do the opposite.

They place Mark 16:9 through 20 in the text with a heading, brackets or a note.

They print John 7:53 through 8:11 with a note or brackets.

They place Acts 8:37 and First John's longer wording in footnotes when not printed in the main text.

Readers can see the evidence.

You may wish the committee had made another decision.

You may prefer that the familiar words remain in the main text.

But visible brackets and footnotes are not concealment.

A hidden removal would avoid telling the reader.

An explanatory note tells the reader exactly where the question is.

A footnote is often evidence of honesty.

There is also a simple reason some modern Bibles appear to skip a verse number.

The familiar New Testament verse numbers were developed in the sixteenth century, before our modern translations.

Committees preserve those numbers so readers can compare Bibles and use concordances.

When they judge that a numbered sentence was not original, they do not renumber the entire book.

They move from verse 36 to verse 38 and place verse 37 in a note.

The missing number is a signpost to the textual history.

Verse numbers are useful.

They are not inspired.

The original writers did not write them.

What should this study do to our confidence?

It should move us from fragile confidence to informed confidence.

Fragile confidence says, “If one familiar sentence is questioned, the whole Bible collapses.”

Informed confidence says, “God has preserved such abundant evidence that we can see where the copies differ.”

Fragile confidence needs every claim made by our side to be perfect.

Informed confidence can correct an overstatement without abandoning Scripture.

Fragile confidence attacks motives.

Informed confidence examines manuscripts, history and context.

The existence of variants was never a secret known only to modern skeptics.

Christian scholars have discussed them for centuries.

The KJV margins recorded some of them.

Printed Greek editions displayed alternatives.

Faithful pastors and teachers can discuss them in church because truth does not need darkness for protection.

Here is the conclusion.

Some words found in the KJV are absent, bracketed or footnoted in modern translations because the translation committees judge that those words are absent from the earliest recoverable form of the passage.

In most cases they are not denying the truth expressed by the words.

They are deciding whether those words were originally written at that place.

Sometimes the evidence is strong.

Sometimes the decision is difficult.

Sometimes responsible scholars disagree.

Older does not automatically mean better.

More manuscripts do not automatically settle the question.

Manuscripts are related witnesses, not independent voters.

The Textus Receptus, the Majority Text and the modern critical text are different categories.

The KJV translators made textual judgments.

Modern committees make textual judgments.

Those judgments should be tested by evidence.

No essential Biblical doctrine depends exclusively on a disputed passage.

Modern translations commonly document the evidence in notes and brackets.

You can continue to read the King James Version with confidence.

You can also look at a modern footnote without fear.

Open it.

Read it.

Ask what evidence stands behind it.

Do not assume that every difference is an attack.

Do not assume that every committee is infallible.

Practice the balance of Acts 17:11.

Receive the Word with readiness of mind and search the Scriptures daily to see whether these things are so.

Most of all, do not become so occupied with the history of a verse that you miss the Savior proclaimed across the whole Bible.

The question that matters eternally is not whether you can win a debate about Acts 8:37.

The question is whether you can honestly make its confession.

Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?

Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

That includes every translator, every scholar, every preacher and every person in this room.

Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Sin earns death.

God offers life as a gift.

Romans 5:8 says, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Jesus did not wait for us to become worthy.

He died for sinners.

He was buried.

He rose bodily from the dead.

Romans 10:9 says, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

Romans 10:13 says, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

If you have never trusted Christ, you can call upon Him today.

The words of a prayer cannot save you.

Jesus saves.

But prayer can express the trust of your heart.

You may pray with me.

Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner.

I believe that You are the Son of God.

I believe that You died for my sins and rose from the dead.

I turn from trusting myself and I trust You.

Forgive me.

Save me.

Give me the gift of eternal life.

Help me follow You from this day forward.

Amen.

If you trusted Christ today, please speak with me after the service.

We would be honored to pray with you and help you begin growing in your faith.

Let us close in prayer.

Our Heavenly Father, thank You that Your Word has not vanished into history.

Thank You for the wealth of manuscripts, versions and quotations through which its wording can be examined.

Forgive us when fear speaks more loudly than truth.

Forgive us when knowledge makes us proud.

Give us charity toward believers who reach different textual judgments.

Give translators and scholars integrity, patience and reverence.

Give Your church confidence that rests in You rather than in a slogan.

Above all, lead us to obey the clear truth You have already placed before us.

May Christ be honored and may the gospel be believed.

In Jesus’ name.

Amen.

Church family, carry three habits with you this week.

First, read the text.

Do not let a debate about a footnote replace daily Scripture reading.

Second, read the note.

When a translation marks uncertainty, do not panic and do not ignore it.

Learn what the evidence actually says.

Third, read the whole Bible.

Build doctrine from the full witness of Scripture rather than making one disputed sentence carry a weight God never required it to carry.

In our next study we will begin the individual translation comparisons reserved for the next parts of this series.

We will use the same standard we have used today.

We will ask what the text says, what the translators intended and what an English reader is likely to understand.

Isaiah 40:8 says, “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.”

Copies differ.

Committees make judgments.

Footnotes tell a story.

But the Word of our God shall stand for ever.

Aloha Nui Loa.

REASON TOGETHER CHURCH
THE BIBLE TRANSLATION QUESTION

A TEN-PART SERIES | PART THREE OF TEN

**WHY DO MODERN BIBLES
LEAVE OUT CERTAIN VERSES?**

PASTOR'S COMMENTARY

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*Bring your questions. Open your Bible.
Let's Reason Together the Word of God.*

Introduction

This commentary follows the sermon in order and supplies definitions, historical cautions and pastoral guidance for statements that must be shorter in oral delivery. It does not replace the research vault. It does not attempt detailed KJV-versus-version comparisons, which are reserved for later studies in The Bible Translation Question.

The controlling answer is neither “modern translators simply removed Scripture” nor “the KJV simply added false verses.” At each location the proper question is which wording best represents what the Biblical author originally wrote. The answer is reached through evidence and judgment. The evidence can be described honestly without treating the KJV, its translators or modern committees with contempt.

1. The Acts 8 Opening

The sermon begins with Acts 8:36-38 because the visible jump in verse numbering puts the listener’s concern on the table. The KJV prints the eunuch’s confession as verse 37. Many modern editions move from verse 36 to verse 38 and place the confession in a note. The opening should validate the reader’s surprise before explaining it.

Verse numbers are a reference system, not part of the inspired autograph. Stephanus’s 1551 New Testament supplied the familiar divisions before the rise of modern critical editions. Renumbering Acts would disrupt concordances, preaching and cross-reference systems. Keeping “38” after omitting “37” preserves common coordinates and draws attention to the history of the text.

2. Continuity with Parts One and Two

Part One asked, “Can the King James Version of the Bible Be Fully Trusted?” The sermon answered yes in the sense of faithful, authoritative and spiritually sufficient English translation. That answer did not require independent inspiration of the translators. Part Two asked, “Is the KJV We Read Today the Same as the 1611 KJV?” Its formula was substantial translation identity without exact edition identity.

Part Three moves from translation and edition history to textual transmission. This boundary matters. A textual difference concerns the Greek or Hebrew source wording. A translation difference concerns how agreed source wording is expressed in another language. Later studies will evaluate individual versions. This sermon should not spend its time comparing style, reading level, gender language or particular renderings unrelated to the listed variants.

3. Originals, Copies and Variants

Autographs

The autograph is the original written form of a Biblical book. None is known to survive. This is historically normal for ancient literature and should not be stated as a crisis. The New Testament is preserved through a large and varied body of witnesses. Christian confidence rests in God’s Word, not in the survival of one physical sheet of papyrus.

Witnesses

A manuscript is a handwritten copy. Greek manuscripts are central because the New Testament was written in Greek. Ancient translations can show that a reading existed early, but they may not reproduce every Greek detail. Patristic quotations can date a reading, but a writer may quote loosely or from memory. Lectionaries show liturgical transmission but can be shaped by worship use.

Variants

A variant is simply a difference among witnesses. It does not carry a moral judgment. Accidental variants arise through skipped lines, repeated words, spelling and visual confusion. Intentional changes may be corrections, harmonizations or explanations. “Intentional” does not necessarily mean deceptive. A scribe may have believed that he was clarifying or correcting a copy.

The sermon says most variants are trivial and a much smaller set affects translation. That statement should not be expanded into “no variant matters.” Long passages and doctrinally suggestive phrases deserve close work. At the same time, the overall message and doctrine of the New Testament are not in suspension while scholars examine them.

4. The Missionary-Letter Illustration

The illustration explains genealogy without technical machinery. Fifty descendants of one erroneous copy are not fifty independent origins of the error. Their agreement remains real, but its evidential value must be traced through the common ancestor. The illustration should not imply that manuscript genealogy is always recoverable as a neat family tree. Mixture occurred when scribes consulted more than one exemplar.

Older Does Not Automatically Mean Better

Age matters because an early witness stands nearer to the period of composition. It is still a copy and can contain errors. The line “older deserves attention but not automatic obedience” protects the legitimate value of early manuscripts without granting them infallibility. It also prevents an unfair caricature of critical scholarship, which does not in responsible form say that the oldest manuscript always wins.

More Manuscripts Do Not Automatically Settle the Variant

Numerical support matters because widespread copying can reflect broad reception. Yet the surviving number is shaped by history. The Byzantine Empire preserved and reproduced Greek manuscripts for centuries, while climate destroyed many earlier papyrus copies elsewhere. Most surviving witnesses are relatively late and related. The line “manuscripts are related witnesses, not independent voters” is the sermon’s memory sentence for this principle.

5. Textus Receptus, Majority Text and Critical Text

Textus Receptus

Textus Receptus names a printed tradition, not a single handwritten manuscript. Erasmus, Stephanus, Beza and the Elzevirs did not print identical texts. The KJV translators drew chiefly from this stream,

especially Beza, while consulting other materials. A later reader who asks “Which Textus Receptus?” is asking a necessary historical question, not undermining the KJV.

Majority Text

The Majority Text ordinarily prints the reading supported by most Greek manuscripts. Because most surviving Greek manuscripts are Byzantine, Majority Text and Byzantine Text are closely related terms. They should not be equated uncritically. A Byzantine-priority method can use more than a mechanical count. Its proponents often argue from the stability and historical dominance of the Byzantine tradition.

Modern critical text

The modern critical text weighs external and internal evidence. The word critical means evaluated, not hostile. Modern editions incorporate discoveries and methods unavailable in 1611. They remain human scholarly editions. A committee can make a poor choice, but the proper response is evidence, not an accusation about motive.

The sermon deliberately rejects the claim that the critical text is merely Westcott and Hort or merely two codices. Sinaiticus and Vaticanus are influential because of age and textual quality, not because editors regard them as inspired. They disagree with each other in many places and are evaluated alongside other evidence.

6. How Copying Patterns Explain Longer Readings

Harmonization occurs when a scribe makes one Gospel resemble a familiar parallel. Expansion occurs when a title or clarifying phrase is supplied. Marginal migration occurs when a helpful note is later copied into the main text. These are plausible historical processes because manuscripts display them in many places. They are not universal rules. Scribes also omit material accidentally, so a shorter reading is not automatically original.

The sermon’s line “Biblical truth and original placement are not always the same question” is especially important. Matthew 18:11 states the same truth as Luke 19:10. That truth can be entirely Biblical even if the sentence was not original to Matthew at that location. The distinction protects both truth and textual precision.

7. The KJV Translators and Marginal Notes

The KJV’s original margins are primary historical evidence. They show alternate translations and variant readings. The preface explicitly defends marginal notes where certainty is lacking. Pastoral use of this evidence should be respectful. The translators were not modern textual critics, but neither were they advocates of a footnote-free certainty that their own work contradicts.

The statement “a footnote is often evidence of honesty” does not make every footnote correct. It identifies the purpose of disclosure. A committee that tells the reader “some manuscripts include” has opened its decision to examination. The reader may disagree while still recognizing the transparency.

8. Matthew 17:21 and John 5:4

Matthew 17:21

The verse follows the disciples' failure to cast out a demon. The KJV's "prayer and fasting" has strong devotional familiarity. Significant early witnesses omit the verse in Matthew. Mark 9:29 contains the parallel saying, though "and fasting" is also disputed there. Harmonization is a plausible explanation because a copyist could complete Matthew's form from the remembered Markan saying.

Preaching guardrail: do not mock believers who learned the verse or suggest that prayer and fasting are invalid. Scripture teaches both. State the narrower judgment: critical editors doubt that Matthew included this sentence here.

John 5:4

The longer wording explains why sick people waited for the water to move. Early papyri and codices omit it, and later forms vary. That combination strongly favors secondary explanation. The manuscript history also helps the reader understand how a marginal note could be useful before becoming part of the body text.

The narrative does not require the evangelist to affirm the popular belief. In verse 7 the man reports the problem from his own perspective. Jesus heals by His word and does not depend on the pool. No Biblical doctrine of angels or healing depends on verse 4.

9. Acts 8:37

Acts 8:37 is especially valuable because it separates Textus Receptus preference from Majority Text argument. The verse is not supported by most Greek manuscripts. Its confession is nevertheless ancient, with early Latin and patristic attestation. A fair account therefore refuses both "late fraud" and "overwhelming Greek majority."

The likely setting is baptismal practice. The Ethiopian asks what hinders baptism. A confession of faith is exactly what early Christian readers expected at that point. The addition would make ecclesial sense without requiring bad intent. This is a probable explanation rather than an eyewitness record of the first scribe who inserted it.

The sermon answers the doctrinal concern through John 20:31, Acts 9:20 and 1 John 4:15. Jesus' identity as the Son of God is not concealed by moving Acts 8:37 to a note. Nor does the absence of the verse settle every debate about baptismal practice. Doctrine should be built from the full canonical witness.

10. The Comma Johanneum

The words about the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost are the most doctrinally sensitive case. Their weak early Greek attestation is not a marginal concern. They are absent from the early Greek manuscript tradition and developed principally in Latin. A small number of late Greek witnesses cannot outweigh the history merely through the label "manuscripts." Date, language and dependence matter.

The Erasmus episode should be taught without legend. His first two editions omitted the clause. His third included it amid controversy. The often-repeated promise story is not established by primary evidence. Removing that story from apologetic use is an act of integrity, not a concession against the Trinity.

The doctrine of the Trinity is a synthesis of the Bible's teaching. There is one God. The Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Ghost is God. The Persons are distinguished and named together. Matthew 28:19 and 2 Corinthians 13:14 are especially concise. John 1 and Acts 5 add decisive evidence. No responsible doctrine should depend exclusively on the Comma.

11. Mark 16:9-20

What is established

The traditional ending is ancient. Irenaeus cites Mark 16:19 in the second century. It appears in many manuscripts and was widely received. Sinaiticus and Vaticanus end at verse 8. Ancient testimony also knows copies without the longer ending. Alternative endings and scribal markings survive. Any account that mentions only one side is incomplete.

What is judged

Many critical editors judge that verses 9-20 were not the original ending of Mark. The external evidence of the earliest complete Greek codices combines with the abrupt transition and stylistic questions. Defenders of the traditional ending point to its antiquity, broad later support and possible explanations for the transition. Antiquity proves early existence, not automatically authorship by Mark.

What remains unresolved

If Mark did not write verses 9-20, scholars still debate whether he intentionally ended at verse 8, whether an original ending was lost or whether the traditional ending supplied an early conclusion. The sermon should not claim more than the evidence. "Ancient and widely received, with Markan authorship disputed" is the calibrated formula.

Pastoral use

The passage can be read and preached with disclosure. Its resurrection, mission and ascension material is confirmed elsewhere. Its signs should be interpreted through the whole canon. The narrative of Paul and the serpent in Acts 28 is providential protection, not a command to stage danger. No text commands poison drinking as a worship practice.

12. John 7:53-8:11

The movable passage

The account's absence from the earliest Greek witnesses and its movement among later locations are central. A passage fixed in the autograph would ordinarily be expected to leave descendants in that location. Movement suggests that scribes valued an unattached or uncertain tradition and sought a suitable place for it. This is stronger evidence than a vague claim that some manuscripts omit it.

Historical value and canonical location

The story may preserve a genuine event from Jesus' ministry. Historical authenticity and original placement are related but distinct questions. A true event can circulate outside the original form of John. A pastor may therefore express respect for the narrative without claiming certainty that John wrote it where the KJV prints it.

Theological use

The passage has often been misused as though Jesus abolished moral judgment. Its own final command is "go, and sin no more." Its mercy and exposure of hypocrisy agree with clear teaching elsewhere. It should not bear exclusive doctrinal weight, especially where its textual status is disclosed.

13. The Remaining Whole Verses

Passage	Pastoral explanation
Matthew 18:11	The sentence is Biblical in sense through Luke 19:10. The question is its original location in Matthew.
Matthew 23:14	The warning is present in Mark and Luke. Variable placement in Matthew points toward harmonization.
Mark 7:16	A familiar hearing formula likely expanded the text. The call to hear remains a dominant theme in Mark.
Luke 23:17	The feast custom is historically and Biblically attested in parallel Gospels. The textual issue is whether Luke stated it here.
Acts 15:34	The verse explains Silas's presence but is absent from early evidence and exists in different forms.
Acts 24:6-8	The longer legal account supplies detail but has weaker early support and internal variation.
Acts 28:29	The departure sentence is narratively natural, which also makes it a natural scribal conclusion.
Romans 16:24	A repeated benediction belongs to the complex transmission of Romans' ending and is not needed for Pauline grace theology.

14. No Essential Biblical Doctrine Is Lost

This conclusion should be stated carefully. It does not mean the disputed words are disposable. If a sentence is original, it is inspired and valuable. It means no essential doctrine exists only in one disputed location. The resurrection, deity of Christ, Trinity, salvation by grace, prayer, fasting, judgment, mercy, mission and ascension stand on clear and repeated Biblical testimony.

The doctrinal redundancy of Scripture is pastoral protection. It prevents one difficult variant from controlling faith. It also disciplines interpretation. A doctrine drawn from the whole counsel of God is stronger than an argument that depends on one contested phrase.

15. Do Modern Translations Conceal Verses?

The normal evidence says no. Major modern translations identify the best-known passages through brackets, headings or footnotes. They preserve traditional numbering. Their prefaces explain the textual basis. The notes may be brief, and editions differ in how many variants they record, but the major issues are publicly visible.

A motive claim requires motive evidence. A committee's decision to print the shorter reading is evidence of a textual conclusion. It is not by itself evidence of hostility to doctrine. If a preface states the method and a footnote records the longer reading, the fair description is open documentation. One may still argue that the committee weighed the evidence wrongly.

16. Certainty Language for Teaching

Say	Use when
"The manuscripts differ here."	The existence of the variant is established.
"The earliest major witnesses omit the words."	The statement accurately describes the principal early evidence without claiming unanimity.
"Most Greek manuscripts include or omit the words."	A verified count or Majority Text assessment supports the statement.
"Critical editors generally judge..."	The conclusion is a scholarly assessment rather than a raw manuscript fact.
"The passage may preserve an ancient tradition."	Historical authenticity is possible while canonical placement is uncertain.
"The question remains disputed."	Significant evidence and responsible scholarship exist on more than one side.

Avoid "obviously," "all scholars," "all manuscripts" and "no evidence" unless the wording is literally supportable. Strong evidence is not weakened by accurate qualification.

17. Gospel Invitation

The invitation turns Acts 8:37 from an abstract debate into a direct question: can the hearer confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? Romans 3:23 names universal sin. Romans 6:23 contrasts earned death with God's gift. Romans 5:8 announces Christ's death for sinners. Romans 10:9 joins confession with belief in the resurrection. Romans 10:13 promises salvation to the one who calls on the Lord.

The prayer is an expression of faith, not a verbal mechanism. The sermon explicitly says that words cannot save and Jesus saves. A pastoral invitation after the service provides a personal next step without emotional coercion.

18. Closing Application

The three habits are designed for retention. Read the text so controversy does not replace devotion. Read the note so uncertainty is neither feared nor ignored. Read the whole Bible so doctrine rests on the full witness of Scripture. These applications keep textual study subordinate to worship and obedience.

Isaiah 40:8 closes the study as it closed the preceding work. It is a confession of the endurance of God's Word, not a technical promise that every scribe, printer or editor will be infallible. Copies differ and committees make judgments. The Word of God remains authoritative and effectual through its providential transmission.

19. Discussion and Teaching Prompts

1. Why does a skipped verse number feel more threatening than a footnote containing the same information?
2. How does the difference between the Textus Receptus and Majority Text change common arguments?
3. What can an older manuscript tell us and what can it not tell us by age alone?
4. Why may many related manuscripts represent fewer independent lines of evidence?
5. Which copying habit best explains John 5:4?
6. Why must Mark 16:9-20 be described as ancient even by someone who doubts Markan authorship?
7. How does the movement of John 7:53-8:11 affect the question of original placement?
8. Which undisputed passages establish the Trinity without the Comma Johanneum?
9. What is the difference between documenting a variant and concealing a verse?
10. How can Christians disagree about textual method while maintaining charity and confidence in Scripture?

20. Final Pastoral Summary

The safest pastoral position is transparent confidence. Scripture is not protected by denying evidence or repeating legends. The KJV can be loved, read and preached while its textual base is described accurately. Modern translations can be evaluated critically without imputing deceit. The church is served when facts are separated from judgments and unresolved questions are named without panic.

The title question has a direct answer. Modern Bibles leave some familiar wording out of the main text because their editors judge that the wording was not part of the earliest recoverable text at that location. They commonly preserve the wording in a note or brackets. That is an evidence-based editorial decision. It is not proof of deliberate doctrinal removal. No essential Biblical doctrine depends exclusively on any disputed passage surveyed here.