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WITH NEW  
TESTAMENT GREEK

An **Intermediate** Study of the Grammar  
and Syntax of the New Testament

Andreas J. **Köstenberger**, Benjamin L. **Merkle**, and Robert L. **Plummer**

*Going Deeper with New Testament Greek*, Revised Edition

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## CHAPTER 1



# THE GREEK LANGUAGE & TEXTUAL CRITICISM

## GOING DEEPER

**M**atthew lists Jesus's immediate male ancestors as Joseph, Jacob, Matthan, Eleazar, Eliud, and Achim (Matt 1:14–16). Seemingly contradicting Matthew, Luke lists them as Joseph, Heli, Matthat, Levi, Melchi, and Jannai (Luke 3:23–24). Some early Christian scribe (as preserved in the 5th-century Codex Bezae [D]) attempted to harmonize these accounts by inserting the Matthean list of names into Luke's Gospel.<sup>1</sup> The vast majority of Greek manuscripts, however, bear witness to the divergence of names apparently present in the autographs (original manuscripts) of Luke and Matthew. We are reminded that the inspired text is our authority—not some later edited or “corrected” version.

In the late 1400s, Annius of Viterbo popularized the idea that Matthew preserves the genealogy of Joseph while Luke records the genealogy of Mary. Annius's interpretation, however, is based on an unlikely translation of the Greek text in Luke 3:23. A more fitting explanation is provided by Julius Africanus (AD 160–240), an early Christian apologist. Julius, in a letter to Aristides, explains that the Jewish custom of Levirate marriage and the resulting disparity of legal and biological lineage explain the differences between Matthew's and Luke's genealogies.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See the textual apparatus for Luke 3:23–31 in Nestle-Aland's 28th edition. If you have a UBS (red) GNT, this variant is not listed in the UBS apparatus because it is certainly not original.

<sup>2</sup> Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.7.1–15.

The modern scholar René Laurentin points to the importance of holding to the Gospel authors' original wording rather than forced renderings of the Greek that attempt to prove that Mary was a descendant of David through the Lukan genealogy. Laurentin writes,

Nothing is truly lost in Mary's not being biologically the daughter of David. The rigor with which the evangelists have avoided this easy solution gives a new indication of their exactitude. They did not invent in order to appease current expectations, as those who came after them did. On the contrary, they accepted the paradoxes which caused the difficulty. This honesty led them to great theological profundity.<sup>3</sup>

If, indeed, Joseph's adoption of Jesus fully legitimizes the Savior's Davidic ancestry, can we not further point out that God's adoption of us as sons and daughters truly grants us eternal access into his Fatherly presence?

## CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this chapter is to survey both the history of the Greek language and the discipline of textual criticism. First, we will briefly consider the history of the Greek language and how such knowledge may aid the student of the GNT. Second, we will introduce the discipline of textual criticism—that is, the study of ancient manuscripts and patterns of text transmission with the goal of arriving at the original text (or “earliest attainable text”).<sup>4</sup> Finally, we will note recent trends in text criticism.

## HISTORY OF THE GREEK LANGUAGE

“Say something for me in Greek!” Most seminary students have probably heard this request from a family member or friend. Such persons, however, look puzzled when the student explains that he is primarily reading Greek of the NT era, not learning *modern* Greek. When students better understand how the Greek language

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<sup>3</sup> René Laurentin, *The Truth of Christmas, Beyond the Myths: The Gospels of the Infancy of Christ*, trans. Michael J. Wrenn and assoc. (Petersham, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1986), 345. See also Andreas J. Köstenberger and Alexander Stewart, *The First Days of Jesus: The Story of the Incarnation* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Eldon Jay Epp represents a more skeptical approach and shuns the term “original text.” He writes, “New Testament textual criticism, employing aspects of both science and art, studies the transmission of the New Testament text and the manuscripts that facilitate its transmission, with the unitary goal of establishing the earliest attainable text (which serves as a baseline) and, at the same time, of assessing the textual variants that emerge from the baseline text so as to hear the narratives of early Christian thought and life that inhere in the array of meaningful variants.” See “Traditional ‘Canons’ of New Testament Textual Criticism: Their Value, Validity, and Viability—or Lack Thereof,” in *The Textual History of the Greek New Testament: Changing Views in Contemporary Research*, Text-Critical Studies 8, ed. Klaus Wachtel and Michael W. Holmes (Atlanta: SBL, 2011), 127.

of the NT differs from preceding and subsequent forms of the language, they can more easily recognize difficult forms or understand grammatical features that were in transition at the time of the NT. Furthermore, an understanding of the way in which the Greek language evolved will guard against simplistic and erroneous approaches that fail to see the Greek language used in the NT as a snapshot of a changing language.

All languages change over time as they incorporate new influences or alter old forms. Certainly, any modern English speaker can clearly see such changes by reading the King James Version of the Bible (1611) or the plays of William Shakespeare (1564–1616). The Greek language is no exception. To understand the history of the Greek language, we will briefly survey the following historical periods:

FORM OF LANGUAGE	DATES
Proto Indo-European	Prior to 1500 BC
Linear B or Mycenaean	1500–1000 BC
Dialects and Classical Greek	1000–300 BC
Koine Greek	300 BC–AD 330
Byzantine Greek	AD 330–AD 1453
Modern Greek	AD 1453–present

## Proto Indo-European

Scholars who study languages classify them according to related families. One such family is the Indo-European family of languages, which includes the sub-families of Greek, Indo-Iranian, Armenian, Albanian, Italic, Celtic, Germanic, and Balto-Slavic.<sup>5</sup> By studying the oldest preserved forms of Indo-European languages and how those languages differ and continued to evolve, scholars are able to reconstruct a preceding, earlier “ancestor language.” This common hypothetical ancestor of Indo-European languages is called Proto Indo-European (or PIE, for short), which was used prior to 1500 BC.<sup>6</sup> We have no written records of this early ancestor of the Greek language.<sup>7</sup>

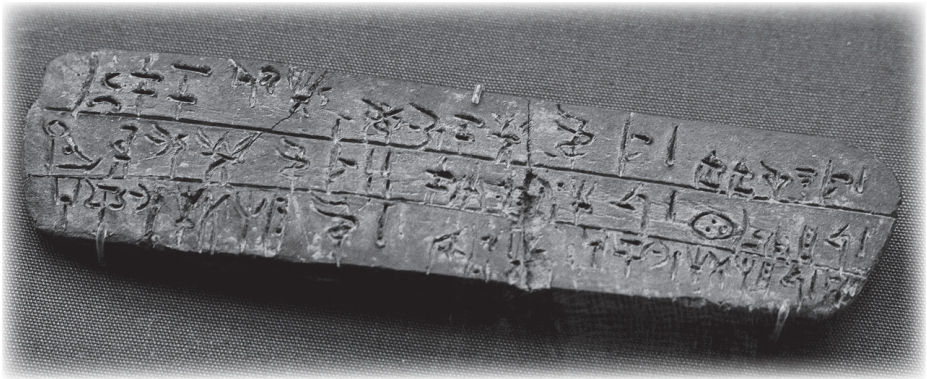
<sup>5</sup> See Bruce M. Metzger, *Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek*, rev. ed. (Princeton, NJ: n.p., 1969; repr. 1983), 73.

<sup>6</sup> How far back one can speak of a common Proto-European language is a matter of scholarly conjecture, though possibly it is helpful to think of the PIE period as extending roughly 3000–1500 BC.

<sup>7</sup> In attempting to explain the irregular form of a NT Greek word, scholarly resources occasionally appeal to the “ancestor” form (sometimes the hypothetical PIE form) of the word that was still causing orthographic challenges in the Koine period hundreds of years later. A helpful resource for such morphological explorations is William D. Mounce, *The Morphology of Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).

## Linear B

After the Proto Indo-European period but before the Classical period, there was a written precursor to Greek known by scholars as “Linear B.” This language is also called Mycenaean, with inscriptions discovered in Mycenae, Crete, and elsewhere. The written alphabet used for Linear B (deciphered by Michael Ventris in 1952) differs from Classical Greek, with each symbol representing a syllable rather than an individual vowel or consonant sound.<sup>8</sup> The relatively recently deciphered inscriptions and clay tablets in Linear B remind the NT Greek student that hundreds of years of changes in the Greek language can be traced through written texts prior to the time of the NT.



*This clay tablet with Linear B script, dated to 1450–1375 BC, is Minoan and was found at Knossos, Crete, by Arthur Evans. It records quantities of oil apparently offered to various deities.*

## Dialects and Classical Greek

Scholars differ as to what to call the next period in the development of the Greek language. A. T. Robertson and Hersey Davis label it the “Age of Dialects” and extend it back to 1000 BC, noting that various regional dialects in Greek coexisted and competed for dominance.<sup>9</sup> These dialects included Aeolic, Doric, Arcado-Cypriot, and Ionic. Homer’s epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, were not written down until roughly 800 BC, so some scholars date the Classical or Dialect period beginning at 800 BC. The various Greek dialects gave way to the political and cultural ascendancy of Athens (and thus the Ionic-Attic dialect) by the fourth

<sup>8</sup> According to journalist Margalit Fox, Alice E. Kober, a Classics professor at Brooklyn College, has never received proper recognition for her ground-breaking work that contributed to the deciphering of Linear B. See Margalit Fox, *The Riddle of the Labyrinth: The Quest to Crack an Ancient Code* (New York: Ecco, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> A. T. Robertson and W. Hersey Davis, *A New Short Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1933), 8–10.



and fifth centuries BC. These two centuries are viewed as the literary high point of the Classical period in Greek literature.<sup>10</sup>

In previous generations, students often came to seminary having already studied Classical Greek for many years. In fact, several lexicons and reference grammars assume a student's familiarity with differences between Classical and NT Greek. Without any further explanation (and to the dismay of students!), such resources will comment that a form represents the Doric or Aeolic spelling. If students wish to expand their knowledge of Greek back into the Classical period, perhaps the best bridge is still Stephen W. Paine's *Beginning Greek: A Functional Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), which includes translation exercises from both Xenophon (fourth century BC) and the NT.

## Koine Greek

Several factors contributed to the ongoing evolution of the Greek language into a genuine *lingua franca* (widely used common language) that came to dominate cultural, political, and economic life in Europe and the Near East for centuries. Most significant among these developments were the short-lived but highly successful military conquests of Alexander, son of Phillip II of Macedon. Alexander the Great, as he came to be known, had studied under Aristotle (384–322 BC) and self-consciously sought to bring the culture and language of the Greeks to the lands he subdued. By the year 326 BC, he had conquered much of the known civilized world of his day—from Eastern Europe to India. The Koine (pronounced, “Coy-neigh”) period of the Greek language is generally dated to begin after the initial unifying effects of Alexander's conquests (c. 300 BC) and to end with the moving of the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome to Constantinople (AD 330).<sup>11</sup>



During the Koine period, Greek was spoken as a second language by many. Increased trade and travel had a regularizing effect on the language. Consequently, a “common,” “widely-spoken” or ordinary dialect emerged. This κοινή διάλεκτος (common dialect) is well preserved in innumerable papyri and in the writings of the NT.

Various other terms are sometimes used to refer to Koine Greek with slightly different nuances. These are:

<sup>10</sup> The term “Classical Greek” is sometimes applied narrowly to the Attic-Ionic dialect contained in well-known Greek literature of the 4th and 5th centuries BC.

<sup>11</sup> See the next section on “Byzantine Greek.”

- *Biblical Greek* – Koine Greek, as preserved specifically in the writings of the OT (LXX) and NT (and OT Apocrypha).
- *New Testament Greek* – Koine Greek, with a focus only on the writings of the NT.
- *Common Greek* – rarely used term; interchangeable with Koine Greek.
- *Vulgar Greek* – “vulgar” in the sense of “ordinary” or broadly-spoken dialect; an even more rarely used term; interchangeable with Koine Greek.
- *Hellenistic Greek* – interchangeable with Koine Greek, though the adjective “Hellenistic” possibly highlights the fact that the ordinary spoken Greek language of this period was widely used as a second language by persons who had adopted Greek language or customs (i.e., “Hellenized” persons).<sup>12</sup> “Hellenistic” is an adjective derived from the Greek adjective meaning “Greek” (Ἑλληνικός).

The Greek of the NT, as an expression of the Koine Greek in the first century AD, is in some sense a picture of an object in motion. The language is in a state of flux, moving toward more explicit expressions and simpler syntactical constructions, as would be expected of a *lingua franca*. Some of the changes we see taking place as the language shifts from Classical to Koine are:

1. Authors regularize the aorist by applying first aorist endings to second aorist verbs. So, for example, one finds εἶπα (“I said,” Acts 26:15) alongside εἶπον (“I said,” John 16:15).
2. The optative mood is rarely found in Koine Greek. Only sixty-eight uses of the optative are found in the NT, usually in formulaic constructions such as μὴ γένοιτο (NASB, “May it never be,” Rom 9:14) or εἴη (“could be,” Luke 1:29).
3. Koine authors are prone to use prepositions rather than noun cases alone to communicate relationships more explicitly (e.g., 1 Pet 1:2a, κατὰ πρόγνωσιν θεοῦ πατρὸς ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος εἰς ὑπακοὴν καὶ ῥαντισμὸν αἵματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ; ESV, “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood”).
4. With a simplifying, regularizing trend, -μι verbs sometimes appear with omega verb endings (e.g., Rev 11:9, οὐκ ἀφίουσιν “they do not permit” [cf. διδόσιν]).
5. The disappearance of some letters is complete. Digamma (Ϝ), formerly appearing after epsilon in the Greek alphabet and pronounced like

<sup>12</sup> As Wallace rightly notes (17). Wallace also seeks to clarify the nuances of various terms that are applied to Koine Greek.

English “w,” disappears. The letter koppa (Ϟ) also disappears.<sup>13</sup> The “memory” of lost letters, however, continues to cause spelling irregularities. καλέω, for example, originally had a digamma at the end of the root and for that reason does not lengthen the contract vowel before a tense formative. Thus, the future of καλέω is καλέσω, not καλήσω.

6. The elaborate hypotactic (subordinated) style of Classical Greek shifts toward parataxis. In paratactic style, an author places assertions side by side rather than in cascades of subordinated clauses. Authors vary in style, but as a general rule, the simpler, paratactic model is more common among Koine writers. For a NT book written almost entirely in paratactic style, see 1 John.
7. Comparative forms are used to express the superlative idea (e.g., Luke 9:48, ὁ μικρότερος, “whoever is least”). The superlative form is commonly elative in sense (e.g., Jas 3:4, ὑπὸ ἐλαχίστου πηδαλίου, “by a very small rudder”).<sup>14</sup>
8. Though true of virtually any historical period of any language, during the Koine period words continue to shift in meaning. (This development is called “semantic shift.”) During the Classical Greek period, for example, λαλέω meant “to chat” or “to babble.”<sup>15</sup> In the NT, however, λαλέω is a general verb for speaking,<sup>16</sup> possibly preferred by authors when the speaker is not being quoted directly.

Other shifts in the Greek language could be noted, but the eight listed above are some of the most common, and any reader of the GNT will soon encounter all the trends listed above. In the first five sentences of the Practice Exercises for this chapter, students will be asked to identify which of the grammatical or orthographic (spelling) shifts above are represented by the underlined words from the GNT.

## Byzantine Greek

In AD 330, the capital of the Roman empire moved from Rome to the city of Constantinople (formerly named Byzantium). Thus began a new era for the Greek language. Except in the Holy Roman Empire, Latin was increasingly used for politics, trade, and religion. Byzantine or Medieval Greek maintained continuity with

<sup>13</sup> Smyth, 8 (§3). Smyth notes that digamma was written in the Boeotian dialect as late as 200 BC. Digamma and koppa continued to be used in writing numerals.

<sup>14</sup> Though the elative use of the superlative is attested in the Classical period (Smyth, 282 [§1085]), it appears more commonly in the Koine period.

<sup>15</sup> LSJ, 1025–26. Though looked to as a lexicon primarily for classical Greek, LSJ is intended to encompass the Koine.

<sup>16</sup> David Alan Black notes the semantic shift of the verb λαλέω in the Koine period. See *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 157.

the earlier Koine, but continued to experience syntactical changes and semantic shifts.

### Modern Greek

Modern Greek is generally divided into two forms: (1) a literary form, known as Katharevousa or Καθαρεύουσα (“purifying”) Greek; and (2) Demotic or Δημοτική (“the people’s language”).<sup>17</sup> Scholars see a direct evolutionary connection between modern Demotic Greek and its medieval predecessor, while Καθαρεύουσα is viewed as an artificial, contrived form of the language. Compared to many languages, however, Greek has experienced comparatively few changes over the last two thousand years. Most NT Greek students, for example, are able to pick their way through much of a modern Greek Bible. See the chart below that compares the Koine GNT and modern Greek Bible.

KOINE (NT) GREEK	MODERN GREEK BIBLE
Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. (John 1:1)	Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦτο ὁ Λόγος, καὶ ὁ Λόγος ἦτο παρὰ τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ Θεὸς ἦτο ὁ Λόγος. (John 1:1)

A few NT Greek professors advocate using modern Greek pronunciation because, at points, it seems a more accurate reflection of first-century pronunciation. The vowels omicron and omega, for example, are both pronounced with a long “o” sound (ō) in modern Greek. Both vowels were also apparently pronounced the same way in the Koine period—as evidenced by numerous scribal mistakes where omicron and omega are interchanged (e.g., Rom 5:1, ἔχομεν, “we have”; variant ἔχομεν, “let us have”). The majority of NT professors, however, currently favor the pronunciation system developed by Erasmus (1466–1536) which employs a distinct vowel sound for each Greek vowel.<sup>18</sup>

## TEXTUAL CRITICISM

### A History of Text Criticism

Even within the NT itself, we have evidence that the individual NT documents were copied by hand and that these copies circulated among the churches. In Col 4:16, Paul writes, “After this letter has been read at your gathering, have it read

<sup>17</sup> Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek*, 154.

<sup>18</sup> If a student wishes to learn modern Greek pronunciation, however, resources such as Rosetta Stone software or the Mango Language-learning website ([www.mangolanguages.com](http://www.mangolanguages.com)) have made the task easier. Also, for audio resources developed with commitments to various approaches to pronunciation, see <http://www.ntgateway.com/greek-ntgateway/greek-new-testament-texts/>. Another helpful resource is BibleMesh, which can be accessed at <http://biblemesh.com/course-catalog/biblical-languages>.

also in the church of the Laodiceans.”<sup>19</sup> Over time, the early church grouped selections of inspired writings and copied them together. By the mid-second century, the four canonical Gospels and Paul’s letters were apparently grouped and copied as units. Not much later, the entire NT was grouped and copied as a recognized body of inspired writings. The earliest extant canonical list we have of the NT (the Muratorian Canon) has been dated to AD 190.<sup>20</sup> As early Christians copied, recopied, and copied copies (all by hand), small variations were inevitably introduced into the manuscripts. And, although Church Fathers sometimes speculated about copyist errors or the original reading of manuscripts,<sup>21</sup> it was virtually impossible to codify accurately such discussion until one could reproduce a text without any variation. Thus, after the printing press was introduced to Europe in 1454, possibilities for comparing manuscripts with an unchanging standard arose. At roughly the same time, Europe experienced a revival of interest in classical learning (including the Greek language) and the arrival of the Protestant Reformation (where focus on the meaning of the inspired Scripture necessitated careful argumentation from the text of Scripture in the original languages). The printing press, a revived knowledge of Greek, and a growing interest in the gospel combined to result in the first published printed edition of the GNT by Erasmus in 1516.<sup>22</sup> In producing this text, Erasmus relied on only seven manuscripts, most of poor quality.<sup>23</sup> Today, we have more than 5,000 ancient manuscripts (or partial manuscripts) of the GNT, with the number increasing yearly.<sup>24</sup>

Subsequent generations continued to build on the foundational work of Erasmus in producing “standard” printed versions of the GNT derived from the various ancient manuscripts available to them. Until the mid-nineteenth century, the Byzantine text tradition was assumed as the standard.<sup>25</sup> It was sometimes called the

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<sup>19</sup> Some scholars have suggested that this “letter from Laodicea” may be Paul’s canonical letter to the Ephesians, as the words ἐν Ἐφεσῶν (“in Ephesus,” Eph 1:1) are lacking in significant ancient manuscripts.

<sup>20</sup> The Muratorian canon is dated by some scholars as late as the fourth century. For a brief presentation of the views, see Edmon L. Gallagher and John D. Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 174–83. Certainly, however, Christians distinguished canonical from non-canonical writings prior to the earliest extant canonical lists, as is evidenced within both the NT (e.g., 2 Thess 2:2; 3:17) and the writings of the Apostolic Fathers.

<sup>21</sup> For example, Jerome, Augustine, and Origen. See Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 200.

<sup>22</sup> The Complutensian Polyglot, a printed GNT produced under the direction of Cardinal Ximenes, was apparently completed in 1514 but not formally published until after Erasmus’s text.

<sup>23</sup> See Edwin M. Yamauchi, “Erasmus’ Contributions to New Testament Scholarship,” *Fides et Historia* 19, no.3 (1987): 10–11. Yamauchi writes, “Although Erasmus claimed that he used ‘the oldest and most correct copies of the New Testament,’ the press of the publisher’s deadline forced him to rely on but seven rather late and inferior manuscripts available at Basle” (10).

<sup>24</sup> See the chapter by Jacod Peterson in Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry, eds, *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2019). Daniel Wallace, director of the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts (CSNTM), regularly reports the discovery of new and significant ancient manuscripts at [www.csntm.org](http://www.csntm.org).

<sup>25</sup> Scholars also speak of the “Majority text,” which means the reading found in the majority of extant NT manuscripts. As the majority of extant NT manuscripts are Byzantine, there is an overlap

*textus receptus* (received text), so labeled in the preface to a GNT published by the Elzevir brothers in 1633. Over time, principles for adjudicating disputed readings were developed and accepted by the vast majority of scholars.<sup>26</sup> The Byzantine text came to be viewed by many as a later conflation of text traditions and lost its primacy to “eclectic” scholarly editions produced by text critics. Principles that dethroned the Byzantine text and codified the modern discipline of text criticism can be traced to the seminal work of Brian Walton (1600–1661), Johann Bengel (1687–1752), Karl Lachmann (1793–1851), Constantine von Tischendorf (1815–1874), B. F. Westcott (1825–1901), F. J. A. Hort (1828–1892), and others. Principles of text criticism are summarized in the following section.

It should be noted that a small minority of scholars insist that only one “family” of ancient manuscripts (the Byzantine family) preserves the most reliable text of the NT. Yet, even within this Byzantine family of manuscripts, there are numerous minor variations. Modern English-speaking persons who insist on the priority of the Byzantine text family are usually aligned in some way with the “King James Only” movement.<sup>27</sup> They argue that the King James Version (the NT of which is translated from a Byzantine version of the Greek text) is the most reliable because it is based on the best preserved manuscript tradition. The vast majority of Christian scholars, however, believe the evidence points to God preserving his Word through the multiplicity of manuscripts in a variety of text families. God has left us so many manuscripts of such high quality that, even in the places where there are variants in the manuscripts, we can reach a high level of certainty as to what the original text read.<sup>28</sup> God has not seen fit to preserve the autographs (apostolically penned originals) of the NT, but he has preserved *all the words of the autographs* in the many manuscripts that have come down to us.

Students wishing to read an irenic, scholarly argument in favor of Byzantine priority are referred to *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Text Form*.<sup>29</sup> This critical edition of the GNT includes not only a carefully constructed critical Byzantine text (based on comparisons of extant NT manuscripts), but also an extensive appendix entitled, “The Case for Byzantine Priority.”<sup>30</sup>

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in the terms. Most Byzantine text readings are considered, by pure mathematical reckoning, as “the Majority text.” Of course, because nearly all NT text traditions overlap at roughly 90%, any NT text will be representative of “the Majority text” at most points.

<sup>26</sup> See Eldon Jay Epp’s critique of these traditional text-critical principles in “Traditional ‘Canons’ of New Testament Textual Criticism,” 79–127.

<sup>27</sup> For an irenic and cogent refutation of the King James Only position, see James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy: Can You Trust the Modern Translations?*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> For a recent essay defending the reliability of the GNT, see Daniel B. Wallace, “Has the New Testament Text Been Hopelessly Corrupted?,” in *In Defense of the Bible: A Comprehensive Apologetic for the Authority of Scripture*, ed. Steven B. Cowan and Terry L. Wilder (Nashville: B&H, 2013), 139–63.

<sup>29</sup> Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont, eds., *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform* (Southborough, MA: Chilton Book Publishing, 2005).

<sup>30</sup> Robinson and Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, 533–86.

## Principles of Text Criticism

Traditionally, the discipline of text criticism has sought to determine the original wording of an ancient text for which the autograph has disappeared and for which disputed witnesses exist today. The criteria for determining the original reading of the text can be divided into external and internal criteria. External criteria concern the age, quantity, and provenance (or geographical origin) of the manuscripts consulted. Internal criteria consider how a disputed variant fits within the context of the document (the author's style or the context of his argument). Some prominent modern text critics are known for strongly favoring external or internal criteria, but a reasoned use of all available criteria seems judicious.

The GNT that results from deciding among disputed readings is called an "eclectic" text. The word *eclectic* means "drawn from a variety of sources." In labeling our final product as an "eclectic" text, we are recognizing that there is no ancient manuscript that parallels it word-for-word. While our eclectic GNT overlaps overwhelmingly with the vast majority of all ancient GNT manuscripts, it is, in the end, drawn from a multiplicity of sources, not agreeing at every point with any of them.

### External Criteria

1. *Favor the older manuscripts.* With all other things being equal, an older manuscript, being closer in date to the original, is to be preferred. Through paleography (the study of ancient writing), analysis of scribal colophones, and other methods, scholars are able to assign composition dates to ancient manuscripts. Also, external evidence takes into account not only GNT manuscripts, but early versions (translations) and quotations from church fathers. Some scholars discount the Byzantine text completely as a later conflation; others (e.g., KJV-only advocates) prefer the Byzantine text.<sup>31</sup> A balanced approach would lead us to consider individual Byzantine readings insofar as they are witnessed to by early manuscripts and supported by other criteria below.
2. *Favor the reading that is supported by the majority of manuscripts.* This criterion must be qualified by the famous quip, "Manuscripts must be weighed, not counted." For example, if we have fifty medieval Byzantine texts that all rely on the same tenth-century exemplar, then the entire group of manuscripts should be viewed in light of their common origin rather than as fifty independent witnesses.
3. *Favor the reading that is best attested across various families of manuscripts.* Over time, various streams of text transmission developed. Within these streams (traditionally delineated by geographical provenance) flowed manuscripts with similar patterns of variants. So, the disputed reading best represented by a broad swath of transmission

<sup>31</sup> This is not to say that all who favor the Byzantine tradition are also KJV-only advocates.

streams (families) is to be preferred.<sup>32</sup> Note the map below depicting the four major text families (Alexandrian, Caesarean, Western, Byzantine).<sup>33</sup>



Influential text critic J. K. Elliott asserts that the traditional classification of text families and their use in determining original readings should be rejected as overly-simplistic.<sup>34</sup> Gerd Mink of the Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung (INTF) in Münster, Germany, has championed a new Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (CBGM). Elliott explains the approach:

Mink’s theory plots the textual flow between manuscripts, declaring the likeliest direction of change and seeing how that trajectory is paralleled elsewhere in the textual tradition. The relevant genealogical connection is seen between the texts and not the palaeographical dating of the manuscripts that happen to bear those texts. There is thus no room for text-types in such a methodology.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> For an online resource that labels virtually all ancient manuscripts according to their text families, see [www.laparola.net/greco/manoscritti.php](http://www.laparola.net/greco/manoscritti.php).

<sup>33</sup> Some scholars contest the legitimacy of the Caesarean text family. David Alan Black writes, “Scholars occasionally refer to a fourth text type—the Caesarean. Found only in the Gospels, this group of manuscripts is often found in company with the Alexandrian or Western text types. Today, however, there is little consensus as to the existence of this group of witnesses. It appears to be the most mixed of any of the groups that can be classified as a text type.” See *New Testament Textual Criticism: A Concise Guide* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 34.

<sup>34</sup> J. K. Elliott, “Recent Trends in Textual Criticism of the New Testament: A New Millennium, a New Beginning?” *Bulletin de l’Académie Belge pour l’Étude des Langues Anciennes et Orientales* 1 (2012): 128–29.

<sup>35</sup> Elliott, “Recent Trends in Textual Criticism of the New Testament,” 130. In his review article of the *Editio Critica Maior*, Peter M. Head writes, “The Coherence-Based Genealogical Method is difficult to summarise briefly, and I will not attempt a complete exposition and evaluation here. As a method it attempts, utilizing the complete transcriptions of manuscript witnesses and the power



Though popular resources still present the traditional text-family classifications, scholarly consensus is moving towards seeing the CBGM as rendering the traditional classifications obsolete.

### *Internal Criteria*

1. *Favor the reading that best fits the literary context.* This holds true as a general rule. Of course, sometimes authors of the NT said shocking or unexpected things, so this criterion must not be rigidly applied.
2. *Favor the reading that best corresponds with writings by the same NT author.* Authors have general stylistic patterns and theological motifs. As noted above, however, authors are not always predictable. The use of an amanuensis (ancient secretary) and differing contexts or purposes can explain stylistic variations within the same author's writings.
3. *Favor the reading that best explains the origin of the other variants.* Similar to a detective story, it is sometimes possible to reconstruct a series of mistakes or attempted fixes that all flow from a scribal alteration of the original reading.
4. *Favor the shorter reading.* As texts were often lengthened or clarified, the shorter reading should usually be preferred.
5. *Favor the more difficult reading.* Often the more difficult reading should be favored, as later additions are attempts to "fix" a perceived problem. This criterion cannot be applied in isolation from the other principles mentioned above, but scribes, when not making mistakes of hearing or sight, were prone to smooth out difficulties rather than introduce them.<sup>36</sup>

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of computer analysis, to deal with the large number of witnesses to the NT text, the problem that these witnesses are related in complex ways involving contamination, and the coincidental emergence of identical readings (specifically for the Catholic Epistles the ECM used 164 witnesses and found 3,046 places of textual variation). The CBGM uses textual agreement between transcriptions of manuscripts as a whole to identify specific genealogical relationships (or coherencies) between the texts represented in these manuscripts and the assumed initial text. Beginning with the relatively certain parts of the initial text, using computer analysis, the 'textual flow' at each variant unit can be mapped and preliminary genealogical relationships can be developed." See "*Editio Critica Maior: An Introduction and Assessment*," *TynBul* 61 (2010): 143–44.

<sup>36</sup> See the helpful tool by David Trobisch, *A User's Guide to the Nestle-Aland 28 Greek New Testament*, Text-Critical Studies 9 (Atlanta: SBL, 2013), including the discussion on pp. 22–24.

## Common Variations in the GNT

### *Unintentional Errors*

According to one reckoning, 95 percent of textual variants are accidental—the unintentional variations introduced by tired or incompetent scribes.<sup>37</sup> Such variants include the following:<sup>38</sup>

1. *Errors of Sight.* Scribes sometimes copied texts by looking back and forth to a manuscript. By this method, they inevitably made a number of errors of sight. For example, they confused letters that looked similar in appearance, divided words wrongly (the oldest Greek manuscripts of the Bible have no spaces between words), repeated words or sections (i.e., copied the same thing twice), accidentally skipped letters, words, or sections, or changed the order of letters in a word, or words in a sentence. In Codex Vaticanus, for example, at Galatians 1:11, a scribe accidentally wrote τὸ εὐαγγέλιον (“the gospel”) three times in succession.
2. *Errors of Hearing.* When scribes copied manuscripts through dictation (i.e., scribes wrote as a manuscript was being read) errors of hearing were made. For example, vowels, diphthongs, or other sounds were misheard, as in Matthew 2:6 in Codex Sinaiticus, where ἐκ σοῦ (“from you”) has been wrongly heard and written as ἐξ οὗ (“from whom”). We make similar mistakes in English, for instance, writing “night” when someone says, “knight.”
3. *Errors of Writing.* Sometimes scribes introduced errors into texts simply by writing the wrong thing. For example, in Codex Alexandrinus, at John 13:37, a scribe accidentally wrote δύνασαί μοι rather than δύναιμί σοι. Rather than saying to Jesus, “why can’t I follow You now,” Peter now queries, “why can’t you follow me now?”<sup>39</sup>
4. *Errors of Judgment.* Sometimes scribes exercised poor judgment by incorporating marginal glosses (ancient footnotes) into the body of the text or by incorporating similar unintentional corrupting influences. In the fourteenth-century Codex 109, for example, an incompetent scribe has apparently copied continuous lines of text from a manuscript that listed the genealogy of Jesus (Luke 3:23–38) in two columns. The

<sup>37</sup> See Arthur G. Patzia, *The Making of the New Testament: Origin, Collection, Text & Canon* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 138.

<sup>38</sup> The material below is from Robert L. Plummer, *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), originally derived from Patzia, *Making of the New Testament*, 138–46.

<sup>39</sup> This variant is also possibly an “error of sight” (i.e., the scribe’s eyes jumped to the parallel expression in John 13:36). I (Rob) am indebted to Elijah Hixson for pointing out this variant, as well as some other variants mentioned in this section.

resulting genealogy has all the family relations scrambled, even listing God as the son of Aram.<sup>40</sup>

### *Intentional Errors*

The remaining five percent of textual variants resulted from intentional activity on the part of scribes. Such changes included:

1. *Revising Grammar and Spelling.* In an attempt to standardize grammar or spelling, scribes sometimes corrected what they perceived as orthographic or grammatical errors in the text they were copying. For example, though John originally put the nominative case after the preposition ὀπό in Revelation 1:4, later scribes have inserted a genitive form.<sup>41</sup>
2. *Harmonizing Similar Passages.* Scribes had a tendency to harmonize parallel passages and introduce uniformity to stylized expressions. For example, details from the same incident in multiple Gospels might be included when copying any one Gospel. As a professor of Greek, I (Rob) have found it interesting that students sometimes unintentionally insert “Lord” or “Christ” when translating a passage with the name “Jesus.” Normally, such students are not intending to promote a “higher Christology”; they are simply conforming their speech to a stylized reference to the Savior. Ancient scribes behaved in a similar way.
3. *Eliminating Apparent Discrepancies and Difficulties.* Scribes sometimes “fixed” what they perceived as a problem in the text. Metzger and Ehrman report that because Origen perceived a geographical difficulty at John 1:28, he changed Βηθανία (“Bethany”) to Βηθαραβᾶ.<sup>42</sup>
4. *Conflating the Text.* Sometimes when a scribe knew of variant readings in the manuscript base from which he was copying, he would simply include both variants within his copy, conflating them. For example, in Acts 20:28, some early manuscripts read τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ (“the church of God”), while others read τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ κυρίου (“church of the Lord”). Later manuscripts conflate the readings as τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ κυρίου καὶ [τοῦ] θεοῦ (“the church of the Lord and God”).<sup>43</sup>
5. *Adapting Different Liturgical Traditions.* In a few isolated places, it is possible that church liturgy (i.e., stylized prayers or praises) influenced

<sup>40</sup> Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*, 259.

<sup>41</sup> Metzger and Ehrman, 262.

<sup>42</sup> Metzger and Ehrman, 264.

<sup>43</sup> Metzger and Ehrman, 265.

some textual additions or wording changes (e.g., Matt 6:13, “For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever, Amen”).

6. *Making Theological or Doctrinal Changes.* Sometimes scribes made theological or doctrinal changes—either omitting something they saw as wrong or making clarifying additions. For example, in Matt 24:36, some manuscripts omit the reference to the Son’s ignorance of the day of his return—a passage that is obviously difficult to understand.<sup>44</sup>

## Understanding the Textual Apparatuses and Tools

Several affordable or even free GNTs are available in print or digital format. A fundamental question, however, is: What version of the GNT am I reading? Is it the Byzantine text? Is it an eclectic text? If so, which eclectic text?

Any serious student of the GNT must own one (or both) of the two mainstream critical, eclectic texts of the GNT. As more manuscripts have been discovered and more variants recorded—and as both textual decisions and formatting have changed—these critical editions have gone through numerous revisions. The Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* is now in its 28th edition (2013). This version is usually called simply the “Nestle-Aland” and is often abbreviated NA<sup>28</sup>. The superscription (“28” in this case) represents the number of the most recent edition. The United Bible Societies GNT is now in its 5th edition (2014), and is usually called “the UBS.” It is abbreviated as UBS<sup>5</sup> and has a red cover, while the Nestle-Aland’s cover is usually blue.

Pointing to a scholarly consensus about text-critical methods and the resulting eclectic text, the Nestle-Aland and UBS have published the same eclectic text since UBS<sup>3</sup> (1975) and NA<sup>26</sup> (1979). The two publications differ, however, in punctuation and formatting, as well as in the presentation of textual data. The UBS text (prepared primarily for Bible translators and pastors) aims to list only significant variants that potentially affect translation. At the bottom of the page, significant variants (if any) are listed with extensive textual data. Each disputed text is ranked A, B, C, or D, based on the editorial committee’s confidence in deciding the original reading. The preface and introductory section of the UBS text provides a helpful overview of the textual apparatus and should be read in its entirety by intermediate Greek students.

Nestle-Aland differs from the UBS by listing many more variants but providing less textual support for the variants listed. The Nestle-Aland text, aimed at the academic community, provides an especially efficient method for viewing variants—even when those variants are clearly not original and do not affect meaning significantly. Inserted symbols (for example a small, raised circle or square) enable

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<sup>44</sup> In this text, as in a few other places (e.g., John 4:6), Scripture seems to speak of Jesus from the perspective of his human nature, not intending to deny the omniscience or omnipotence of his divine nature. Others have explained this passage by claiming that prior to his exaltation, Jesus emptied himself of certain divine prerogatives (i.e., the Kenotic theory).

the editors of the NA to include much information about variants in an extremely compact space. Students who own an NA<sup>28</sup> should carefully read the introductory material and learn the “critical signs” that label variations in the text.

Though the free Society of Biblical Literature Greek New Testament (SBLGNT), edited by Michael Holmes, is widely used in digital format by students, modern text critics have raised strident objections against enthroning it as a new *textus receptus*. J. K. Elliott has pointed out that the SBLGNT is an amalgam of four previously printed Greek New Testaments and that it provides no apparatus for variants in ancient manuscripts. The SBLGNT differs from the NA in more than 540 places.<sup>45</sup>

There are three other scholarly NT Greek texts of which the intermediate Greek student should be aware. First, in late 2018, Crossway, in conjunction with the evangelical study center Tyndale House at Cambridge University, released the Tyndale House edition of the Greek New Testament (THGNT). Dirk Jongkind, the lead editor of the work, claims that it is the most accurate Greek New Testament published to date. That is, he claims that, of printed Greek New Testaments, the THGNT is closest in wording to the apostolic autographs. The THGNT is unique in focusing on Greek manuscripts from the first five centuries of transmission and in incorporating recent scholarly insights on scribal habits into the editors’ text-critical decisions. Many of the claims of the THGNT are still being debated, and students are referred to the following short book for a more extensive introduction and defense: *An Introduction to the Greek New Testament Produced at Tyndale House*, Cambridge (Crossway, 2019), by Dirk Jongkind. For an extensive video review of the THGNT by Rob Plummer, see: <https://vimeo.com/313496503>.

Students should also be aware of two other incomplete projects. These are the *Editio Critica Maior* (ECM) and the International Greek New Testament Project (IGNTP).<sup>46</sup> The ECM is overseen by the Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung (INTF) in Münster, Germany. The origins of the project date to a call for a more comprehensive text-critical edition of the NT made by Kurt Aland, Jean Duplacy, and Bonifatius Fischer in 1967. So far, only the fascicles for the Catholic Epistles (James–Jude, 1997–2005), a short volume on parallel Gospel pericopes (2011), and the four volumes on the book of Acts (2017) have been published. The goal of the work is to provide a comprehensive look at all significant text variations within the first thousand years of the text’s transmission—looking at Greek manuscripts, citations in the Greek Fathers, and significant early versions (translations) where they bear witness to variants in an underlying Greek text.<sup>47</sup>

Peter Williams notes that the ECM volume (2nd ed.) of the Catholic Epistles differs from the NA<sup>27</sup> on decisions about the NT text’s original wording in only 34

<sup>45</sup> J. K. Elliott, “Recent Trends,” 118. Available online at <http://evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.com/2012/03/keith-elliott-on-recent-trends.html>. The SBLGNT does provide a minimal apparatus, listing the readings of Bible translations and other critical editions. See <http://sblgnt.com/about/>.

<sup>46</sup> The IGNTP continues the Critical Greek Testament Project, begun in 1926.

<sup>47</sup> Information in this paragraph was obtained from the Preface and Introduction to the *Editio Critica Maior*.

places, all of which have been incorporated into the new 28th edition of Nestle-Aland.<sup>48</sup> Dirk Jongkind observes that the ECM volumes of Acts differ from the NA<sup>28</sup> at 52 places,<sup>49</sup> all of which will presumably be incorporated into the forthcoming 29th edition of the Nestle-Aland GNT and 6th edition of the United Bible Societies GNT. While intermediate Greek students may use the *ECM* in their campus library, they are unlikely to own it because of (1) the cost, (2) the currently incomplete nature of the project, and (3) the level of detail provided by *ECM*—a detail unnecessary except for the most detailed text-critical study. For example, page 15 of the *ECM* volume covering James features only twelve Greek words from Jas 1:18b–19a. The remainder of the page contains information on textual variants for this small section of text. Such a page is typical of the series.

Another ongoing project of which students should be aware is the International Greek New Testament Project (IGNTP). Beginning in 1948, the IGNTP sought to provide a comprehensive critical edition of the GNT, listing every significant variant in existing ancient manuscripts, quotations, and versions. The IGNTP differs from the *ECM* in using the *textus receptus*<sup>50</sup> (Byzantine text) as a base text, from which variant readings are noted. This use of the *textus receptus* is simply a scholarly convention, not a normative judgment about the quality of the Byzantine text tradition. The goal of the IGNTP is not to produce a scholarly eclectic text, but simply to provide a comprehensive, accurate recording of NT textual variants. So far, only Luke has been completed (two volumes, published by Oxford University Press in 1984 and 1987). The IGNTP is currently working on the Gospel of John (two volumes already out) in cooperation with the Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung.<sup>51</sup> In addition to their IGNTP volumes on John, the IGNTP will also produce the *ECM* volume on John. The IGNTP website reports that in 2016, the organization “formally began work on the edition of the Pauline Epistles, which is expected to take around two decades to produce.”<sup>52</sup> As Dan Wallace notes, the discipline of text criticism is experiencing a new era of cooperation and collaboration, made easier by digital scanning, the internet, and other evolving technologies. Perhaps your interests have been sparked in this field. If so, receive this challenge from Wallace, which he wrote in 2009:

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<sup>48</sup> Accessed October 29, 2019, <http://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/peter-williams-on-the-nestle-aland-novum-testamentum-graece/>. Williams notes that the NA<sup>28</sup> text outside of the Catholic Epistles is the same as the NA<sup>27</sup>, except for minor changes such as capitalization or formatting. The textual apparatus of the NA<sup>28</sup>, however, includes additional and corrected information throughout the entire GNT.

<sup>49</sup> Accessed October 21, 2019, <http://evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.com/2018/08/the-text-of-acts-differences-between.html>.

<sup>50</sup> Specifically, the chosen *textus receptus* was “published by Clarendon Press, Oxford, in 1873, a reprint of an edition published in 1828 that ultimately is based on the third edition of Stephanus published in 1550.” Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Textual Criticism: Recent Developments,” in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, ed. Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne (Grand Rapids: Baker; Leicester: Apollos, 2004), 64.

<sup>51</sup> Two volumes on John have appeared, one with evidence from the papyri (1995) and the other with attestation from the majuscules (2007).

<sup>52</sup> Accessed October 21, 2019, <http://www.igntp.org/>.

“Collation” is the comparison of a MS [manuscript] to a base text. All the differences, down to the individual letters, are noted. Collation is thus an exact transcription of the MS but done with less effort and less paper. To date, all the MSS [manuscripts] of only one book of the NT have been completely collated. Herman Hoskier took thirty years to collate all MSS for Revelation—a book that has by far fewer MSS than any other NT book.

Complete collations of all NT books are desperately needed. Furthermore, only about 20% of all NT MSS [manuscripts] have published collations and transcriptions. How can we honestly speak about “knowledge of documents” without doing complete collations of them? At present, the work to collate all Greek NT MSS would take about 400 man-years. In short, the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few!<sup>53</sup>

Students are encouraged to take a class in NT text criticism to develop deeper knowledge and personal proficiency in the practice of text criticism. Although usually only a small percentage (5 percent?) of students find that they are fascinated by text criticism, perhaps you belong to this select group.

## Recent Trends in Text Criticism

In recent years, prominent NT text critics (e.g., Bart Ehrman, Eldon Jay Epp, David Parker) have attempted to redirect the discipline away from determining the original reading of the NT text. Instead, these scholars have called for a study of textual variants as a window into the theological, ecclesiastical, and cultural world in which the documents were copied (and altered). The variants, thus, are a worthy end in themselves. Often this new approach has been combined with an unwarranted skepticism and sensationalistic claims about the wide influence of tendentious scribes.<sup>54</sup>

While not neglecting the worthy study of textual variations in their own right, the long-established discipline of text criticism should lead us to affirm the value and confidence of studying ancient manuscripts of the NT to determine the original reading of the text. In responding to some of the more recent fads in text criticism, Moisés Silva astutely writes:

In conclusion, I would like to affirm—not only with Hort, but with practically all students of ancient documents—that the recovery of the original text (i.e., the text

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<sup>53</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, “Challenges in New Testament Textual Criticism for the Twenty-First Century,” *JETS* 52 (2009): 97. According to text critic Elijah Hixson, of the 304 extant manuscripts of Revelation, Hoskier only collated 228 (all he had access to at the time). Recently, Tommy Wasserman has collated virtually all known continuous-text manuscripts of Jude. See *The Epistle of Jude: Its Text and Transmission*, Coniectanea Biblica: New Testament Series 43 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2006). Matt Solomon, a PhD graduate of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, accomplished the same feat for the book of Philemon (private conversation with Elijah Hixson, January 8, 2015).

<sup>54</sup> E.g., Bart D. Ehrman’s *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005). For a rebuttal of Ehrman’s claims, see Andreas Köstenberger, Darrell Bock, and Josh Chatraw, *Truth Matters* (Nashville: B&H, 2014); and the more detailed version by the same authors, *Truth in a Culture of Doubt* (Nashville: B&H, 2014).

in its initial form, prior to the alterations produced in the copying process) remains the primary task of textual criticism. Of course, it is not the only task. The study of early textual variation for its own sake is both a fascinating and a most profitable exercise. And it is also true that we have sometimes been sloppy in our use of the term *original text*. But neither these truths nor the admittedly great difficulties involved in recovering the autographic words can be allowed to dissolve the concept of an original text.<sup>55</sup>

## Theological Considerations

Scholars debate what role *a priori* theological commitments should play in academic study. Nevertheless, if Jesus Christ is the climax of God’s revelation of himself (as you are likely to affirm if you are reading this text), it seems reasonable to surmise that God would provide an accurate and enduring record of that definitive revelation (cf. John 16:12–15). This logical necessity is furthermore supported by data—lots of it. A massive number of ancient NT manuscripts, their overwhelming similarity, and the ability to arrive at virtual certainty as to the text’s original wording through comparative analysis (i.e., text criticism) leads us to affirm God’s preservation of his authoritative Word.<sup>56</sup> The words of British paleographer Sir Frederic G. Kenyon nicely summarize the state of NT textual criticism:

It is reassuring at the end to find that the general result of all these discoveries and all this study is to strengthen the proof of the authenticity of the Scriptures, and our conviction that we have in our hands in substantial integrity, the veritable Word of God.<sup>57</sup>

TEXT CRITICISM: RECOMMENDED WEBSITES	
WEBSITE	CONTENTS
csntm.org	Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts. Executive Director, Dan Wallace
nobts.edu/cntts	H. Milton Haggard Center for New Testament Textual Studies, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
ntgateway.com	Website overseen by NT scholar Mark Goodacre; includes helpful section of text criticism links
evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.com	Forum to discuss biblical manuscripts and textual history from an evangelical perspective

<sup>55</sup> Moisés Silva, “Response,” in *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. David Alan Black (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 149. For a similar view of recent fads, see Wallace, “Challenges in New Testament Textual Criticism,” 79–100.

<sup>56</sup> D. A. Carson notes, “Almost all text critics will acknowledge that 96, even 97 percent, of the Greek New Testament is morally certain. It’s just not in dispute.” See “Who Is This Jesus? Is He Risen?” a documentary film hosted by D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe (Fort Lauderdale, FL: Coral Ridge Ministries, 2000).

<sup>57</sup> Frederic G. Kenyon, *The Story of the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 113.



## SUMMARY

HISTORY OF THE GREEK LANGUAGE	
FORM OF LANGUAGE	DATES
Proto Indo-European	Prior to 1500 BC
Linear B or Mycenaean	1500–1000 BC
Dialects and Classical Greek	1000–300 BC
Koine Greek	300 BC–AD 330
Byzantine Greek	AD 330–AD 1453
Modern Greek	AD 1453–present

COMMON CHANGES IN GREEK FROM CLASSICAL TO KOINE PERIOD	
CHANGE	EXAMPLE FROM GNT
First aorist endings appear on second aorist verb stems	ἐγὼ δὲ εἶπα· τίς εἶ, κύριε; (Acts 26:15). Then I <b>said</b> , “Who are You, Lord?” (Acts 26:15).
Less common use of optative mood	ἐμοὶ δὲ μὴ γένοιτο καυχᾶσθαι εἰ μὴ ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Gal 6:14). <b>may it never be</b> that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (Gal 6:14 NASB).
Increased use of prepositions	εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ εὐλογήσας ἡμᾶς ἐν πάσῃ εὐλογίᾳ πνευματικῇ ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ (Eph 1:3). Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us <b>with</b> every spiritual blessing <b>in</b> the heavens in Christ (Eph 1:3).
-μι verbs appear with omega verb endings	τὰ πτώματα αὐτῶν οὐκ ἄφίουσιν τεθῆναι εἰς μνήμα (Rev 11:9). They did not <b>permit</b> their bodies to be put into a tomb (Rev 11:9).
Disappearance of φ and ϕ	καλέσω τὸν οὐ λαόν μου λαόν μου καὶ τὴν οὐκ ἠγαπημένην ἠγαπημένην (Rom 9:25). Those who were not my people I <b>will call</b> “my people,” and her who was not beloved I will call “beloved” (Rom 9:25 ESV).
Greater use of paratactic style	Cf. 1 John and James.
Change in meaning of comparative and superlative forms	μετάγεται ὑπὸ ἐλαχίστου πηδαλίου ὅπου ἡ ὄρμη τοῦ εὐθύνοντος βούλεται (Jas 3:4). They are guided by a <b>very small</b> rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs (Jas 3:4).
Semantic shifts in specific words	σύ δὲ λάλει ἃ πρέπει τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ διδασκαλίᾳ (Titus 2:1). But as for you, <b>speak</b> the things which are fitting for sound doctrine (Titus 2:1 NASB).

TEXT-CRITICAL CRITERIA	
EXTERNAL CRITERIA	INTERNAL CRITERIA
Favor the older manuscripts.	Favor the reading that best fits the literary context.
Favor the reading supported by the majority of manuscripts.	Favor the reading that corresponds best with writings by the same author.
Favor the reading best attested across manuscript families.	Favor the reading that best explains the origin of the other variants.
	Favor the shorter reading.
	Favor the more difficult reading.

ERRORS IN THE GNT	
UNINTENTIONAL ERRORS	
TYPE	EXPLANATION
Errors of sight	Scribe glancing back and forth between manuscripts makes an error.
Errors of hearing	Scribe listening to dictated manuscript makes an error.
Errors of writing	Scribe makes an error in writing that cannot be attributed to a mistake in copying by sight or listening.
Errors of judgment	Scribe wrongly judges what to copy—incorporating a marginal note into the text, for example.
INTENTIONAL ERRORS	
TYPE	EXPLANATION
Revision of grammar and spelling	Orthographic or grammatical correction by a scribe.
Harmonization of passages	Deleting or incorporating material so that the passage corresponds with a parallel text (in the Synoptic Gospels, for example).
Elimination of difficulties	Deletion or revision of a perceived error.
Conflation of texts	Scribe incorporates two or more variant readings into his manuscript.
Adaption of liturgical tradition	Addition of liturgical material to text.
Theological or doctrinal change	Scribe omits or adds material to avoid perceived theological difficulty.

CRITICAL EDITIONS OF THE GNT	
TEXT	CHARACTERISTICS
United Bible Society, 5th edition (UBS <sup>5</sup> )	Eclectic critical text. Notes only significant variants, but provides extensive textual data and an A, B, C, or D ranking. Edition primarily intended for pastors and translators.

CRITICAL EDITIONS OF THE GNT	
<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , 28th edition (Nestle-Aland <sup>28</sup> or NA <sup>28</sup> )	Same NT text as UBS, but noting many more variants through a system of symbols incorporated into the text. Fewer textual witnesses provided than in the UBS. Aimed at the academic community.
<i>Editio Critica Maior</i> (ECM)	Eclectic critical text of the NT that provides comprehensive manuscript data for the first thousand years of the church. Only the Catholic Epistles, Acts, and a short volume on parallel Gospel pericopes have been completed. Material from ECM is gradually being incorporated into Nestle-Aland and UBS.
International Greek New Testament Project (IGNTP)	Using the <i>textus receptus</i> as a base, the IGNTP provides nearly exhaustive manuscript evidence for all ancient witnesses. Only the Gospel of Luke has been completed. Two volumes on the Gospel of John (papyri and majuscules) have been published.

## PRACTICE EXERCISES

In the first five sentences, label the grammatical or orthographic (spelling) shift in Koine Greek represented by the underlined word(s) in each sentence.

- καὶ βλέπουσιν ἐκ τῶν λαῶν καὶ φυλῶν καὶ γλωσσῶν καὶ ἐθνῶν τὸ πτώμα αὐτῶν ἡμέρας τρεῖς καὶ ἡμισυ καὶ τὰ πτώματα αὐτῶν οὐκ ἀφίουσιν τεθῆναι εἰς μῆμα (Rev 11:9).
- οἱ δὲ εἶπαν αὐτῷ, ἐν Βηθλέεμ τῆς Ἰουδαίας· οὕτως γὰρ γέγραπται διὰ τοῦ προφήτου (Matt 2:5).
- ἰδοὺ καὶ τὰ πλοῖα τηλικαῦτα ὄντα καὶ ὑπὸ ἀνέμων σκληρῶν ἐλαυνόμενα, μετάργεται ὑπὸ ἐλαχίστου πηδαλίου ὅπου ἡ ὀρμὴ τοῦ εὐθύνοντος βούλεται (Jas 3:4).
- τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ γεννηθέντος ἐν Βηθλέεμ τῆς Ἰουδαίας ἐν ἡμέραις Ἡρώδου τοῦ βασιλέως, ἰδοὺ μάγοι ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν παρεγένοντο εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα (Matt 2:1).

5. ὡς καὶ ἐν τῷ Ὡσηὲ λέγει, Καλέσω τὸν οὐ λαόν μου λαόν μου καὶ τὴν οὐκ ἠγαπημένην ἠγαπημένην· (Rom 9:25).

In each of the following five examples, (1) translate the passage both as it stands in the body of the NA<sup>28</sup>/UBS<sup>5</sup> and with the selected textual variant in parentheses. (2) In one brief sentence, note the difference in meaning that the variant makes. (3) Record which manuscripts support the variant reading provided in parentheses. (4) Why do you think the editors of your GNT favored the reading that they did? If you have the UBS edition, what letter ranking did the editorial committee assign to their choice? If you have access to Metzger's *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, check his explanation.

6. Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ τοῖς ἀγίοις τοῖς οὖσιν [ἐν Ἐφέσω] (*variant: omit bracketed words*) καὶ πιστοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (Eph 1:1).
7. καὶ ταῦτα γράφομεν ἡμεῖς (ὕμῖν), ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν (ὕμῶν) ἢ πεπληρωμένη (1 Jn 1:4).
8. αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ κύριος τῆς εἰρήνης δόξη ὑμῖν τὴν εἰρήνην διὰ παντὸς ἐν παντὶ τρόπῳ (τόπῳ) (2 Thess 3:16).
9. δικαιοθέντες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως εἰρήνην ἔχομεν (ἔχομεν) πρὸς τὸν θεὸν διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Rom 5:1).
10. ἰδοὺ βάλλω αὐτὴν εἰς κλίνην (φυλακίαν) καὶ τοὺς μοιχεύοντας μετ' αὐτῆς εἰς θλίψιν μεγάλην, ἐὰν μὴ μετανοήσωσιν ἐκ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς (Rev 2:22).

## VOCABULARY

## Vocabulary to Memorize

ἀπαγγέλλω	I announce, proclaim, report (45)
ἀποδίδωμι	I give away, pay, return (48)
ἄρα	so, then, consequently (49)
ἄφεσις, -εως, ἡ	forgiveness (17)
ἄχρι	until (conj. or prep. + gen.) (49)
βάπτισμα, -ατος, τό	baptism (19)
δεύτερος	second (43)
διακονέω	I serve (37)
διέρχομαι	I go through, cross over (43)
ἐκπορεύομαι	I go out, come out (33)
ἐνδύω	I clothe myself, put on, wear (27)
ἐπιγινώσκω	I know, understand, recognize (44)
ἔρημος, ἡ	desert, wilderness (48)
ἐτοιμάζω	I make ready, prepare (40)
ἔτος, -ους, τό	year (49)
εὐδοκέω	I am well pleased, approve (21)
Ἡσαΐας, ὁ	Isaiah (22)
θηρίον, τό	animal, beast (46)
θλίψις, -εως, ἡ	tribulation, affliction, oppression (45)
θρίξ, τριχός, ἡ	hair (15)
ικανός	qualified, able (39)
Ἰορδάνης, -ου, ὁ	the Jordan (15)
ἰσχυρός	strong, mighty, powerful (29)
καθίζω	I cause to sit down, appoint (46)
κρατέω	I grasp, hold (fast), arrest (47)
μετάνοια, ἡ	repentance (22)
ναός, ὁ	temple, sanctuary (45)
ὅμοιος	like, similar (45)
ὀπίσω	after, behind (35)
οὐαί	woe (46)
οὐκέτι	no longer (47)
πειράζω	I tempt, test (38)
ποταμός, ὁ	river (17)
πρό	before, in front of, at (gen) (47)
προσφέρω	I bring to, offer (47)
Σατανᾶς, -ᾶ, ὁ	Satan (36)

σταυρόω	I crucify (46)
τεσσαράκοντα	forty (22)
φυλακή, ἡ	watch, guard, prison (47)
χώρα, ἡ	district, region (28)

## Vocabulary to Recognize

ἄγριος	wild (3)
ἀκρίς, ἴδος, ἡ	locust (4)
βοάω	I call, shout, cry out (12)
δερμάτινος	(made of) leather (2)
ἐξομολογέω	I confess, admit (10)
εὐθύς	straight (8)
ζώνη, ἡ	belt (8)
Ἰεροσολυμίτης, -ου, ὁ	inhabitant of Jerusalem (2)
ἱμάς, -άντος, ὁ	strap, thong (4)
κάμηλος, ὁ	camel (6)
κατασκευάζω	I make ready, prepare (11)
κύπτω	I bend down (2)
μέλι, -ιτος, τό	honey (4)
Ναζαρέτ, ἡ	Nazareth (12)
ὀσφῦς, -ῆ	waist (8)
περιστερά, ἡ	dove, pigeon (10)
σχίζω	I split, divide, separate, tear apart (11)
τρίβος, ἡ	path (3)
ὑπόδημα, -ατος, τό	sandal (10)

## READING THE NEW TESTAMENT

## Mark 1:1–13

<sup>1</sup> Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [υἱοῦ θεοῦ]. <sup>2</sup> Καθὼς γέγραπται ἐν τῷ Ἡσαΐα τῷ προφήτῃ: ἰδοὺ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου, ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδὸν σου. <sup>3</sup> φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ: ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ, <sup>4</sup> ἐγένετο Ἰωάννης [ὁ] βαπτίζων ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ καὶ κηρύσσω βάντισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεςιν ἁμαρτιῶν. <sup>5</sup> καὶ ἐξεπορεύετο πρὸς αὐτὸν πᾶσα ἡ Ἰουδαία χώρα καὶ οἱ Ἱεροσολυμίται πάντες, καὶ ἐβαπτίζοντο ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ ποταμῷ ἐξομολογούμενοι τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν. <sup>6</sup> καὶ ἦν ὁ Ἰωάννης ἐνδεδυμένος τρίχας καμήλου καὶ ζώνην δερματίνην περὶ τὴν ὀσφύν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐσθίων ἀκρίδας καὶ μέλι ἄγριον. <sup>7</sup> Καὶ ἐκήρυσσεν λέγων· ἔρχεται ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου ὀπίσω μου, οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἰκανὸς κύψας λῦσαι τὸν ἱμάντα τῶν ὑποδημάτων αὐτοῦ. <sup>8</sup> ἐγὼ ἐβάπτισα ὑμᾶς ὕδατι, αὐτὸς δὲ βαπτίσει ὑμᾶς ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ. <sup>9</sup> Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις ἦλθεν Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ Ναζαρετ τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ ἐβαπτίσθη εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην ὑπὸ Ἰωάννου. <sup>10</sup> καὶ εὐθὺς ἀναβαίνων ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος εἶδεν σχιζομένους τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα ὡς περιστερὰν καταβαίνον εἰς αὐτόν· <sup>11</sup> καὶ φωνὴ ἐγένετο ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν· σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα. <sup>12</sup> Καὶ εὐθὺς τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτὸν ἐκβάλλει εἰς τὴν ἔρημον. <sup>13</sup> καὶ ἦν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ τεσσαράκοντα ἡμέρας πειραζόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ σατανᾶ, καὶ ἦν μετὰ τῶν θηρίων, καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι διηκόνουν αὐτῷ.

Reading Notes<sup>58</sup>

## Verse 1

- **Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ** (“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ”) – This is the opening title of Mark’s Gospel. ἀρχή is a nominative absolute because it is grammatically unrelated to the rest of the sentence. In addition, ἀρχή is definite even though it is anarthrous since as the initial word in the opening title it is sufficiently specific without the article (cf. Matt 1:1; Rev 1:1).<sup>59</sup> Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is most likely an objective genitive, “the gospel *about* Jesus Christ,” or a genitive of content, referring to the written work whose subject or content is Jesus Christ.<sup>60</sup>
- **[υἱοῦ θεοῦ]** (“the Son of God”) – As the brackets indicate, υἱοῦ θεοῦ is missing in some key manuscripts, so the editors felt uncertain as to its

<sup>58</sup> The English version used in the Reading Notes for this chapter is the CSB.

<sup>59</sup> See Robertson, 781, 793.

<sup>60</sup> So BDF, 90 (§163); Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 41. Wallace labels Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ a “plenary genitive,” indicating that this is probably both an objective and subjective genitive (121).

authenticity. The reading Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ is attested by Codex Alexandrinus (A, υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ), Codex Vaticanus (B), Codex Bezae (D), and an ancient correction to Codex Sinaiticus (ℵ<sup>1</sup>).<sup>61</sup> The omission of υἱοῦ θεοῦ in certain manuscripts may be due to the similarity in endings of the *nomina sacra* (abbreviations for common words such as “Christ” or “God”), which scribes used in the first few centuries of the church when copying manuscripts.<sup>62</sup> The genitive phrase υἱοῦ θεοῦ, if original, stands in apposition to Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in order to define further the identity of Jesus. In the remainder of his Gospel, Mark does not join the name Jesus with Χριστός but instead always uses Χριστός as a title (e.g., 8:29).

## Verse 2

- **γέγραπται** (“it is written”) – Per pass ind 3rd sg γράφω. This could be translated “it stands written” since the focus of the perfect is on the present results of the past action.
- **ἐν τῷ Ἡσαΐα τῷ προφήτῃ** (“in Isaiah the prophet”) – The syntactical function of the phrase τῷ προφήτῃ, a dative of apposition, is to identify Isaiah as a prophet, highlighting the fulfillment of his prophecy in the coming of John the Baptist. Some manuscripts (A W f13) read ἐν τοῖς προφήταις which is a clear attempt of a scribe to “fix” the text since the author quotes from Isaiah *and* Malachi. Early Jewish sources conflated texts in this way, so Mark is following the literary conventions of his day. Metzger notes, “The quotation in verses 2 and 3 is composite, the first part being from Mal 3:1 and the second part from Is 40:3. It is easy to see, therefore, why copyists would have altered the words ‘in Isaiah the prophet’ (a reading found in the earliest representative witnesses of the Alexandrian and Western types of text) to the more comprehensive introductory formula ‘in the prophets.’”<sup>63</sup>
- **ἰδοὺ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου, ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδόν σου** (“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, he will prepare your way”) – This is actually a quotation of Mal 3:1, but in the next verse Mark cites Isa 40:3. Most likely because Isaiah

<sup>61</sup> To see the correction added over the original scribe’s writing (ℵ\*) in Codex Sinaiticus, go to [www.codexsinaiticus.org](http://www.codexsinaiticus.org).

<sup>62</sup> Metzger comments, “The absence of υἱοῦ θεοῦ ℵ\* Θ 28<sup>c</sup> *al* may be due to an oversight in copying, occasioned by the similarity of the endings of the *nomina sacra*. On the other hand, however, there was always a temptation (to which copyists often succumbed) to expand titles and quasi-titles of books. Since the combination of B D W 1ℵ in support of υἱοῦ θεοῦ is extremely strong, it was not thought advisable to omit the words altogether, yet because of the antiquity of the shorter reading and the possibility of scribal expansion, it was decided to enclose the words within square brackets.” See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (New York: UBS, 1994), 62.

<sup>63</sup> Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 62.



was the major prophet, Mark prefaces this dual citation by saying “As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,” not explicitly identifying Malachi as his first source. *πρὸ προσώπου σου* (literally, “before your face”) is a Semitism and may be translated “ahead of You.”<sup>64</sup> *κατασκευάσει* is a fut act ind 3rd sg of *κατασκευάζω*.

### Verse 3

- **φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ** (“A voice of one crying out in the wilderness”) – This now begins the quote from Isa 40:3. The anarthrous noun *φωνή* may be translated as either indefinite (CSB) or definite (ESV). In the original context of Isa 40:3, the precise identity of the voice is left unspecified. *βοῶντος* (pres act ptc masc gen sg *βοάω*) is a substantival participle (“of the one crying out”).
- **ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ** (“Prepare the way for the Lord; make His paths straight!”) – The quotation includes two imperatives, *ἐτοιμάσατε* (aor act impv 2nd pl *ἐτοιμάζω*) and *ποιεῖτε* (pres act impv 2nd pl *ποιέω*). The adjective *εὐθείας* (“straight,” at the beginning of the clause for emphasis) is associated with *τρίβους*.

### Verse 4

- **ἔγένετο Ἰωάννης [ὁ] βαπτίζων ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ καὶ κηρύσσων** (“John came baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming”) – Some manuscripts do not include the article *ὁ*, while others do not include the *καί*. Without the article, *βαπτίζων* (pres act ptc masc nom sg *βαπτίζω*) functions as an adverbial participle and is coordinate to *κηρύσσων* (“baptizing . . . and proclaiming”). With the article, *ὁ βαπτίζων* functions as a substantival participle (“[John] the one baptizing” or “[John] the Baptist”). A few manuscripts (most notably **ℵ**) include both the substantival and adverbial use of *βαπτίζων* in this verse. Perhaps the regular use of *ὁ βαπτιστής* as a title for John (e.g., Mark 6:25) encouraged the addition of the article with *βαπτίζων*, so that it functions as a title.<sup>65</sup>
- **βάπτισμα μετανοίας** (“baptism of repentance”) – *μετανοίας* is a descriptive genitive, specifying which kind of baptism John was administering.
- **εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν** (“for the forgiveness of sins”) – *ἁμαρτιῶν* is an objective genitive. That is, the sins are not doing the forgiving (which would be subjective genitive), they are being forgiven.

<sup>64</sup> So Robertson, 621; Moulton & Turner, 4:16.

<sup>65</sup> See Stein, *Mark*, 52–53.

## Verse 5

- **καί** (“and,” not translated in CSB) – Mark begins approximately two thirds of his sentences with **καί**, a distinctly Markan style.
- **ἔξεπορεύετο . . . ἐβαπτίζοντο** (“were going out . . . were baptized”) – Impf mid ind 3rd sg ἐκπορεύομαι / impf pass ind 3rd pl βαπτίζω. The two imperfect verbs convey the habitual or repetitive (iterative) nature of people coming to John and being baptized by him. Also notice that the compound subject (πᾶσα ἡ Ἰουδαία χώρα καὶ οἱ Ἱεροσολυμίται πάντες) has a singular verb (ἔξεπορεύετο), a common feature in Greek. The technical term for this pattern is a Pindaric construction.
- **ἔξομολογούμενοι** (“as they confessed”) – Pres mid ptc masc nom pl ἐξομολογέω. A temporal adverbial participle expressing an action that is contemporaneous with ἐβαπτίζοντο (“they were being baptized . . . as they confessed their sins”).

## Verse 6

- **ἦν . . . ἐνδεδυμένος** (“wore”) – This is a periphrastic construction with the imperfect of εἶμι and the perfect participle ἐνδεδυμένος expressing a pluperfect verbal idea (“had been clothed” or perhaps more accurately with an emphasis on the results that existed in the past: “was clothed,” i.e., “wore”).<sup>66</sup> Since ἐνδύω normally takes a double accusative, τρίχας and ζώνην remain as accusatives after the passive form of ἐνδύω. John’s attire characterizes him as a prophet like Elijah (cf. 2 Kgs 1:8; Zech 13:4).
- **ἦν . . . ἐσθίων** (“and ate”) – This is another periphrastic construction, in this situation composed of the imperfect of εἶμι and the present participle ἐσθίων expressing an imperfect verbal idea, denoting the customary or habitual nature of John’s diet of locusts and wild honey (“was eating”). Note the large number of rare vocabulary words in this verse.

## Verse 7

- **ἐκήρυσσεν** (“He proclaimed”) – impf act ind 3rd sg κηρύσσω.
- **ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου** (“someone more powerful than I”) – ἰσχυρότερος (nom masc sg) is a comparative adjective of ἰσχυρός (“strong”), followed by the genitive of comparison μου (“than I”).
- **οὐκ οἶμι ἰκανὸς κόψασαι λῦσαι τὸν ἱμάντα τῶν ὑποδημάτων αὐτοῦ** (“I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of His sandals”) – The syntax of this sentence is a bit awkward in the original (literally, “Of

<sup>66</sup> Wallace, 647–48.

whom I am not worthy having stooped down to loose the strap of His sandals”) and is typically smoothed out by the existing English translations. κύψας (aor act ptc masc nom sg κύπτω, “bend down”) conveys attendant circumstance (with the aor inf λῦσαι; “to stoop down and untie”; so most translations). The inf λῦσαι clarifies the way in which John considers himself to be unworthy (epexegetical inf). Removing another person’s sandal was a menial task similar to footwashing (cf. John 13:14).

### Verse 8

- **ἐγὼ . . . αὐτὸς δέ** (“I . . . but He”) – ἐγὼ adds emphasis and when juxtaposed with αὐτὸς δέ is used for contrast (“I baptized . . . but *he* will baptize”).
- **ὔδατι . . . ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ** (“with water . . . with the Holy Spirit”) – Most English translations render these phrases to communicate instrumentality/means (though ὔδατι may be a dative of sphere/space; i.e., “in water”).

### Verse 9

- **Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις** (“In those days”) – Many translations (such as the CSB and the ESV) do not translate the phrase καὶ ἐγένετο, a Semitic construction similar to “and it came to pass” (Judg 19:1; 1 Sam 28:1; cf. Mark 2:15, 23; 4:4).<sup>67</sup> The phrase is often used to introduce a new narrative phrase or a new character (in this case, Jesus) into the story. Notice also the contrast between the many coming to John from Judea and Jerusalem (1:5) and the lone individual coming from Galilee (1:9).
- **εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην** (“in the Jordan”) – The preposition εἰς is used where ἐν might be expected (literally, “into the Jordan”; cf. ἐν in Matt 3:6). As reflected throughout Mark, by the time of the NT these two prepositions were used interchangeably.<sup>68</sup>

### Verse 10

- **καὶ εὐθύς** (“As soon as”) – A Markan favorite (42 occurrences), εὐθύς (adv, “immediately”) may draw attention to a dramatic event (in the present instance, the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on Jesus like a dove). See also v. 12.

<sup>67</sup> See Moulton & Turner, 4:16.

<sup>68</sup> BDF, 110–11 (§205); Moule, 68; Robertson, 525, 592–93.

- **ἀναβαίνων . . . καταβαῖνον** (“He came up . . . descending”) – These two participles (pres act ptc masc nom sg ἀναβαίνω and pres act ptc neut acc sg καταβαίνω) are temporal adverbial participles.
- **σχιζομένους** (“torn open”) – Pres pass ptc masc acc pl σχίζω. This verb appears only here and at 15:38 in Mark’s Gospel, in the latter passage for the tearing apart of the temple veil. In both contexts, the “tearing open” is followed by a declaration of Jesus’s identity as the Son of God (1:11; 15:39). There is also a possible allusion to Isa 63:19. The placement of the anarthrous ptc σχιζομένους before τοὺς οὐρανοῦς forms a chiasm with τὸ πνεῦμα preceding καταβαῖνον.

### Verse 11

- **σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός** (“You are my beloved son”) – The allusion is to Ps 2:7 LXX (though note the different word order): υἱός μου σὺ εἶ. According to Gundry, “Mark puts σὺ, ‘you,’ in first position to accent the identification of Jesus as God’s Son.”<sup>69</sup> Moreover, υἱός . . . ἀγαπητός indicates Jesus’s special relationship with God, implying that he is his *only* Son.<sup>70</sup>
- **ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα** (“with you I am well-pleased.”) – εὐδόκησα (aor act ind 1st sg εὐδοκέω), while in the aorist, is certainly present-referring (“with you I am *now* well pleased” not “with you I *was* well pleased” *in the past*), commonly referred to as a gnomic use of the aorist.

### Verse 12

- **ἐκβάλλει** (“drove”) – This is the first of approximately 150 historical presents in Mark’s Gospel, vividly portraying the action of the Spirit driving Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (cf. the use of aorist and imperfect forms of [ἀν]άγω in the parallel accounts in Matthew [4:1, ἀνήχθη] and Luke [Luke 4:1, ἤγετο]).
- **εἰς τὴν ἔρημον** (“into the wilderness”) – Jesus’s sojourn into the wilderness may be reminiscent of the “voice in the wilderness” in v. 3 and John the Baptist’s baptizing ministry “in the wilderness” in v. 4 (see also v. 13).

### Verse 13

- **ἦν . . . πειραζόμενος** (“was . . . being tempted”) – The imperfect of εἰμί here could function either in periphrastic construction with the pres

<sup>69</sup> Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 49.

<sup>70</sup> See first numbered definition of ἀγαπητός in BDAG, 7.

pass ptc *πειραζόμενος* (“was in the wilderness 40 days being tempted”; NASB) or adverbially (“was in the wilderness for 40 days, being tempted”; so CSB, NIV). In the latter case the participle would most likely convey purpose: Jesus was tempted in keeping with God’s plan.<sup>71</sup> Mark does not specify *how* Jesus was tempted as do Matthew (Matt 4:1–11) and Luke (4:1–13).

- **τεσσεράκοντα ἡμέρας** (“40 days”) – An accusative of time, Jesus’s “40 days” in the wilderness portrays him in contrast to the people of Israel who were tested in the wilderness for 40 *years*, often failing the test.
- **διηκόνουν** (“were serving him”) – Impf act ind 3rd pl *διακονέω*. The verb *διακονέω* is in the imperfect tense, here indicating the ongoing service of the angels to Jesus.

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<sup>71</sup> Wallace notes, “Almost every instance of an adverbial *πειράζων* in the present tense in the NT that follows the controlling verb suggests purpose” and includes Mark 1:13 (636 n. 60).