

## **“Word Studies”**

### **How to Study the Bible**

Various Scriptures

The Rev. Jeff Stivason, Ph.D.

July 22, 2022

**Transcriber’s Note:** After praying Jeff begins the lesson. One of the Brave Men asks a question.

**Don Maurer:** Jeff, I wanted to ask you about something you said two weeks ago at the end.

**Jeff:** Are you going to remind me of what I said two weeks ago at the end? *(Laughter)*

**Don:** Yes; it’s about the last few verses of Revelation. And you said that—

**Jeff:** Oh yes, Erasmus.

**Don:** Added by Erasmus. Every translation that I know of has them, not just the King James. I don’t know of any translation that doesn’t have them.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Don:** My question is, regarding those or the few other parts of the Bible that—

**Jeff:** So let me say this just in case this influences your question. Those verses are there. So the issue is not that they weren’t there and that they’re added, but that Erasmus did not have a Greek Bible that had them.

**Don:** Okay.

**Jeff:** So he had to translate them from the Latin Vulgate into his Greek edition.

**Don:** Okay; that does clarify it.

**Jeff:** So when Erasmus was basically creating the New Testament that was published, he had about six manuscripts, and two of those were copies of one. So you really had what amounted to about four manuscripts. And none of the manuscripts had the last five verses of Revelation. However he knew that those five verses of Revelation existed because they were in the Vulgate. So what he did was that he translated from Vulgate Latin back into Greek for his edition of the Greek New Testament. That’s what I meant.

**Don:** I see. Also I was going to ask: what would you say to a person who is new to the faith or new to the Bible, and discovers that some of those texts are questionable, such as 1 John 5:7, or the woman caught in adultery, or whatever.

**Jeff:** Yeah. So we’re not going to finish this study this week. *(Laughter)*

**Transcriber’s Note:** Jeff had said they would finish the study before Don asked his question.

**Jeff:** Before I answer that, let me ask Ted. Do you have something about this?

**Ted Wood:** Well I want to commend Don for holding your feet to the fire. *(Laughter)* The second thing is that maybe you might explain the word Vulgate. What is the Vulgate?

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Ted:** I’m anxious to see how many people here know what the Vulgate is.

**Jeff:** The bishop raises his hand. *(Laughter)* You don’t count, okay? *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** The bishop’s vote counts for ten. *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** It’s as secure as most votes go, so I’m going to withdraw my question.

**Jeff:** Yeah. I’m really torn whether or not to answer this question, but I’m going to go ahead and take a stab at it. Oh, boy! *(Laughter)* Okay. We don’t have a white board; all right. Okay, I’m going to try this.

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**Transcriber’s Note:** Jeff gets out his new computer.

**Rich Clark:** Don, see what you did? (*Laughter*)

**Jeff:** I know; this is Don’s fault.

**Brave Man:** Oh, look at that!

**Jeff:** I have new technology. I’m looking for a somewhat blank page here. Okay. So—

**Ted:** Tabula rossa?

**Jeff:** Yes, something like that—tabula rossa.

**Brave Man:** Hit Share Screen.

**Jeff:** What’s that?

**Brave Man:** Hit Share Screen again. There’s actually a white board on it.

**Jeff:** The Share Screen?

**Brave Man:** So if you hit Share Screen, hit Stop.

**Jeff:** So the Share Screen is up?

**Brave Man:** Yup. So hit Stop the Share Screen.

**Jeff:** Do you want to come up and give me a lesson? (*Laughter*)

**Don:** Oh, my! What did I do?

**Transcriber’s Note:** One of the Brave Men tries to help Jeff.

**Brave Man:** This is an Apple?

**Jeff:** Uh-huh.

**Brave Man:** Maybe not. Okay, I’m not going to screw it up. (*Laughter*)

**Jeff:** All right. Well then, here’s what we’ll do; we’ll just do this. You’ll just have to ignore this for right now. So let’s say this is the original manuscript for Romans, okay? Now this original manuscript is copied. For instance Paul sends it to Rome. Somebody from Philippi comes. He says, “Hey, you have a letter from Paul.” So they copy it. And then someone else copies it, and someone else copies it, and so there are copies that proliferate.

And what we’ve noticed is this. We’ve noticed that there are families that share scribal errors. So in other words you can trace families of texts back by the scribal errors that they share. So you can group them, for instance. And the largest family that we have is called the Byzantine family. And then there’s the Alexandrian family, and then there is what’s called the Western family. There are other families, but these are the three dominant families.

When you think about what text we have the most of, it’s the Byzantine text, but they’re not the oldest texts. Actually the fifth century is the oldest Byzantine text that we have—the fifth century.

With the Alexandrian texts we don’t have a bunch of those. But the texts that we have of the Alexandrian text, many of them are texts that were created in Alexandria, which was a town known for its library and the scribal abilities. And so oftentimes these are corrected texts. In other words, as the scribes would get more texts as they were doing textual criticism, they were working to remove scribal errors and so on, and get back to a pure text.

The Western text is just the wild, wild West. For instance, the book of Acts is ten per cent larger than any other book of Acts. Why? Well because, for instance, let’s say here’s the text, right? And it’s just like a study Bible. Oftentimes these scribes would make notations in the side margins. And a scribe would come along and he would say, “Boy, I

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don't know if that actually belongs in the text at this point, or if that's just a notation on the side of the text.” Well, a lot of scribes would try to make that determination.

Well, not the Western guys. The Western guys took all of this and they dumped it into the text. (*Laughter*) And so it's kind of humorous in that regard.

But anyway Don is asking about questions related to a particular strain. And what do I mean by that? Well, the Byzantine is the largest, and it's often called “the majority text.” But out of the Byzantine strain is what's called the TR—the *textus receptus*. And that's the basis, the Greek basis, for the King James Bible. And like I said, it's these six texts that can really be reduced to four texts that Erasmus had that he used to put together his edition of the Greek Bible. And that has become known as the *textus receptus*.

Now much of the church believes that this is sort of the Bible that was dropped out of heaven. And so there are 5,000-plus manuscripts out there—pieces and whole manuscripts. And yet there are people who say, “Nope; just these four.” And these four don't date before the fifth century. So they're not old texts, and not all of them are good texts.

Now what is it about this particular family that's interesting? Well, one of the things that's interesting is that this is basically a text that has been smoothed out. In other words, we have many of them. But it very much looks, as scribes copied and recopied and so on, like they recognized that there were scribal errors, and so on. And so what they did was, they created a smooth text. And part of creating a smooth text is harmonizing texts. And so there's the element of harmonization that comes into this family of the Byzantine texts.

For instance, the Alexandrian family is a bit rougher. If you were to look at what's called Sinaiticus, Sinaiticus is going to be a corrected text. It's going to have things crossed out; it's going to have margin notes. As they would find texts and they would compare them with what they had and the Sinaiticus text, they would make corrections. Byzantine texts are not like that.

And so people have a tendency to gravitate toward the Byzantine text or the majority text because it has a smoothness to it. Now that's not saying that there aren't differences, because there most certainly are differences in the majority family. But oftentimes those who gravitate toward the majority text have a way of creating the narrative that makes other texts look heretical and this text look like the pure text that was sort of preserved by God, and so on.

Now I'll give you an example of that. Well, that's going to be too long of a story. It is a great story, but maybe I'll tell you another time. So Don is asking about questions that have to do with this particular family over against, say, that family. Everybody kind of agrees that the Western text is a wild, wild West show. But the Byzantine text is oftentimes over against the Alexandrian text and the Alexandrian over against the Byzantine. And yet that's just the war that the King James Bible has created.

Now what about the things that Don is raising? For instance, what is it? John 7:58; is that right?

**Don:** Yes.

**Jeff:** 7:58 and following is the woman caught in adultery. That's a questionable text.

Let me say some other things. 1 John 5:7: a questionable text.

**Transcriber's Note:** 1 John 5:7, NKJV. “*For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.*”

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**Jeff:** Mark 16:9 and following: a questionable text. What do I mean by that? Well, I mean this. Take Mark 16:9 and following. If you get your Bible out you will probably have it through verse 20 of Mark 16. But after verse 8 it will probably have a note. And depending on what your Bible is it will probably say, “After verse 8 this text is not found in the most reliable texts, or the oldest texts.” And so you’ll have 9-20 there.

But 9-20 is not the only option. There are at least five contenders for the ending of Mark—five contenders. There’s a long ending which is 9-20. There’s a shorted ending which is just a couple of verses. And it’s oftentimes given in footnotes in most study Bibles. And then there are three other options for the ending of Mark. And then there’s the option that says that Mark just ended with verse 8.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Mark 16:8, NKJV. *“So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”*

**Jeff:** And so the question is a textual critical one. Where does Mark end?

But that’s not the only question. Also, for instance, the question is 1 John 5:7. In 1 John 5:7 we find what is oftentimes the Trinitarian verse. And when you think about that Trinitarian verse people will say, “You lose this verse and you don’t have the Trinity.” And that’s not true. Yes?

**Don:** Jeff, some people’s translations may not have that verse. Can you say what it is?

**Jeff:** I don’t have it memorized because I don’t think it’s Biblical, Don. *(Laughter)*

**Don:** All right.

**Jeff:** But some Bibles may have that. 1 John 5:7; does anybody have that?

**Brave Man:** Is that *“For there are three that testify?”*

**Jeff:** Yes. But you know what? The ESV is not going to have it. Do you have it in the King James?

**Brave Man:** No, the ESV.

**Jeff:** Yeah, but that’s not going to be the whole thing. Does anybody have a King James with 1 John 5:7?

**Dave Wessel:** Yes. *“For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.”*

**Jeff:** Yes. *“For there are three that testify”* is in the ESV. But in the King James it says, *“For there are three that bear witness in heaven.”*

**Dave:** *“The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.”*

**Jeff:** Yeah. So there’s a little bit of a change from the ESV to the King James Version. And there’s a little story about this. And the story is that Erasmus is collating these texts under the four that he has. And at the same time there’s a controversy during the day. And the controversy is an anti-Trinitarian controversy. In other words there were actually those in the church who were Unitarians arguing against Trinitarianism.

So Erasmus publishes this document, the Greek New Testament, with the text that he has. 1 John 5:7 is not in there. But it’s debatable as to whether 1 John 5:7 is in any Greek text. But it is in the Latin Vulgate. So all of a sudden Erasmus takes a lot of heat because he has not included 1 John 5:7 in his Greek edition. And what Erasmus says is, “I don’t have a Greek text that has it in there. And I don’t know of one that exists.”

So basically the story goes that Erasmus says, “If somebody can produce a text with 1 John 5:7 that’s in the Vulgate, then I’ll put it in the next edition.” Well lo and behold,

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there’s a text that shows up, and it’s called Mott Furianus. And text Mott Furianus shows up. And it has 1 John 5:7 that mirrors the Latin Vulgate.

Now let me just say a couple of things about that. First of all, textual critical work was done on it in the 1800s—actually earlier than that. Erasmus actually doubted its veracity; he doubted its validity. It turns out that most people believe that it was written around the time Erasmus lived. And they basically trace it back to a guy by the name of Friar Roy. And Friar Roy basically seems to be the guy that wrote this Greek text. And they produced it and sent it to Erasmus.

Erasmus immediately has doubts about it because it looks like a translation of the Vulgate. If he were translating from the Vulgate he would translate it that way. So it looks like it’s the Vulgate. And many others have pointed out some interesting things about Mott Furianus. Frankly it has the same divisions as the Vulgate, and so on, in terms of text.

So here’s this text. Erasmus is given this text, and so he said he’d put it in if one was produced. So he puts it in his third edition, but it’s doubtful. And this produces all kinds of debate and controversy over the years. And if you go back and read the history, people were divided in the church as to whether or not this was a genuine verse that belonged in the Bible. But most of the time it didn’t take shape around it. For instance, is there another Greek text besides Mott Furianus that contains this verse? It really took shape around this: If you don’t include this verse you’re not a Trinitarian. And so pressure was great theologically to affirm 1 John 5:7.

We’re really living in a time where scholarly opinion doesn’t see verse 7 in the text. However there is a vocal minority of people who are King James folks who basically spew out all kinds of accusations against people if they don’t believe that 1 John 5:7 is in the text. It’s an interesting thing.

How about Mark 16? Mark 16 is interesting because the long ending is often the ending that’s printed. But I want you to see just a couple of things about Mark. Am I taking too long? Would you rather just do something else?

**Bishop Rodgers:** Yes.

**Jeff:** Yes?

**Bishop:** I’m ready for something else. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** Sounds good to me. If the bishop is ready for something else I’m ready for something else.

**Don:** All right; okay.

**Jeff:** Thanks a lot, Don.

**Sig Tragard:** Ted has something to say. Hold on, Ted.

**Ted:** I agree that we may need to move on. But this is a very important discussion because it really makes us think about how the Scriptures have come down to us.

**Jeff:** Mm-hmm.

**Ted:** They didn’t just kind of float out of the sky and drop in our lap.

**Jeff:** Sure. **Ted:** Mark 16:17: *“And these signs will accompany those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues. They will pick up serpents with their hands; if they drink deadly poison it will not hurt them.”*

**Jeff:** Yeah.

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**Ted:** There are denominations built on this verse, which is a highly questionable verse. So these are very important questions.

**Jeff:** Yeah. And it’s interesting; I was going to mention that. Oftentimes it’s said that this is the apostles. It says every believer.

**Ted:** Most evangelicals don’t think much about where the Scripture came from, and how difficult and convoluted that whole process was to get to where we are today.

**Jeff:** Sure, yeah.

**Ted:** That’s all I have to say about that.

**Jeff:** Yes?

**Matt Kail:** Another thing regarding translations. When Jerome translated the Vulgate, he translated *metanoia* as “penance” rather than “repentance.”

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Matt:** And that was the spark that set off the Protestant Reformation. The word is *repentance* for *metanoia*—it’s transformation. And my thing is that for hundreds of years—for centuries—they thought, well what does that mean, with all those rituals of penance—the acts and the rituals? Since they didn’t know, they did the best they could in the grace of God. But anyway,--

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Matt:** I know you wanted to get on with—*(Laughter)*

**Don:** So with the woman caught in adultery, did that happen or didn’t it?

**Jeff:** Well, it’s a disputed text.

**Don:** All right.

**Jeff:** Yeah, it’s a disputed text. I’ll talk to you later about it.

**Don:** All right.

**Brave Man:** Before you move on, I think what might be relevant for today is that even in non-Christian circles you hear about the Dead Sea Scrolls.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Brave Man:** So where does that fall? Do the best you can if it’s a short answer; if it’s not, it’s okay.

**Jeff:** It’s not a short answer, but I’ll say this to you. You might be outvoted on this one, Bishop. *(Laughter)* So Don, I’ll say to you that I don’t think that’s a text that belongs in Scripture. The interesting thing about it is that it doesn’t just float around in the Alexandrian family. Actually in the majority family, in the majority text, it appears in different places and in different books. And so even in the majority text family—the Byzantine text family—it doesn’t have a permanent home. So it’s not like the majority folks can say look, it’s here all the time in all of our texts. And so the majority family has the same problem.

**Don:** Okay.

**Jeff:** So I have the tendency to think it’s a well-loved story—probably the most well-loved story. But the evidence would suggest that it’s not there.

It’s interesting that R. C. Sproul knows that, but thinks it’s the most well-loved story, a beloved story. He thinks that it’s a scrap that’s a valid scrap, and the Gospel writers just kind of put it wherever they could find it or where it made sense. But it wasn’t part of the original Gospels.

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On the Dead Sea Scrolls, just really quick. They are thought to have come from the Essenes, which was kind of a sect of Judaism. We do have texts from them that are extra-Biblical texts. But one of the great things about the Qumran find, or the Dead Sea Scrolls, is that, for instance, we have Biblical texts that confirm for us some of our own families of the Old Testament.

So for instance, the Masoretic text is a family of Old Testament texts. And this is interesting, kind of a striking thing. The oldest Old Testament text that we have in the Masoretic family is from around 1000 A.D. 1000A.D. is the oldest Masoretic text. Now there are older Greek texts of the Old Testament. But it's just like the New Testament; there are families of texts.

Anyway, the Qumran find of Isaiah, with small differences, actually shows us that the Masoretes preserved the text with the utmost care. So that helps us in terms of saying that wow, these scribes really cared for these texts. Yes, Bishop?

**Bishop:** I was just wondering. Just take the average guy in your congregation at a Bible study. How do you take hold of this? What does a pastor say to the people about reading their Bibles?

**Jeff:** Yeah. So that's a great question. And so in part, one of the reasons why I actually dealt with this in church school in my own congregation is because of Bart Ehrman. Bart Ehrman is a guy that has popped up and published a ton of books—*Misquoting Jesus*—and you could probably name many other titles because they're popular titles. He was an evangelical scholar who repudiated the faith, who worked in textual criticism, who then went on to write books.

So the shock value of it all is just incredible. He'll say, “Do you know that there are more errors in your Bible than there are Greek words in your Bible?” And people are like “What in the world?” Lots of shock value there.

But when you really get down to it—and a lot of scholars have held his feet to the fire and said, “Okay, now let's really think about this”—scribal errors in five thousand texts. For example, the misspelling of *kai*, the word *and*, is considered a scribal error. So the copyist just puts *kappa alpha* rather than *iota*, or something like that—or drops the *iota* or misspells a name; the copyist does this. Those are considered scribal errors. And that's why there are all of these errors—more errors than there are words in the New Testament. But once you explain that, all of a sudden it's like “Oh, okay.”

So he comes out and rattles people. And my own view is this, and this gets to the bishop's question. My own view is that what has happened in congregations is that we've kind of swept how we get our Bible under the rug, and we don't really talk about it. And then a guy like this comes along and drops a bombshell, and everybody comes and asks you, “What's with our Bible?”, you know? And so then you're left kind of holding the bag with “Well yeah; we get this taught in seminary. But it's not really something we bring into the pulpit, or into the church school class.”

So I'm sort of hopefully helping people just to understand. There are guys in my congregation here, so hopefully they've been helped. I'm helping people to understand how it is that we got our Bible.

For instance, here is what our Westminster Confession says. The Scriptures were immediately inspired by God, but they are not immediately preserved. They are mediately preserved through the copies.

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And so what I’ve said to the people in my church school class is this: What does immediate inspiration mean? Immediate inspiration does not mean time; there is no mediator. There is no mediator between the Holy Spirit and the authors of Scripture. The Holy Spirit immediately speaks to the authors of Scripture. And the authors of Scripture write exactly what He wants them to write. Now it’s more nuanced than that, but you get the idea.

There is a mediate preservation. In other words, there’s a mediator that comes between God’s inspiring Scripture and the preservation of Scripture. In other words, how did God preserve Scripture? God could have preserved Scripture by creating a photo copier in the first century, and just photo copying all these texts. But He didn’t do that. Instead, He preserved the Scriptures through copyists and copies, which means that as soon as you have two or three copies, you have to do textual critical work to figure out where the error is here, and to get back to the original document. So we have an immediately inspired Bible that is mediate preserved.

Now the question is, do we have God’s word? And I would say to you that God has enabled us through the proliferation of texts and the work of textual criticism to get back to the original text of His word. And the interesting thing is, Bart Ehrman would admit the same thing. He thinks there is possibly one place in Luke’s Gospel where we may not have the exact reading. But other than that we basically have the original document of the New Testament.

But that’s not what he says in public. That’s interesting; that’s in an appendix to one of his books. I can’t believe they published it, but it’s in the appendix. Anyway, it’s just a striking thing. Sig back here.

**Sig:** John, hold on.

**John:** The problem isn’t with any of this where there’s a question, what it says. The question is whether we like it or not. And that’s where we have the issue. I have an issue with the Ten commandments; I’m not very good at it. (*Laughter*)

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**John:** There’s not a lot of dispute about what is really known about what God has said to us. This is a useful discussion; we need to have an answer for someone who asks. But the question they’re really asking is that I am looking for an excuse not to believe that God is and that He is the Author, and that I’m responsible to Him, because He says it in His word.

If you read *The Iliad*, you don’t miss it. If you read Marcus Aurelius, it’s two thousand years old. How many copies of that are there? You don’t miss the point. God sent His Son. He died and He rose again, and there were witnesses. That’s the Book. And so therefore we believe it or we don’t. These things matter, but they don’t change whether people believe it or they don’t. The things they excuse are not the things that we hang around.

**Jeff:** Yeah. I think, as you’re coming over here, that I’ll just say this. I totally agree with you. And as an apologetic oftentimes this is just a red herring. People are trying to get you off of what the Bible actually says onto do we really have what God says? And so I think it’s useful mainly to us, to encourage our confidence in the book that we have, which is God’s word. Go ahead.



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**Jim Hamilton:** Can't we be confident that the Holy Spirit is going to guide us in understanding and interpreting?

**Jeff:** Sure, yes; absolutely. And the Holy Spirit is going to guide and lead in providence as He preserves the Scriptures, too.

**Bryan Whittington:** The application for right now is that I just had this conversation yesterday. There was a young lady baptized in the faith who has come out being gay, along with a gay friend who also professes faith. And there are so many online texts that you can get whatever you want. So they now believe that they are in the faith—baptized in the faith and completely saved. And that is just an interpretation error—that they had the right interpretation but that there is another one. So with the craziness that's going on in the world right now, my sense is that I think the old way is right, and that's exactly what I would have said. But right now, if we don't know how to engage them, (*unclear*), I guess the Holy Spirit will be the only One to change them. But I think this is what we need today.

**Jeff:** There's a lot of stuff that stands behind what we think and say and do, for instance like what you're saying. They believe they have the right interpretation. One of the interesting things is that they're not really coming from a literary theory. But what they're saying is, they're at least saying a couple things, if not one. They're at least saying that Paul was biased by his own views. And so if I read the text in an unbiased way in my lifetime, then I can come to this view that gays and lesbians and so on are accepted and loved by God—that I just need to push aside the biases of Paul when I read this text.

And what you're saying then is that my own culture, my own reason, my own sense of what's right and wrong has to inform what this text actually means, versus that I've got to understand what the author of this text meant, and the author is Paul. And I have to ask myself, do I really believe he was inspired? Or do I just believe he was a biased man? If he was just a biased man writing his own view, then this text is worthless; all of us might as well go home. But if this text is Paul writing under the immediate inspiration of God, then we have to push aside the idea that Paul is just biased as he writes. And we have to read this text for what it is: it's a timeless text that communicates timeless truths, and those are God's truths. And we like them or we don't, and you're right.

But this is what people are doing. They're reading the text through literary theory. There are biases, or the text is its own being, its own entity, and so it's a reader response. I read it, I respond to it. You know, there are all these theories about how I read the text. Maybe nobody even knows those theories. But that's how they're reading the text.

I agree. We have to be able to come and say, “How are you reading this text? Are you reading this text saying such and such?” You know, that sort of thing is helpful. Yes, Bishop?

**Bishop:** Do we not have the confidence expressed that there are no serious Christian teachings and doctrines that are upset by any of these differences?

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Bishop:** That's #1. And #2: if there is one text that people interpret in a strange way, and if it doesn't take away from the whole teaching of Scripture on that same issue, then they're stuck.

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**Jeff:** Yeah. You know, it’s interesting. You listen to Bishop, and Bishop brings his own level of authority to us, saying that there is no Christian doctrine that’s affected by any of these. Bart Ehrman, who is no friend of Christianity, says the exact same thing! And you just have to hear that, because it’s remarkable. Here’s a guy that says some of the things I just said that he says. And yet he will also say that Christianity as a teaching is not influenced or affected by any of these textual critical things.

Now let me tell you when he says that kind of thing. He says that kind of thing when a guy is sitting in the audience who knows and can hold his feet to the fire during the question and answer period. That’s when he’ll say these things. He’ll make adjustments.

You know, I’ve talked to people who’ve been at Bart Ehrman talks. When Bart Ehrman makes contact with them and he sees them in the audience. They know that his talk gets changed slightly, because it’s not so inflammatory; it’s not so panicky. It’s more like what you would hear at an academic conference, where there’s some validity to what he’s saying. But he doesn’t say that kind of thing when no one is in the audience that can challenge him. You know, that sort of thing.

**Brave Man:** I wanted to say that Peter endorses Paul.

**Jeff:** Yeah. Not only that, but we should remember that In 1 Timothy 5 Paul quotes both from Deuteronomy and from Luke’s Gospel. And he prefaces them both with, “*As Scripture says.*” And then he quotes Deuteronomy, and then he says “*And,*” and then he quotes Luke. Both of those quotes—one from the Old and one from the New—are prefaced with “*And Scripture says.*”

So oftentimes people have this idea that the Scriptures are written, and then they gain ascendancy of authority. In other words, by the third or fourth century they are recognized to be Scripture. That’s not the way it is at all. If you read the New Testament they are immediately acknowledged to be what they are. And there is corruption and degeneration, which happens.

For instance, you get guys who basically detract from Scripture who want to do all sorts of things to it. And so by the time the first century rolls around the church says: Wait a minute! We’ve been functioning with this Canon for a long, long time. And now we have guys saying that this isn’t the Canon; this is the Canon; they have their own Canon. We need as a church to say, “This is what we’ve been functioning with all along.”

And so that’s what happens when you get to the fourth century. The church basically says, “We recognize the Canon that has already been functioning in our midst, and here it is.” Yes?

**Ted:** The thing that’s been missing that you will bring up at the very last, and that the bishop brought up as his first point, is that the thing that has been missing is the role of the church, which is itself a divine institution. So when Alexander decides to do his copying and correcting, it’s not that he’s independently working. They’re all in an organized and organic church.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** And so what Bart Ehrman says is not consistent with what the church has already taught.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

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**Ted:** It may be consistent with what that preacher down the road is saying, or what my personal opinion is. The question asked by the gay people is that my opinion is as valid as yours.

**Jeff:** You know, I just want to say this. And this is a great place to wrap this up. When you look at the second epistle to Timothy, and the first epistle to Timothy and the epistle to Titus, one of the things that you find is that these are letters that were written just prior to Paul’s second imprisonment, and 2 Timothy in his imprisonment. And they were all written during the period of somewhere between 66 and 68.

And you have to remember that Paul was likely in Spain from 64 to 66. And what happens in 64? Rome burns, and Nero begins to persecute Christians. And so Paul comes back from Spain basically into a world of persecution that’s swirling around Rome, and then sort of concentric circles out from there. And so he’s in the midst of chaos when he returns.

But with what did those letters of 1 Timothy and Titus primarily have to do? The establishment of the church—elders and deacons, and what to do about widows; all sorts of things, right?—in both letters. He’s concerned about the church. Why? Because the church, as it is the household of God, is the propagator of truth, “*the foundation and pillar of the truth.*” And so this is what needs to be preserved in times of chaos and persecution—the church.

And so by the time he writes 2 Timothy he’s already in prison. And what is he doing? He’s writing, “Man, you need to teach and preach,” and those kinds of things, in the churches that are already established. So when you look at those epistles from that particular point of view, the church is a primary piece in his view of the stretching forth of the kingdom of God. So it’s a great reminder.

Okay, let me pray with you. And Bishop, if I were you, I would probably take Don to the woodshed. (*Laughter*) That’s probably what I would do. I’m not going to tell you what to do, but I would. So Don, be careful.

**Bishop:** You have your sheet all ready for next week.

**Jeff:** I already do; that’s right. All right. Father, thank You for this day. And Lord, thank You for the truth of Your word. We praise You for it, and we ask that You will continue to use it in our lives as a great blessing and a blessing to others. Father, we’re so thankful that despite the fact that we may at one time have used arguments as red herrings in order to put up blockers to what people were seeking in our lives,—that is, the work of the Spirit,—we’re so thankful that You brought down every blockade and barrier and brought us to Yourself. And we ask, Lord, that You’ll continue to strengthen our faith in You and in Your word. We pray it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Let me say one thing really quick. It was pointed out that we have very few manuscripts of Marcus Aurelius or Plato or Aristotle or *The Iliad*, and so on. And that’s very true; we have over 5,000 manuscripts of the New Testament. The interesting thing is that we want those manuscripts. Those help us to get back to the original text.

For instance, in the Muslim faith they took all of their manuscripts and destroyed them. They made one authoritative document and then destroyed all the manuscript evidence, because they want an authoritative testimony.

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And that’s not the way the church is. The church is not hiding anything. The church says, “We want manuscript evidence; we want to work through it, because we want the original text.”

**Roger Myers:** So when they say that, that’s a bogey, right?, because they tell you it’s the original.

**Jeff:** Oh yeah; it’s really not the original. Okay, all right; take care. (*Applause*)