

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 21 May 2023. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Not One Jot Nor Tittle (Part 2)

Matthew 5:18

Just before the Lord Jesus bowed His head and died, He cried, “*Tetelestai*”—“***It is finished!***” This was not a cry of defeat, but a shout of victory. Christ was proclaiming that the sins of mankind were now paid for in full. Immediately after Jesus shouted “***It is finished,***” the thick veil in the Temple was torn in half, thus showing that the New Covenant was now ratified, and that the way to the Father was now opened.

When Jesus cried, “It is finished,” *it really was finished!* By that one little word, *Tetelestai*, Jesus judged the prince of this world. Like a mighty cedar tree that has been cut down, Satan was defeated by that one word. And just in case Israel didn’t get the message, God *continued* to confirm Jesus’ word over the next 40 years. According to the Babylonian Talmud, the Jerusalem Talmud, and the records of Josephus, there were many strange happenings in the Temple during the last 40 years before the Temple was destroyed (in A.D. 70). For one thing, every night for those last 40 years, the main lamp of the Golden Lampstand went out. No matter how hard the priests tried to keep it burning, it kept snuffing out on its own. The enormous brass Temple gates (which were so heavy, that it took 20 men to open them) swung open every night, of their own accord. Also, on every Yom Kippur for those last 40 years, two ominous things happened. First, there was a red sash that the priests would tie to the horn of the scapegoat, and another one that they would tie to the door of the Temple, on the Day of Atonement; and for as long as anyone could remember, these two sashes had miraculously turned *white* after the blood was sprinkled by the high priest in the Holy of Holies. However, starting in A.D. 30, and continuing through A.D. 70, the sashes did *not* turn white even once. Also, the Jews considered it a bad omen if the lot for the LORD fell on the goat that was on the high priest’s *left* hand. Well, guess on which side the lot fell every year from A.D. 30 to A.D. 70? On the *left* hand! Even the priests and rabbis realised that all these things meant that God was *not* happy with Israel, and that soon, the Temple would be destroyed. Yet, they refused to believe that these signs had anything to do with their rejection of Jesus as their Messiah; and when Israel’s forty years of testing were up, God brought down His judgment upon the nation.

Do you see how important that one word, “*Tetelestai*,” is? That word, *tetelestai*, explains what Jesus meant when He said, “***Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.***” By the word *tetelestai*, we understand that all the ceremonial types and pictures of salvation in the Old Testament were *fulfilled in Jesus’ death on the cross*; and thus, they are not needed anymore. Aren’t you glad that God included that word *tetelestai* in Scripture, and that He *preserved* it for us? It is unthinkable that God would ever allow that one little word to be omitted from the pages of Scripture! Yet, what about *all God’s other words* in Scripture? Are there *any* of God’s words which are *not* important, and which we could afford to lose? No, there are not! In fact, Jesus tied His promise to *fulfil the Law* to His promise to *preserve every word of Scripture!* You can’t have one without the other!

In our study of the Sermon on the Mount, we have been learning about what Kingdom living looks like. We have been learning what it means to be “pure in heart.” However, before we learn more about purity of heart, we need to understand that “***the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.***” When we are confident that *all* the Word of God is pure and uncorrupted, we can be confident of how to live a pure life before God. This morning, we will continue in our investigation of how God has preserved His marvellous Word. The title of this message is ***Not One Jot Nor Tittle (Part 2)***.

Read Matthew 5:17-18.

I. The origin of the Critical Text

As I mentioned in week's message, there are two "families" of Greek New Testament text. The first family is called "**The Received Text**" (or, the *Textus Receptus*). It is also called "the Byzantine Text," "the Traditional Text," and "the Majority Text"; but "Received Text" is the one that really seems to stick. It is called "The Received Text" because it was *this text* that was generally received by God's people, right up until the mid-19th century. The sheer number of ancient manuscripts that we have of this text (about 5,500) shows that God's people regarded *this text* as God's Word, and passed it on! Jesus said of His disciples, "***For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them.***" This is the attitude that God's people should have. We should *receive* all Christ's words. How do we know which words are His? Because we have the Spirit of God; and through the Spirit, we are able to know the voice of our Shepherd. Jesus said, "***My sheep hear my voice.***"

Now, in next week's message, we will talk about the Textus Receptus; but before we do, we need to talk about the other family of texts. This family is called "**The Critical Text.**" There aren't many ancient manuscripts in the Critical Text family (only 40 or so); yet, it is this family of texts that most modern scholars love. The most important text in this family is the **Vaticanus Text**, which was discovered in the Vatican Library in 1481. (This text is also called "B.") Then, there is the **Alexandrian Text**, or **Sinaiticus Text** (which is also called *Aleph*). This text was discovered in 1844 by a man named **Constantin von Tischendorf**, in the St. Helen's monastery in the Sinai Peninsula. According to Tischendorf, he rescued this text from a rubbish bin just before it was ready to be burned! (Apparently, the priests didn't consider it to be a good copy of Scripture!) This is the official story: although it seems more likely that this text was a *forgery* made by a Greek paleographer named **Constantine Simonides**, who lived at that same time. To his dying day, Simonides insisted that *he* had made that ancient-looking copy of Scripture in 1844 while he was at that monastery, and that Tischendorf had stolen it from the priests, so that he could tell the world that he had found a "very ancient" copy of Scripture, and thus make himself famous. (By the way, Simonides had no reason to lie about this, because he was brutally mocked and vilified by the international press, who refused to believe his story.) As for the Vaticanus text, there is good reason to doubt that *it* was really from the fourth century, either. It appears to be a forgery from the Middle Ages.

However, regardless of how old these texts really are, one thing is for sure—they are both very corrupt! There are **140,521** Greek words in the Received Text; but the *Aleph* and B texts are nearly **10,000 words shorter** than the Received Text! *That* is how many words, phrases, sentences, and whole passages of God's Word were *omitted* by the men who made these copies of Scripture! Altogether, that is **7%** of the New Testament—the equivalent of **1 Peter** and **2 Peter**! By the way, Vaticanus and Sinaiticus don't even agree between each other. There are *thousands* of disagreements even between them. (They also disagree with the 30-some other texts in the Critical Text family.)

Now, the Critical text manuscripts are, for the most part, *older* than the Received Text manuscripts. Most of the known Critical Text manuscripts were copied between 200 to 400 A.D.—whereas most of the oldest Received Text manuscripts are from about A.D. 600 and later. There *is* one portion of **Matthew 26**, which we now know to be *the oldest* existing manuscript; and it dates to A.D. 66 (while the Apostles were still living)! It is called the **Magdalen Papyrus**; and it is a *Received Text* reading (the reading that you and I have in our KJV Bibles)! There are a few other very early Received Text readings that we now know about, as well. Nonetheless, most of the oldest known copies of Scripture do follow the Critical Text readings. Does this mean that they are "better" or "more accurate"? No. It

simply means that they *were not read or handled much*, and thus were much better preserved! God's people recognised that these texts were corrupted, and thus didn't use them.

Now, according to most scholars, these Critical Text readings are the *most accurate*, because they are the *oldest*. They say that the closer a manuscript is to the time of the Apostles, the more it will resemble what the Apostles actually wrote, since there would be less time for error to creep in. However, do you see a problem with this reasoning? They are assuming that God was *not* able to preserve His Word perfectly, and that 7% of the original readings have been lost! This reveals *unbelief*. The "scholars" say that we *don't* have all God's words; but God says otherwise. God promises severe judgment on those who tamper with His Word.

Read Revelation 22:18-19.

God made it clear that there would be men who *would* tamper with His Word. Otherwise, He wouldn't have put this warning right at the end of His Book! With this in mind, do we know any names of people who *did* mess with Scripture? Yes, we do: and I will tell you the number one culprit of all times. His name is **Origen**. Origen Adamantius was a scholar who lived in Alexandria, Egypt, in the 200's A.D. Origen was the third headmaster of a school in Alexandria, which was founded by a Greek philosopher named Pantaenus. Origen considered himself a "Christian" because he was baptised; but his beliefs were anything but Christian. He was thoroughly immersed in neo-platonic and Oriental cult teachings. Simply put, he was a Gnostic. He did *not* believe that Jesus is Almighty God in human flesh. He believed that the universe is an emanation from an impersonal being called "the one." This being called "the one" was *not* the personal Creator God that the Bible tells us about, but rather some kind of impersonal "force," with which man can be reunited by casting off the "prison" of human flesh, and progressing into the spirit realm, up some kind of spiritual "ladder," over many ages of reincarnation. Like modern Jehovah's Witnesses, he believed that the soul "sleeps" in the grave. He believed that baptism saves. He believed in a universal salvation for *all* beings (including Satan and his demons). He believed that the Father is "God" ("the one"), but that Jesus is a god with a "little" g (in other words, that he is a created being). He believed that to become sinless, you must go to purgatory. He believed in transubstantiation (that the bread and wine become the literal body and blood of Jesus). He believed in reincarnation and karma, and in the pre-existence of all souls prior to the existence of the world. He said that non-baptised infants are hell-bound. He denied that the temptations of Jesus really happened. In fact, he said that Scriptures are not to be interpreted literally, but allegorically. Origen denied the literal fall of Adam, the literal 6-day creation, and all the events of **Genesis 1-3**. He taught that salvation is *not* a gift, but that one must strive to earn it, and retain it. He also denied the physical resurrection of the body—the very bedrock of our faith! Many of Origen's followers even taught that Mary is the second person of the Trinity!

Needless to say, Origen was an apostate! And guess what his number one pursuit was, apart from writing commentaries? *Editing* the Scriptures! He *purposely* changed the Scriptures; and many Christian writers of his day reported that he did exactly that. Origen wrote a document called the "Hexapla," which had the Old Testament in six columns, side-by-side. The first column had the Hebrew Old Testament; but the other five columns were Greek translations of the Old Testament (including one that he himself made). Some of these translations were made by Ebionites (people who rejected Jesus' deity; who rejected all of Paul's epistles; and who distorted all the prophecies of the Messiah, so that they didn't appear to point to Jesus). As for the New Testament, he omitted, or changed, huge portions of it.

Now, the question is: “Have Origen’s corrupted Scriptures made their way into modern Bibles?” Yes, they have. You see, after Emperor Constantine declared himself the “head” of the Christian churches in the early 300’s, he commissioned a man named Eusebius to produce fifty Bibles, to be used in the churches of Constantinople (the new eastern administrative centre of the empire). And guess which Greek Scriptures Eusebius used? **Origen’s!** You see, Eusebius was an Arian. This means that he believed that Jesus is not God, but a created being. Naturally, an Arian like Eusebius would want to use the texts that were edited by an Arian like Origen! Later, many of the readings of this corrupted Greek text were incorporated into the Latin Vulgate, which was produced by Jerome in the 400’s; and the Vulgate became the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church. Then, in the 19th century, they made their way into *Protestant* Bibles, through the efforts of two Anglican priests named Westcott and Hort.

My friends, this is, in a nutshell, the origin of the Critical Text. Its origin was with *Origen*—a man who denied every foundational teaching of Scripture. Tragically, Origen was tortured by the Romans for his supposedly “Christian” faith; and he died from broken health in A.D. 253. However, he did not die as a martyr of the true Christ: he died as a religious, but lost, man.

II. What has been changed in the Critical Text?

I wish I had time to point out all the Scriptures that are deleted from the Critical Text; but if I did, we would be here for hours. So, I will begin by reading some of the *entire verses* that are left out of the Critical Text. I will simply read them in quick succession, back-to-back.

“Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (**Matthew 17:21**). “For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost” (**Matthew 18:11**). “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation” (**Matthew 23:14**). “If any man have ears to hear, let him hear” (**Mark 7:16**). “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (**Mark 9:44**). “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (**Mark 9:46**). “But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses” (**Mark 11:26**). “And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors” (**Mark 15:28**). “Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left” (**Luke 17:36**). “(For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.)” (**Luke 23:17**). “In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had” (**John 5:3-4**). “And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (**Acts 8:37**). “Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still” (**Acts 15:34**). “And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves” (**Acts 28:29**). “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” (**Romans 16:24**).

Now, these are not *all* the entire verses that are missing from the Critical Text. **Luke 24:12** is also missing. (This verse says, “*Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.*”) **Luke 24:40** is missing, as well. (This verse says, “*And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.*”) There are whole passages of Scripture that are left out of the Alexandrian and Vaticanus texts, as well. For example, **John 7:53 - 8:11** is left out. (These thirteen verses tell us about the woman who was caught in adultery.) **Mark 16:9-20** is also left out. (These 12 verses tell us about Jesus’ resurrection and

ascension.) Now, modern versions that are based upon the Critical Text *do* include these verses; but it is only because these passages are so large, that it would be too glaringly obvious to leave them out, without raising serious questions from the public. They do, however, include *footnotes* to inform you that “This passage is not included in the oldest and best manuscripts.” In other words, they are saying, “This passage isn’t really Scripture!”

It's obvious why men like Origen wouldn't have liked these passages, isn't it? The **John 8** passage teaches that salvation is by *God's grace and mercy*; but people who believe in a works-salvation cannot accept the fact that Jesus would actually forgive an adulteress, right on the spot. As for the **Mark 16** passage, it teaches the reality of Jesus' resurrection; and people who don't believe in a physical resurrection don't like such passages. They also don't like the names “Jesus” and “Lord.” “Lord” is missing about 39 times in most modern versions; and the name “Jesus” is eliminated 87 times. Words like “eternal,” “heaven,” “hell,” “blood,” “in Christ” (in relation to salvation), and many other words or phrases that have to do with Jesus' deity, are left out. Here is a small sampling of Scriptures in which *portions* of the verse are missing. (The omitted portions are in red text.)

Matthew 5:44: “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, **bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you,** and pray for them which **despitefully use you, and** persecute you.”

Matthew 6:13: “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: **For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.**”

Matthew 9:13: “But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners **to repentance.**”

Matthew 19:9: “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: **and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.**”

Matthew 20:16: “So the last shall be first, and the first last: **for many be called, but few chosen.**”

Mark 6:11: “And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. **Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.**”

Mark 10:21: “Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, **take up the cross,** and follow me.”

Mark 10:24: “And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it **for them that trust in riches** to enter into the kingdom of God!”

Luke 2:33: “And **Joseph** and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.” (The Critical Text changes “**Joseph**” to “his father,” thus leaving the impression that Joseph was Jesus' *actual* father.)

Luke 4:8: “And Jesus answered and said unto to him, **Get thee behind me, Satan:** for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”

Luke 9:54–56: “And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, **even as Elias did?** But he turned, and rebuked them, **and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.** And they went to another village.”

Luke 22:64: “And when they had blindfolded him, **they struck him on the face,** and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?”

John 3:15: “That whosoever believeth in him **should not perish,** but have eternal life.”

John 6:47: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth **on me** hath everlasting life.”

John 6:69: “And we believe and are sure that thou art that **Christ, the Son of the living God.**”

Acts 9:5–6: “And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: **it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.**”

Acts 13:42: “And when the **Jews** were gone out **of the synagogue, the Gentiles** besought that these words might be preached to

them the next Sabbath.” **Acts 23:9**: “And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees’ part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, **let us not fight against God.**” **Acts 24:6-8**: “Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, **and would have judged according to our law. But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, Commanding his accusers to come unto thee:** by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him.” **Romans 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.**” **1 Corinthians 5:7**: “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed **for us.**” **1 Timothy 6:5**: “Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: **from such withdraw thyself.**” **1 John 5:7-8**: “**For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.**” **Revelation 21:24**: “And the nations **of them which are saved** shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.” My friends, that is a *lot* of God’s words that have been removed! (And this is only a *small* selection!)

Now, most modern Bible scholars say that “No doctrine of Scripture is affected by these textual variants.” But is this so? Before we close this morning, I would like us to take a look at some passages that have been changed, and see if doctrine *have* been affected.

Read Matthew 19:16-17.

Why did Jesus ask this man, “**Why callest thou me good?**” He was trying to get him to realise *who He is*. He was saying, “If you call me ‘good,’ then you must acknowledge that I am *God*—because only God is good!” Yet, the Critical Text changes “**Why callest thou me good?**” to “Why do you ask me about *what is good?*” The focus on Jesus’ deity is removed!

Read Mark 1:2-3.

In the Critical Text, the phrase “**in the prophets**” is changed to “in **Isaiah** the prophet.” This makes Mark into a liar, since the quotation is from **Malachi 3:1**, and not from **Isaiah**!

Read Luke 2:14.

In this passage, the phrase “**peace, good will toward men**” is changed to “peace on earth among men of good will.” This change to “peace on earth among men of good will” seems to imply that there are *some* men who are “good,” and thus deserving of God’s peace! It certainly takes away the truth that God offers His peace to *all* men! (By the way, this is a difference of only *one letter* in the Greek—the letter *sigma*. That one “jot” really matters!)

Read John 1:18.

In the Critical Text, the phrase “only begotten Son” is changed to “only begotten God.” It is true that Jesus is God; but Scripture calls Him “the only begotten *Son*.” This phrase “only begotten God” creates the impression that Jesus is a lesser, created “god.”

Read John 3:13.

In this passage, the Critical Text leaves out the phrase “*which is in heaven.*” This erases the truth that Jesus, though Man, is also *God*. As a *Man*, He was in the flesh, talking with Nicodemus; but as *God*, He was still “*in heaven.*” The Critical Text erases this truth!

Read John 7:8.

In this text, the Critical Text leaves out the Greek word *houpo*, which means “*yet.*” The removal of the word “*yet*” makes Jesus into a liar, since He *did*, in fact, go to the feast!

Read Acts 20:28.

In this passage, the Critical Text changes “*his own blood*” to “*the blood of his own Son.*” Now, we know that Jesus *is* the Son; but that isn’t what Paul said. Paul said, “*with his own blood.*” The pronoun “*his*” refers back to “*God*”—thus showing that Jesus *is God*. Yet, the Critical Text erases this truth. Now, not all modern versions make this change; but those that *don’t* make the change are not following the Critical Greek Text, which *does* leave it out.

Read Colossians 1:14.

In this verse, the Critical Text leaves out that all-important phrase “*through his blood.*” This isn’t the only place where Jesus’ blood is left out, either. It is left out in a number of places. Why? It seems that someone did not like the doctrine that Christ’s blood brings redemption.

Read 1 Timothy 3:16.

In this passage, the Critical Text changes the word *theos* (“*God*”) to the pronoun *hos*, which means “*who*” or “*he.*” This is a profoundly important verse to show Jesus’ deity; yet, the Critical Text *removes* Jesus’ deity. Why? Because Origen did not like this teaching!

Read 1 John 4:3.

In this verse, the Critical Text removes the phrase “*Christ is come in the flesh,*” and leaves us with the simple statement, “*Every spirit that confesses not Jesus.*” But *which* Jesus? By taking away that statement about Jesus’ coming in the flesh, one could accept a *Gnostic* Jesus—a Jesus who is only a phantom, and not real flesh and blood.

Read Revelation 1:11.

In this verse, the Critical Text leaves out the profoundly important statement, “*I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.*” Why would anyone omit these words? Perhaps because he doesn’t like the teaching that Jesus is “*the first and the last.*” My friends, Jesus *is* the First and the Last! He *is* Jehovah. He is the living Word of God, and the Creator of all things. By His word the heavens and earth came to be; by His word all things consist (hold together); and by His word He *keeps* the written words that He has given to us. The same Jesus who uttered the word *Tetelestai*, and who gave that word to the Apostle John to write down, and who has *kept* that word *tetelestai* in the Scriptures, has promised to keep *all* His words.

Conclusion: Christian, you don’t have to go around doubting whether a word, phrase, verse, or whole passage should be in Scripture, because God has promised to keep *all* His words, and to preserve them “*from this generation for ever!*” You can rest in that assurance! Hear your Shepherd’s voice, Christian! He wants you to receive *all* His words.

Should you not be sure that you are saved, I am here to tell you that *you can trust God's Word about salvation*. Jesus said, ***"It is finished"***! Everything you need to be saved has already been done for you. Jesus already paid the price for your sin on the cross. Take Jesus at His Word, and let Him come into your heart! Jesus says, ***"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."***