

Why are some verses that appear in the King James Version missing from the text of the New Living Translation and other modern translations?

This is not a simple question, since answering it must assume a fair amount of knowledge about Bible translation and how the Scriptures have been passed down to us from ancient times. Since many readers have asked this question, the following pages have been written to give some background on the issues. You can be certain that we have not excluded verses from the Bible out of carelessness or disrespect for God's Word. On the contrary, we have sought to translate the New Living Translation from the Hebrew and Greek texts as close as possible to the original inspired texts of Scripture.

The Holy Bible, New Living Translation is a modern-language translation of the ancient Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible. The original manuscripts of the Scriptures no longer exist, but there are thousands of ancient copies of those manuscripts available to scholars today. For the most part, the wording of the texts is identical between all the ancient manuscripts. But since these manuscripts were all copied by hand before the invention of the printing press, there are many small differences between them. Over time, differences were introduced by scribes in the copying process. Some were clearly simple mistakes; others were intentional explanatory additions. This adds an additional challenge for translators. They not only need to translate the text from an ancient language; they also must select the Hebrew and Greek texts from which the translation will be made. (The textual issues that concern most readers are in the New Testament, so the following comments will focus on the Greek New Testament texts.)

Most modern English translations differ with the King James Version and the New King James version on some fairly significant textual issues. The King James Version translators used a Greek text of the New Testament known as the Textus Receptus (which means, "Received Text"), commonly abbreviated as TR. This text came primarily from the compilation work of Erasmus, a noted Catholic textual scholar, who was a contemporary of Martin Luther. The Greek New Testament compiled by Erasmus was the first to be produced on the printing press, thus creating a new standard with multiple copies. (The printing press had only recently been invented.) When Erasmus compiled this text in the 1520s, he used five or six very late manuscripts dating from the 10th to the 13th centuries A.D. These manuscripts are far inferior to hundreds of other much earlier manuscripts that have been discovered by archaeologists during the past 200 years.

Some of the most significant, newly-discovered manuscripts of the New Testament are Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus, the Oxyrhynchus Papyri (nearly 50 manuscripts), the Beatty Papyri (P45, P46, P47), and the Bodmer Papyri (P66, P72, P75). These manuscripts, all dated before A.D. 350 (and many dated in the 2nd and 3rd centuries), preserve a text that is closer to the original writings than the later and inferior manuscripts used by Erasmus to compile the Textus Receptus. One of the primary differences is that the later manuscripts contain scribal expansions--that is, through the course of time, scribes added theological explanations, inserted liturgical information, or added verses to one gospel by borrowing from parallel passages in the other gospels. Some of these changes were originally introduced in the margin,

but then incorporated into the text by still later scribes. None of these additions could be considered heretical in content, but neither were they part of the original text.

In the past 150 years, scholars such as Tischendorf, Tregelles, Westcott and Hort, Nestle, and Aland have produced editions of the Greek New Testament based on the evidence of the earlier and superior manuscripts. In these editions, most of the scribal expansions that appear in the Textus Receptus have been eliminated. Thus, modern translations based on these Greek editions also differ from the King James Version and New King James Version, especially in the gospels, where most of the scribal additions occurred. Seen in this light, the reader must realize that modern translators have not removed anything from the Scriptures. Rather, they have simply translated a Greek text that is closer to the original Greek New Testament. If the translators of the King James Version were alive today, they would have done the same. In their day, they used the best Greek text available to them.

The translators of the New Living Translation used the two presently recognized standard editions of the Greek New Testament: the Greek New Testament, published by the United Bible Societies (fourth revised edition, 1993, often referred to as the UBS4 edition), and *Novum Testamentum Graece*, edited by Nestle and Aland (twenty-seventh edition, 1993, often referred to as the NA27 edition). These two editions, which have the same text but differ in punctuation and textual notes, represent the best in modern textual scholarship. The scholars have painstakingly studied the early manuscripts to reconstruct a New Testament Greek text as close to original as possible.

It is these two standard Greek New Testament texts, or related texts, that have been used by the translators of most modern translations, including:

New American Standard Bible (NASB), which generally used Nestle's 23rd and later editions;
New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which used the 3rd and 4th editions of the UBS text;
New International Version (NIV), which used an eclectic text similar to UBS4 and NA27;
New American Bible (NAB), which generally used Nestle-Aland's 25th edition.

Some of the differences between the ancient Greek New Testament manuscripts are reflected in twenty passages where verses included in the Textus Receptus are not included in the earliest manuscripts. These "extra" verses appear in the King James Version, which based its translation on the later Greek manuscripts. The editors of the UBS4 believe--and there is good evidence to support this belief--that these extra verses were not present in the original texts of Scripture. Since the New Living Translation is a translation of the UBS4 Greek text and the NLT translators in most instances agree with the UBS4 assessment, those verses were not included in the NLT text itself. But since those verses are included in several popular English translations (notably the King James Version and the New King James Version), the NLT translators felt that they should be included in the NLT footnotes.

Many of the passages in question are noted in the following pages. For a more complete discussion of these issues, further study will be necessary. The list of books at the end of this document should be helpful in this regard.

1. Matthew 6:13

In the earliest and best Greek manuscripts, the Lord's Prayer as recorded by Matthew does not include the traditional closing doxology.

Matthew 6:13

13And don't let us yield to temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*

*6:13 Or from evil. Some manuscripts add For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

2. Matthew 17:21 (see footnote at 17:20)

This verse is not included in the earliest and best Greek manuscripts. However, the text, as reflected in the NLT footnote for verse 20, is quite similar to the text of Mark 9:29, which is a parallel passage:

Matthew 17:20

20"You didn't have enough faith," Jesus told them. "I assure you, even if you had faith as small as a mustard seed you could say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it would move. Nothing would be impossible."*

*17:20 Some ancient manuscripts add verse 21, But this kind of demon won't leave unless you have prayed and fasted.

Compare Mark 9:29: Jesus replied, "This kind can be cast out only by prayer."

3. Matthew 18:11 (see footnote at 18:10)

This verse is not included in the earliest and best Greek manuscripts. However, the text, as reflected in the NLT footnote for verse 10, is similar in meaning to the text of Luke 19:10 (and compare John 3:17):

Matthew 18:10

10"Beware that you don't despise a single one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels are always in the presence of my heavenly Father.*

*18:10 Some ancient manuscripts add verse 11, And I, the Son of Man, have come to save the lost.

Compare Luke 19:10: And I, the Son of Man, have come to seek and save those like him who are lost.

Compare John 3:17: God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it.

4. Matthew 23:14 (see footnote at 23:13)

This verse is not included in the earliest and best Greek manuscripts. However, the text, as reflected in the NLT footnote for verse 13, is quite similar to the text of Mark 12:40 and Luke 20:47:

Matthew 23:13

13“How terrible it will be for you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you won’t let others enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and you won’t go in yourselves.*

*23:13 Some manuscripts add verse 14, How terrible it will be for you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! You shamelessly cheat widows out of their property, and then, to cover up the kind of people you really are, you make long prayers in public. Because of this, your punishment will be the greater.

Compare Mark 12:40: But they shamelessly cheat widows out of their property, and then, to cover up the kind of people they really are, they make long prayers in public. Because of this, their punishment will be the greater.

Compare Luke 20:47: But they shamelessly cheat widows out of their property, and then, to cover up the kind of people they really are, they make long prayers in public. Because of this, their punishment will be the greater.

5. Mark 7:16 (see footnote at 7:15)

This verse is not included in the earliest and best Greek manuscripts. However, the text, as reflected in the NLT footnote for verse 15, is identical to the text of several other passages that contain Jesus’ parables, including Mark 4:9 and 4:23:

Mark 7:15

15You are not defiled by what you eat; you are defiled by what you say and do!*

*7:15 Some manuscripts add verse 16, Anyone who is willing to hear should listen and understand.

Compare Mark 4:9: Anyone who is willing to hear should listen and understand!

Compare Mark 4:23: Anyone who is willing to hear should listen and understand!

6./7. Mark 9:44, 46 (see footnotes at 9:43b and 9:45)

These verses are not included in the earliest and best Greek manuscripts. However, the text that has been added in some manuscripts and translations at Mark 9:44 and 9:46 is identical to the text of Mark 9:48. This is reflected in the NLT footnotes for verses 43 and 45:

Mark 9:43, 45 43If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better to enter heaven* with only one hand than to go into the unquenchable fires of hell with two hands.* 45If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better to enter heaven with only one foot than to be thrown into hell with two feet.*

*9:43a Greek enter life; also in 9:45.

*9:43b Some manuscripts add verse 44 (which is identical with 9:48).

*9:45 Some manuscripts add verse 46 (which is identical with 9:48).

8. Mark 11:26 (see footnote at 11:25)

This verse is not included in the earliest and best Greek manuscripts. However, the text, as reflected in the NLT footnote for verse 25, is quite similar to the text of Matthew 6:15:

Mark 11:25

25“But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too.*”

*11:25 Some manuscripts add verse 26, But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your sins.

Compare Matthew 6:15: But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

9. Mark 15:28 (see footnote at 15:27)

This verse is not included in the earliest and best Greek manuscripts. However, the text, as reflected in the NLT footnote for verse 27, is quite similar to the text of Luke 22:37:

Mark 15:27:

27Two criminals were crucified with him, their crosses on either side of his.*

*15:27 Some manuscripts add verse 28, And the Scripture was fulfilled that said, “He was counted among those who were rebels.” See Isa 53:12.

Compare Luke 22:37: For the time has come for this prophecy about me to be fulfilled: ‘He was counted among those who were rebels.’ Yes, everything written about me by the prophets will come true.

10. Luke 9:55b-56 (see footnote at 9:55)

This verse is not included in the earliest and best Greek manuscripts. However, the text, as reflected in the NLT footnote for verse 55, is similar in meaning to the text of Luke 19:10 (and compare John 3:17):

Luke 9:55:

55But Jesus turned and rebuked them.*

*9:55 Some manuscripts add And he said, "You don't realize what your hearts are like. 56For the Son of Man has not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

Compare Luke 19:10:And I, the Son of Man, have come to seek and save those like him who are lost.

Compare John 3:17:God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it.

11. Luke 11:2-4

Some phrases included in traditional translations of Luke's Lord's Prayer are not included in the earliest and best Greek manuscripts. Many of the differences found between the early and later texts seem to reflect changes toward being more similar to the parallel verses in Matthew 6:9-13. The NLT footnote at verse 4 notes recognizes this.

Luke 11:2-4

2He [Jesus] said, "This is how you should pray:

"Father, may your name be honored.

May your Kingdom come soon.

3Give us our food day by day.

4And forgive us our sins--

just as we forgive those who have sinned against us.

And don't let us yield to temptation.*"

*11:2-4 Some manuscripts add additional portions of the Lord's Prayer as it reads in Matt 6:9-13.

12. Luke 17:36 (see footnote at 17:35)

This verse is not included in the earliest and best Greek manuscripts. However, the text, as reflected in the NLT footnote for verse 35, is quite similar to the text of Matthew 24:40, which is a parallel passage:

Luke 17:35:

35Two women will be grinding flour together at the mill; one will be taken, the other left.*"

*17:35 Some manuscripts add verse 36, Two men will be working in the field; one will be taken, the other left.

Compare Matthew 24:40:Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left.

13. Luke 23:17 (see footnote at 23:16)

This verse is not included in the earliest and best Greek manuscripts. However, the text, as reflected in the NLT footnote for verse 16, is similar in meaning to the text of Matthew 27:15 and Mark 15:6 (and compare John 18:39), which are parallel passages:

Luke 23:16:

16So I will have him flogged, but then I will release him.”*

*23:16 Some manuscripts add verse 17, For it was necessary for him to release one [prisoner] for them during the feast.

Compare Matthew 27:15: Now it was the governor’s custom to release one prisoner to the crowd each year during the Passover celebration—anyone they wanted.

Compare Mark 15:6: Now it was the governor’s custom to release one prisoner each year at Passover time—anyone the people requested.

Compare John 18:39: But you have a custom of asking me to release someone from prison each year at Passover. So if you want me to, I’ll release the King of the Jews.

14. John 5:3b-4 (see footnote at 5:3)

This material is not included in the earliest and best Greek manuscripts. In many ancient Greek manuscripts that do contain it, it is marked as a later addition to the text.

John 5:3:

3Crowds of sick people—blind, lame, or paralyzed—lay on the porches.*

*5:3 Some manuscripts add waiting for a certain movement of the water, 4 for an angel of the Lord came from time to time and stirred up the water. And the first person to step down into it afterward was healed.

15. Acts 8:37 (see footnote at 8:36)

This verse is not included in the earliest and best Greek manuscripts. While there is no parallel passage for the story of the Ethiopian eunuch, the content bears certain similarities to the Great Commission as found in Matthew 28:19 and to the conversion of the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:31-33:

Acts 8:36:

36As they rode along, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look! There’s some water! Why can’t I be baptized?”*

*8:36 Some manuscripts add verse 37, “You can,” Philip answered, “if you believe with all your heart.” And the eunuch replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

Compare Matthew 28:19: Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Compare Acts 16:31-33: They replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with your entire household." Then they shared the word of the Lord with him and all who lived in his household. That same hour the jailer washed their wounds, and he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized.

16. Acts 15:34 (see footnote at 15:33)

This verse is not included in the earliest and best Greek manuscripts. In describing the decisions made by the editors of the UBS4 Greek text, Bruce M. Metzger says, "The insertion . . . was no doubt made by copyists to account for the presence of Silas at Antioch in verse 40" (A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, United Bible Societies, 1971, p. 439).

Acts 15:33:

They stayed for a while, and then Judas and Silas were sent back to Jerusalem, with the blessings of the Christians, to those who had sent them.*

*15:33 Some manuscripts add verse 34, But Silas decided to stay there.

17. Acts 24:6b-8a (see footnote at 24:6)

These verses are not included in the earliest and best Greek manuscripts. When faced with differences between manuscripts, textual scholars try to determine which is more likely to reflect the original text. For instance, if the longer version was the original, they ask why a copyist might have deleted words from the text. Conversely, if the shorter version was the original, why might he have added text to it? Metzger says, "the abruptness of *ekratesamen* [the last Greek word before the added material] may have prompted a desire for addition and completeness, and it is difficult to account for the omission of the disputed words if they were original" (ibid., p. 490).

Acts 24:6:

Moreover he was trying to defile the Temple when we arrested him.*

*24:6 Some manuscripts add We would have judged him by our law, 7but Lysias, the commander of the garrison, came and took him violently away from us, 8commanding his accusers to come before you.

18. Acts 28:29 (see footnote at 28:28)

This verse is not included in the earliest and best Greek manuscripts. Metzger says, "The addition was probably made because of the abrupt transition from verse 28 to verse 30" (ibid, p. 502).

Acts 28:28:

28 So I want you to realize that this salvation from God is also available to the Gentiles, and they will accept it.”*

*28:28 Some manuscripts add verse 29, And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, greatly disagreeing with each other.

19. Romans 16:24 (see footnote at 16:23)

This verse is not included in the earliest and best Greek manuscripts. However, it may have been added by copyists who felt that the letter to the Romans was lacking a benediction similar to the benedictions found at the end of Paul’s other letters:

1 Cor 16:23; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 6:18; Eph 6:24; Phil 4:23; Col 4:18; 1 Thes 5:28; 2 Thes 3:18; 2 Tim 4:22; Titus 3:15; Philemon 1:25;

For example, note that the text, as reflected in the NLT footnote for verse 23, is nearly identical to the wording found at the end of Galatians and 1 & 2 Thessalonians:

Romans 16:23:

23 Gaius says hello to you. I am his guest, and the church meets here in his home. Erastus, the city treasurer, sends you his greetings, and so does Quartus, a Christian brother.*

*16:23 Some manuscripts add verse 24, May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Compare Galatians 6:18: My dear brothers and sisters, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Compare 1 Thessalonians 5:28: And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you.

20. First John 5:7

The last part of this verse as rendered in the KJV is not included in any of the earliest and best Greek manuscripts. There is clear evidence that the additional content was added at a late date.

1 John 5:7

7 So we have these three witnesses*--

*5:7 Some very late manuscripts add in heaven--the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. And we have three witnesses on earth.

For Further Reading and Study

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