

How we got our Bible

Week 4

Wrap up from last time

- *Book of Enoch*: read from handout
- *The NT Apocrypha*: read from Metzger chapter 7

Which Old Testament text?

The Masoretic text.

Virtually universal agreement within the church and with Jewish scholars.

Which New Testament text?

All camps have the same “data”: the Greek **manuscripts**.

There are over 5,600 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament with the earliest dating to around AD 130, which would be less than 100 years after the original was penned and could be as little as 40 years.

Most of the 5,600 manuscripts are fragmentary, preserving a few verses or a few books. Only about 50 contain the entire New Testament.

In addition, there are over 19,000 copies in the Syriac, Latin, Coptic, and Aramaic languages. The total supporting New Testament manuscript base is over 24,000.

So if everyone uses the same data, why are there different Greek texts?

The manuscripts don't always agree. In fact no two manuscripts agree in every detail.

The differences that arise are called **textual variants**.

For certain verses of scripture, the manuscripts provide several different readings.

Here is an example

Rom 8:1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
NASU

Rom 8:1

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

KJV

This is NOT a translation issue. There is a difference in the underlying Greek texts used for the NAS and for the KJV.

What is the correct reading?

There are different theories about how to determine that.

The Greek manuscripts of the New Testament are generally grouped together into “**text-types**”.

This means that the manuscripts belonging to a particular text-type all reflect the same variants at crucial passages, and have the same general pattern of development.

If a manuscript reflects two or more text-types, it is said to be mixed.

What follows is the most common general classification of text-types.

Research continues, and there are debates about what the text-types should be and how to assign the individual manuscripts to the text-type.

In any event, here are the widely-accepted text-types of the Greek New Testament:

1. **The Byzantine text.** This is the textual tradition which, in large measure, stands behind the King James Version. It was largely preserved in the Byzantine Empire, which continued to use Greek, unlike the Western Roman Empire and its successor states, for which Latin was the common language. There are far more manuscripts in this text-type than in the other three combined. On the other hand, most of these manuscript witnesses are relatively late.
2. **The Western Text.** There is considerable scholarly dispute about this text-type. Some scholars hold that the Western text is the creation of a group of scribes whose work developed in more rather than less confusion as each generation of scribes toiled without knowledge and care. A few contend for an individual scribe at the heart of this tradition. Others argue that the text-type is not homogeneous enough to be considered a true category, and suggest that the manuscripts classified under the “Western” title sprang from fairly wild and undisciplined activity.
3. **The Caesarean text.** This text-type probably originated in Egypt and may have been brought to Caesarea by Origen. It boasts a unique mixture of Western and Alexandrian readings, prompting some scholars to question the value of calling it a text-type.
4. **The Alexandrian text.** This text-type was probably prepared by trained scribes, most likely in Alexandria Egypt and its regions. F.J. A. Hort called its prime witnesses the “Neutral” text and ascribed to them a preeminence that has been somewhat disputed by later research. Nevertheless, the Alexandrian text has some excellent credentials of its own. It has also come under very harsh criticism particularly by those who defend the Byzantine text and the King James version of the English Bible.