

# Is the Bible Reliable? What about Mark?

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] of us, let's go ahead and open up to Mark. We kind of finished up Mark as far as looking at the text, but one of the things we're going to do today is look in the margins of the book of Mark and really talk about this long ending of Mark in particular, but also in general there are, for many of you, as you're reading through your Bible, you might see in the margins notes that talk about little discrepancies or variants in our Bibles. We're specifically going to focus on the New Testament this morning, but I'd like to look at kind of a big picture of, whoa, what are these variants all about? Is it something that should cause us to distrust our Bible?

We're going to provide some of the big picture context about all that and some of these different variant readings. We'll look at Mark 16 in particular, and then we're just going to talk about how to think about these kinds of disputed passages. The first thing I'd like to do, I use a New King James Bible. Anybody else use the New King James? How about the King James? Okay, many of you King James. NASB, yep, a bunch. We actually have the Bibles that we have here at the church underneath the seats are all NASB, those black Bibles. In fact, I might ask you to pull those out later, but I looked up some of the margin notes for, in my Bible, the New King James, and I also looked up the NASB, but if you look up in Mark chapter 16, where we've been studying, in fact, let me read it directly from my Bible. Here's what it says in the margin, referencing Mark chapter 16, verse 9. It says this, verses 9 through 20 are bracketed in NU as not in the original text. They are lacking in Codex

Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, although nearly all other manuscripts of Mark contain them. Well, that is quite a mouthful, a lot of big words and strange words in there. The NASB is quite a bit more brief, and it says this, later MSS, which by the way stands for manuscripts, later manuscripts add verse 9 through 20. And so, what in the world does all that mean? So, that's what we're going to get into today. We'll talk about some of those, more about those abbreviations, those kind of big words, Sinaiticus and Vaticanus as we go along.

I want to talk about, start briefly with just the importance of preserving Scripture. The Bible itself speaks about God's Word, and it's talking about Scripture itself, the written Word. Not always is when the Bible speaks of God's Word, is it talking about the written Word, but many times, in fact, I think most of the time, it is. And so, should we really be concerned with preserving the literal words of the Bible? Is it maybe just well enough that we just try to preserve the ideas? Because really, what's the most important thing when it comes to the Word of God? It's understanding what is meant, right? The ideas behind it. So, is it really that big of a deal to try to preserve the individual words? Well, let's look at a few passages that speak to this, because I'd like to make a case that it is important, and I think God sees it as important, to preserve the actual letters and words that He inspired for us in our Bibles. Start with Deuteronomy chapter 4, verse 2.

Go ahead and open up to Deuteronomy. That's the fourth book in the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. And then after that is Numbers. Thank you. But we're going to look at Deuteronomy chapter 4 and verse 2. Chapter 4 and verse 2. The context here is Moses is giving the law.

[ 4 : 35 ] Deuteronomy is a book in which he is repeating the law that God gave him to the people of Israel. But here's what Deuteronomy chapter 4, verse 2 says. You shall not add to the word which I commanded you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God, which I commanded you. Now, in the context, this is talking specifically about the law of Moses. Not the whole Bible, but just the law of Moses. But it is demonstrating just how much God is concerned about preserving His word. Two things, right? Adding to it or subtracting from it. And those are two concerns that we would have with the Bible. And there have been attempts over the years, some are well-known, some lesser-known, to add to the Bible. Do you know that there are, we have four Gospels in our Bible. Do you know that there are probably a dozen other Gospels?

But they're not in our Bible. And why are they not in our Bible? Well, because they're fakes, they're forgeries, they're attempts to add something to the Bible that God did not intend. We won't talk about those specifically, but I just wanted to use that as a point in that there are people over the years who have attempted to add things or take things away from the Bible.

The next is, so we're looking at the beginning of the Bible. Let's go to the very end, the last book of Revelation. And the last chapter in Revelation, Revelation chapter 22 and verse 18. Revelation 22, in verse 18. Again, the one that we read in Deuteronomy is about the law of Moses. This one is speaking specifically about this letter or this book of Revelation. But we can apply it, I think, to the whole Bible because it shows God's intention for his word. Revelation 22, 18, for I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book. And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the book of life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. Wow, that's some serious business. Again, these are actually some warnings about what will happen to those who dare try to change the words specifically in this book of Revelation. I want to look at a couple more passages. The next one is in Proverbs. So Proverbs is right about in the middle of your Bible. We're going to look at the very last chapter, Proverbs chapter 30.

Or I guess the second to last chapter. These are the words of, what is it, Agar or Agur, the son of Jacob.

But he says this in verse 5, verse 5 and 6. Every word of God is pure. He is a shield to those who put their trust in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you, and you be found a liar.

[ 8 : 09 ] The last verse we're going to look at is the words of Jesus. Turn to Matthew. It's the very first book in the New Testament. Matthew chapter 5.

And Jesus is teaching people that he's talking to, his audience, the importance of keeping the law of Moses and that part of his purpose is not to take away the law of Moses or in some way abrogate the law of Moses.

And so as part of that point, he says this in Matthew chapter 5, verse 17. Do not think that I came to destroy the law or the prophets.

I did not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

Some of you may know that these terms jot and tittle, they sound funny. We don't use those in our regular English, but they are references to just little parts of the characters of letters.

[ 9 : 27 ] Typically, we illustrate those with our dotting of I's and crossing of T's. The jot and tittle were similar in that respect. So here, Jesus is saying, he's speaking to even the individual characters in the law of Moses.

That none of those things, not one of those little characters will be done away with until everything is fulfilled. So there's a reference here to the words of God and even the individual characters of God's word.

And so it's important. And throughout Christian history, many, many people have seen the importance of preserving God's word and have put a ton of effort into making sure that the words that God gave us, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, are the words that were originally written down.

The next thing I'd like to do is talk about how we got our Bibles today. I'm specifically going to focus on the New Testament. But as we talk through this, I'm going to talk about some terms that we'll kind of use throughout this message.

So with each of the books of the New Testament, there was an author. Sometimes we know who the author is. Sometimes the book or the letter says who the author is.

[ 10 : 48 ] Sometimes it's unclear. There are ways to try to figure it out. Some, it's just highly disputed. But regardless of who the author is, there was an original author who actually took ink in a pen on some parchment or paper and wrote the words down.

We call that original pen and paper the original autographs. So there was some original made by that original author. In this case, we call this book the book of Mark.

This is a little bit unclear. Most people think this was John Mark who is described in the book of Acts. And people, many people think that he got, because he was very close with Peter, that he got a lot of his accounting from Peter directly.

But Mark, whoever Mark was, was the one who originally wrote down this account of the life of Jesus. But then, that account, that letter or document was then copied and distributed.

And over the years, more copies were made and more copies were made based on the original language that it was written in, which is Greek. All of the New Testament was written originally in the Greek language.

[ 12 : 10 ] It's an ancient Greek. You can go to Greece today and they speak Greek, but it's very different from the ancient Greek that would have been used at this time of the Bible. We call it, or it's called Koine Greek is the name of that kind of ancient version of the Greek language.

So, over the years, and we actually find that very early on, the texts that make up our New Testament were identified as authoritative, as Scripture, just like the Old Testament Scripture.

Jesus, when Jesus mentioned Scripture, he's always talking about the Old Testament. But, the early Christians identified some of these accounts about Jesus, the letters of Paul, the letters from some of the other apostles, as also Scripture.

In fact, we find that at least in one place, Peter talks about Paul's writings and he mentions them as Scripture. So, even internally, there's a reference to these being Scripture.

Very early on, the books in the Bible that we have, or the New Testament anyway, were identified as Scriptural, as authoritative, as divinely inspired, and there was effort put in to maintain very, very good copies, very accurate copies.

[ 13 : 35 ] And so, they were copied by scribes in the original language that they were written in, from Greek to Greek, word for word. Now, at this point, all the original autographs, those, the original ink and paper that was first used, they're all gone.

At least, we don't know where they are. If they're still around, we haven't found any of those. And so, all we have left today are copies.

And many of these are copies of copies. And so, some have questioned, well, how can we know that the copies that we have are legitimate?

Also, what happened very early on was that these copies of the letters were translated into some of the languages that were popular back in that day.

So, we actually have today many translations of the original Greek letters or documents into ancient languages.

[ 14 : 44 ] In fact, we actually have more translations of the Bible into other languages than we have of the copies of the original Greek. These copies that we have thousands of, we have thousands of these old copies of the original Greek texts have variations.

Most of the time, very, very minor. But you can imagine how challenging it would be to take a text, and this happens not just with the Bible but any kind of ancient text, the works of Shakespeare, Homer, whatever it might be, wherever you find multiple copies, you'll find little variations, differences, between the copies that have been made.

And so, what do you do when you're trying to translate that into like a different language where you have these little variations between, let's say you have a hundred copies, and as you read through, maybe, maybe 80 of them have a certain word, word, but 20 have a different word.

What do you do? How do you do that? Do you go with the majority, or do you look at other things? These are the kinds of things we're going to talk about. But variations were introduced, and so one of the things that has happened throughout history is there have been master documents created that looks at all of these discrepancies, these little minor discrepancies, and tries to create a master document that translators can use to then translate the Bible from, just to make it easier, because who wants to, there's 5,000 manuscripts, you know, who wants to look through each and every one of those every time you want to make a translation of the Bible, right?

And so these kind of master documents are used as a baseline for translating our Bibles. We'll talk a little bit more about some of the different translations, and there's actually three of these kind of major baseline manuscripts that have been put together, and we'll talk about those in just a moment.

[ 17 : 01 ] There is a whole field of study called, or practice, practice and study called textual criticism. It's an academic discipline that is all about what we just talked about, looking at copies and trying to determine of all these copies, which readings, which variations are the ones that were originally penned, originally written down.

It can be a challenge, but that's what the whole practice of textual criticism is all about. Let's talk about these Greek manuscripts that we have.

We have about 5,000 Greek manuscripts of the Bible across the last 2,000 years. They range from the second century, so the 100s, this is within just a couple of generations of when they were written.

In fact, we have some small fragments that are within one generation of when they were written. but they range from the second century to the 15th century.

These are the Greek manuscripts that are used for the translations of the Bible. The oldest of these copies that we have are just fragments of pages.

[ 18 : 23 ] You can imagine why, right? The older they are, the more time comes in to destroy these copies. But the oldest fragments are within 50 to 100 years of the original writings, which is pretty great.

In fact, it's a closer copy than we have of any other ancient document. So I think after the Bible, the next largest ancient text that we have copies for is the writings of Homer, like the Iliad, what was the other one that Homer did?

I can't remember. The Odyssey, is that Homer? And I think the time span between when he originally wrote it and the earliest copy we have is 400 years.

400 years. Whereas with the Bible, we actually have copies that are much closer to the original than that. The oldest complete copy that we have of the New Testament was produced around the year, between the year 325 and 350.

So that's very, very close. That is a complete copy of almost the whole New Testament. There's a few little things missing, but almost the whole complete New Testament.

[ 19 : 48 ] Interestingly enough, we are still finding ancient documents today. In fact, many of the oldest documents that we have found, that we have today, the ones that are like the one I just described from 325, were discovered just in the last 200 years.

And so there may be discoveries even in the next 10, 20, 30 years, we might find something even older or just more copies in different places that we can use as part of this collection.

So those are the manuscripts that we're talking about. The next thing to look at is what are variants? And that's a term you'll look at when it comes to translating the Bible and looking at the original text.

These variations, these variants, these are differences between any two copies of a document. And when it comes to all these copies and the number of variants, there are actually thousands of variants among all of these copies that we have of the Greek manuscripts.

And so that sounds kind of scary, right, with all these discrepancies. But let's dive in a little bit deeper. I think we can look at these discrepancies, these variants, in three different categories.

[ 21 : 18 ] The first category is looking at discrepancies where the difference is viable, like it's not clear which one is the right one.

And so it's a viable discrepancy that we should kind of take a close look at. And it's not meaningful. So it's really unclear.

There's a dispute. There's some kind of dispute between scholars, which one is the right one. But really, it doesn't make much of a difference. And so in this category, most of the time, these have to do with spelling differences, right?

And so even in English, like we have British spellings and American spellings. And so with these kinds of things, there's lots of little variations in spellings throughout these copies, but for the most part, they're just not meaningful.

It's the same word, and nobody is unclear on what the word is. That accounts for 75%. That category accounts for 75% of the differences we have in these copies.

[ 22 : 36 ] So the vast majority, the bulk. The next category accounts for about 24%. That gets us to 99%.

And that category is differences, variances that are meaningful, but not really disputed. It's pretty clear to everybody which one is the right one.

And so you might have 100, out of 100 documents, you have 99 that show one word, and one that has a different word.

And it's very clear to everybody, well, somebody, that one, just he kind of messed up, right? He screwed up in some kind of way. And sometimes these are, they added an extra letter to the beginning or ending of a word, and sometimes that actually changes the word, right?

When you add a letter to the beginning or end. And the same way with Greek. So that's the other 24%. They're a meaningful difference, but everybody's pretty clear which one is the actual word word that should be in the Bible, which is the original, from the original autograph.

[ 23 : 47 ] So that leaves us with really less than 1%, where we have both a disputed either word or section, sometimes sentence or phrase, and it's somewhat meaningful.

I will say this when it comes to meaningful, there are really no passages that are disputed that really have any kind of huge impact on Christian doctrine, on how we are expected to live the Christian life, how we are expected to come to the Lord in faith, salvation, things like that.

So, but, when it comes, but people want to preserve those words of God, want to try to get to the original. So when it comes especially to that 1%, there are debates and differences about how we try to determine what they are.

So like I said, there are these compiled manuscripts that we use as like the master documents that we use for translation. And there are three of these major documents.

And I don't want to say individual documents because there are actually different versions of them and all that, but kind of three collections, if you will. Let's talk about these three.

[ 25 : 12 ] And this is going to come into play in kind of some of the notes and the acronyms or abbreviations that you see in the margin of your Bible. The first one we'll look at is a collection called the Textus Receptus.

The Textus Receptus. This is a collection or a master document that was put together back in the 1500s.

This is what was used to translate the King James Bible in or about 1611. We have the 1611 King James Bible. We won't go too much into the history, but King James put together a committee of scholars to translate the Bible into English to have an official translation.

There were other English translations before it, but everybody wanted kind of an official one. The king kind of stepped in to create that. In the previous hundred years, there was a man named Erasmus who had put together this.

He had a series of original texts, Greek manuscripts, actually a pretty small number. People think it was probably less than a dozen. He used those books to create a master document that is today called the Textist Receptus.

[ 26 : 33 ] He didn't call it that, but others who kind of carried on his work labeled it that. The next kind of collection or group is we call the majority text.

The majority text is a kind of looks at all these copies of the Greek manuscripts that we have, 5,000 of them, about 5,000, and kind of takes this approach.

While we have so many of these manuscripts, let's look at what the majority, when we have any kind of difference or variation, let's just look at what the majority of the texts or the copies go with.

If 98% of them go with this word, then that's what we're going to go with in our master document. We're just going to ignore the exceptions, the ones that are in the minority.

And so that's kind of the general approach when it comes to the majority text, and that's where it gets its nickname, is from majority text, hey, we're looking at the majority. What do the majority of these texts say?

[ 27 : 50 ] But the majority of the texts that we have are not as ancient as what is called the minority texts. So the majority of texts are from around like between, really I would say the vast majority are between the 12th century and the 15th century, the 12th century and the 15th century.

The majority texts, I will say when you, well let's talk about the minority texts texts, or what is also called the critical texts first. So there is another collection or a master document that's been created really just in the last 200 years called the critical text or the minority text.

And it's called that as a distinction between the majority texts. And it is, takes a little bit of a different approach. and the idea, it has these rules that it follows.

There's a list of like a dozen different rules for how to try to come up with that original, what was the original Greek rendering of this text based on all these copies.

We won't get into all the details, but in general the very first principle that they follow is the more ancient it is, the more reliable it is.

[ 29 : 12 ] So that, the critical text tends to prefer, in fact really heavily prefer, the older texts, the ones that I mentioned that are from the 300s or the 400s.

And if there's any differences between those and the majority text, it tends to prefer the earlier ones. In most cases, it actually tends to prefer just two of the oldest.

And this is where those big words come in, the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Vaticanus. And again, these are texts that have been found just recently, the Sinaiticus just in the last 200 years.

The Vaticanus has actually been part of the Vatican for several hundred years. I think it's something like 500 years. But both of those are mostly complete. the other thing to consider, and sorry for all the level of detail, but these details are things you'll find in the margin of your notes, so I want to at least address them, is the majority texts are primarily from an area or an era and a region called Byzantine.

And so you'll see that term used. They're sometimes called the Byzantine texts, and we have tons of those. The older ones are from an area in Egypt called Alexandria, and so they're called Alexandrian texts.

[ 30 : 45 ] There are two kind of general differences that people have found between the Alexandrian texts, which are older and much fewer, and the Byzantine texts, which are not as old, but we have much more copies.

This big difference, or the kind of general difference that they have found, is that when there are differences, the Alexandrian text tends to omit things, and the Byzantine tends to have a more expanded variation.

So you'll typically find with the majority text or the Byzantine text that there is an extra word or sometimes an extra verse there that is not in the critical text or the Alexandrian text, and then obviously vice versa.

So the majority texts tend to be more expansive, and the critical text tends to omit things that are in other copies. All right, everybody take a deep breath.

That's kind of the big picture of how people approach, how scholars have approached this area of textual criticism. One final note about that is many of you maybe have heard or are familiar with the King James only controversy, and so there are some who say that the King James Bible is the only inspired, if you will, authoritative English version of the Bible.

[ 32 : 15 ] So most Christians would say, hey, the original autographs were inspired, but the scribes that copied, they were not inspired in their copying.

and so most Christians and Christian scholars would accept that it's possible that the mistakes were made in the copying process and would say that of all of these master documents that have been created over the years, the three that we mentioned, that none of them are perfect, that we're all kind of working with imperfection, and so, but there are those in the King James only kind of camp that would say, no, we think, and they'll point to certain scriptures, we won't look at them today, that God didn't just inspire the original authors, but he also will and has preserved his word through the copying process as well, and so if that's the case, then there, you know, if there's differences among these different collections, then one of them must be the right one, and so basically, 100% of the time,

I think, they look to the Textus Receptus, which is that master document that the King James Bible was based on, so just a little bit of inside information on that, if you've ever heard that, one of the reasons, the Textus Receptus, one of the publishers, actually wrote this about the Textus Receptus, in the preface, and they say, so you hold this text now received by all in which nothing is corrupt, that's what the publisher said about the Textus Receptus, that's why we call it the Textus Receptus, it says, you now hold this text, Textus, now received by all, Receptus, received, but then they add this, in which nothing is corrupt, that's quite a claim, I would be very hesitant myself to say that about my own copying work or transcription work or work of textual criticism, but that's what at least a publisher claimed, and so some have said, well, we believe that that's true.

All right, what we're going to do next is we're going to look specifically at this passage in Mark, what's going on with this passage in Mark? Mark, man, I spent a lot more time on this than I was expecting because there is so much regarding this.

We talked about some of these variants between the majority text and the critical text, and that actually plays in, but it's not the only thing that plays in. So let's look at some of the areas of consideration and why this is so disputed about whether this is original to the original author.

[ 35 : 19 ] So the first thing we'll look at is the Greek manuscripts. What do the Greek manuscripts have? So big picture is the vast majority of Greek manuscripts that we have include the longer ending of Mark, the vast majority.

The only ones that don't, really, are two, and it's these two really old ones from the fourth century.

And they're the ones that we brought up in the very beginning that are mentioned in my margin. The codex, codex by the way just means book. A codex is different from a scroll.

They had two ways of basically creating books. One was a scroll, right? The other is a bound book. A codex just means a bound book. Most of the copies, almost all the copies that we have of Greek manuscripts are in that bound book form.

But basically every Greek manuscript that we have includes longer ending of Mark, except these two that are very, very old, of the oldest.

[ 36 : 33 ] It is interesting to note, though, that there are some that are very close to that same ancient era that do include that longer ending of Mark.

So, some Bibles will say this. They'll say that the most trusted versions or most trusted manuscripts don't include it. And I'd like to just insert here, maybe we'll talk about this in a little bit, but that's a judgment call, right, on what's the most trusted.

So, just keep that in mind. Oddly enough, some people have noted, that these two manuscripts that don't have the longer ending of Mark include a generous amount of empty space at the end of Mark.

And it's not typical of other sections of the Bible. So, when you look at these ancient copies, there is this huge amount of space at the end of Mark.

It's just empty. And when you look at the end of other books of the Bible, you don't see nearly as much space. And so, it's kind of odd and interesting. It's as if they left it blank, but there's this idea that, you know, something might go there, right?

[ 37 : 52 ] And so, some people have pointed that out. Some other lines of evidence regard early translations. We have our English translation of the Bible.

really, the English translation of the Bible is fairly recent. One of the earliest translations into English was maybe four or five hundred years ago. But in the very first century, or second century anyway, the Bible was translated from the Greek into some of these early popular languages back then.



Syriac, Coptic, Gothic, Ethiopic, Armenian, and then in around the three hundreds, four hundreds, it was copied or translated into Latin. Latin was actually very popular, the most popular language especially for scholars for many, many, many centuries.

And so, we can actually go back and look at these ancient translations, these early translations and see, well, what did they do? Those who were translating from the Greek to, let's say, Syriac, did they include the longer ending of Mark?

And what we find is, and by the way, we actually have more copies of these translations. We have about 15,000 copies of these old translations, whereas we have 5,000 copies of the Greek.

[ 39 : 16 ] So, we have about three times as many ancient translations of the Bible than we have the original copies. And so, some people say, well, let's look at these ancient translations and see what they include.

The vast majority of these ancient translations include the longer ending of Mark. They're there. There are, however, a few that don't include it.

So, the vast majority of these ancient translations of the Bible, of the New Testament, include the longer ending Mark. A few do not. The next thing that people will look at is some of the early Christians created liturgy books that are called lectionaries.

If any of you have ever attended kind of more of a, kind of an old order church, they have liturgies where you have your day of the month or week or the year, and you have some specific readings, scriptures you're supposed to read.

The Catholic Church does this, Lutherans, Anglicans, etc. and so the Common Book of Prayer, by the way, is an Anglican document or a book where you have liturgy for each week of the year.

[ 40 : 32 ] And so these have been around for a long time. So we have copies of these going back to the second and third century of these books that were used and they contain scripture. Well, many of these lectionaries that we have preserved contain the longer ending of Mark as part of their reading plan, if you will.

So there's evidence that even those books that had copies of scriptures in them included them. The other thing to look at is the writings of early church fathers.

One thing to note is that this dispute or question about the longer ending of Mark has been a dispute for a very long time. There was a guy whose name is Eusebius who lived around the year 300 and he actually writes about this dispute over the long ending of Mark.

This is back just a handful of generations after the Bible was written. And what he says is he says most of the manuscripts that he has of the Greek don't contain the longer ending of Mark.

Most of the ones that he had back around 300 don't contain it. But a few do. And so he actually included it and thought it should be included.

[ 41 : 58 ] There's another guy named Jerome who lived about 100 years later. Jerome is famous for creating the Latin translation of the Bible. We call it the Vulgate.

Vulgate just means it's the language of the common people. It's not anymore but it was back then. And he basically reiterates Eusebius' note and says that that's his experience too is that most manuscripts that he has available to him do not contain the longer ending of Mark.

The last thing that people look at is some style differences. When you read that longer ending of Mark especially in the original language people note that it's just like different from the rest. It just doesn't seem like it's the same author.

There are grammar differences, word usage differences, and people who are experts in language have more of an eye or ear to identify those types of things.

Sometimes you can see in writing like we might think about it like an accent or a way of speaking that is just different. And so they look at those texts and they say it just seems like somebody else wrote it.

[ 43 : 05 ] Now some say well I agree with you it does look like somebody else wrote it but does that mean that it shouldn't be there? That it wasn't inspired? Maybe actually Mark was the author but he had Peter write the last part or write the first part or whatever it might be.

And so those are some of the things that kind of go into the debate. With all of that as a big picture and that's kind of explaining things I want to ask this question is our Bible reliable?

The copies that we have today the translations that we have today. There are again lots of these little discrepancies. For the most part they really don't make a difference.

The disputes are fairly few and far between. And there's been a lot of care and attention put into preserving the Bibles that we have today. There are skeptics for sure.

A lot of times especially the popular skeptics when it comes to the Bible have pretty shallow arguments. A lot of times they use the illustration of the game of telephone right and they say well you know when you translate the Bible is a translation of a translation of a translation of a translation and that's just not true at all.

[ 44 : 24 ] The Bible we have copies of the original language copied over and over and over again. and so there is reason to believe that the copies that we have today the original copies the copies of the original Greek anyway are very very accurate.

In fact basically every scholar today both Christian and secular would say that these the texts that we have today we are we can trust are very very very close to the original that was written.

Even for the secular ones they don't believe that it was inspired but they still say the copies that we have are trustworthy replicas of what was originally written.

There are a few other disputed passages this one is probably one of if not the biggest dispute. The other big one is in the book of John about the woman caught in the act of adultery.

Familiar with that story? They brought her the Pharisees brought her to Jesus and they wanted to stone her and Jesus ended up forgiving her telling her to go and sin no more and had somewhat of a rebuke to the Pharisees but I'm not sure exactly how many verses it is but basically that whole account is disputed between different variations.

[ 45 : 56 ] there's also a passage in 1 John chapter 5 that references the Trinity and some people have tried to use that to there's some people that don't like the idea of the Trinity and so they've tried to throw shade on whether that should be included or not.

But as you read through the Bible you'll see in your margin hopefully I think any good Bible should have these kinds of things in their margin notes about these little discrepancies some of them are big very very few are big most of them are very very minor and so I think by looking at these few cases where we have kind of more of a significant variation I think we can use that to point to how the vast majority of the Bible is utterly undisputed by anybody and so what that says to me is that this book that we have this Bible that we have is trustworthy it's reliable because of the hard work of people who have spent the time to make it so one thing

I wanted to point out we won't look at any verses but Jesus actually quotes the Old Testament quite a bit in the Gospels and people have noted that when he quotes the Bible he usually quotes not the original Hebrew text but he actually quotes the translation in the Greek so a Greek translation was made of the Old Testament about three four hundred years before Jesus and they've noted that when he quotes the Bible he seems to quote word from word from that Greek translation called the Septuagint which no translation can ever be perfect right that's just the nature of language you can't translate from one language to another and always perfectly preserve the meaning but Jesus himself was very comfortable it seems quoting passages where there might have been little variations in that passage so to kind of wrap up in your margins you're going to find different notes about these passages that are disputed have any of you ever read the preface to your Bible most of us haven't and but a lot of times if you look at the go to the very beginning of your

Bible usually there's a page or two about the translation and what kind of is the general approach of the translation because each translation is different we won't get into that today but it also a lot of times talk about the Greek manuscripts that were used and why also sometimes the preface will have a little bit of like a legend in fact the Bibles in our pew Bibles here have something like that if you look at page VII which is Greek numeral seven you can see like a little legend of abbreviations and that's helpful if you ever see these little abbreviations in your margin note and aren't sure what they mean sometimes you can just go to the preface and it'll tell you what they mean but I wanted to just go over a few of the kinds of things that you'll find so sometimes you'll see an abbreviation called MS or MSS and that's just an abbreviation that just means manuscript or manuscripts plural and so it's just talking about these original Greek manuscripts sometimes you'll see TR

TR and that's actually a reference to the textus receptus another one that is in New King James I don't know if this is in others but it uses the abbreviation NU and that's just an abbreviation that really is a reference to the critical text of the Bible the N stands for Nestle Allen it's just the publishers or authors of the critical text today anyway and the U stands for the United Bible Society they actually also publish the same critical text and so those are like the foundational Greek text master document that is used for some Bibles the New King James and the King James use as their master document the textus receptus almost all the rest of the Bibles out there the ESV the NASB NIV many others use the critical text as the foundational basis for their translation and so usually the note that you'll see will say well the other text the one that this Bible is not based on has this or that and so it's explaining and I think that's helpful right to have those kinds of notes there are disputes hey let's be open about them and again most of the time it's you know sometimes it's word synonyms sometimes it says he instead of the proper name of somebody instead of saying Jesus walked to such and such it'll just say he walked to such and such it's obvious to everybody that it is Jesus but it's just a variation sometimes you'll see the letter

[ 51 : 30 ] M and that stands for majority text sometimes you'll see the word Alexandrian again that's these minority texts these older texts that the critical text of the Bible tends to prefer sometimes you'll see Byzantine which is a reference to these majority texts and then that Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus are just those really old almost fully complete copies and that's the one that really comes into play here with Mark those are the two that don't have that longer ending of Mark but basically everything else does including many old Alexandrian texts included sometimes you'll see things like some copies or most copies or a few copies say this and usually it's talking about some Greek text sometimes you'll just see the word or it's in the margin it'll reference a word and it will say or and it'll have a variant reading and it won't talk about where it comes from or anything like that so I'm just trying to provide some tools as we read our

Bible sometimes people read in the margin those kinds of things and don't really understand well where's all that coming from but the big picture idea is hey we can we can trust our Bibles but there are these little tiny discrepancies a lot of times they don't really make a huge difference in our understanding of the Bible a few times they are more major they affect multiple verses but very rarely is that the case so as a conclusion do I think that Mark 16 verse 9 through 20 should be in our Bible I think it should I think it should but I think it's appropriate to have a little note in there to note that some copies don't have it I think that's good and I think that should be the case in any Bible there is no perfect manuscript there just is not there's no perfect translation either every translation has strengths and weaknesses but regardless of that we can read our

Bibles and be confident that what we're reading is a reliable rendering of what God would want us to hear I'll finish with this you know I looked this up last night people do surveys right on different topics and people have done surveys on how many people read their Bible regularly and I look specifically at Christians about half of Christians read their Bible at least once a week about 50% of Christians read their Bible at least one time per week you know people have spent over the centuries some people have laid down their lives so that we could have the Bibles that we have today so that we can access God's word are we reading our Bibles you know some people say oh you have to read your Bible every day you know that's I think a good habit that's a tremendously good habit to read our Bible every day but we should be reading the

Bible on a regular basis to get God's word into our heart so with all these you know regardless of all these little variations are we consuming God's word are we putting it into our heart are we studying the Bible are we memorizing portions of it are we taking it seriously and are we seeking to understand what it says a perfect absolutely perfect copy of every jot and tittle is of no use if you don't read it right Paul says this to Timothy he says this in 2nd Timothy 2 15 this is a major passage we talk about a lot at this church be diligent or the King James says study to show yourself approved unto God a worker who does not need to be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth we need to be diligent in our reading and study of the

Bible the Bible will change your life but it's not going to change your life if it's sitting on a bookshelf or excuse me sitting on the coffee table we need to read it we need to consume it understand what it says and it will change our life to be more like him Jesus said this when he was being tempted by Satan in the wilderness he said this to Satan it is written man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God so hey it's a new year right it's time to start build new habits have new resolutions and so if reading the Bible regularly is not part of your regular routine hey let's look at opportunities to change that to make reading the Bible a regular part of our routine a habit that we form so that we can get God's word into our heart and be changed by it amen all right let's pray everybody father we love you thank you so much for giving us instructions for giving us understanding through these written words about yourself about your creation about your purpose in our lives thank you for all the men and women throughout history who have contributed to seeing your word preserved so that we can have have it today so that we can read it and study it

[ 57 : 22 ] I pray that you would work in each of our hearts that we would build these habits to consume to read your word to understand it and to have our lives changed by it we thank you for all that you have done for us in Jesus name amen