**21st CENTURY APOLOGETICS, PART 2 Class 8…**

“The Bible is the story of two gardens: Eden and Gethsemane. In the first, Adam took a fall. In the second, Jesus took a stand. In the first, God sought Adam. In the second, Jesus sought God. In Eden, Adam hid from God. In Gethsemane, Jesus emerged from the tomb. In Eden, Satan led Adam to a tree that led to his death. From Gethsemane, Jesus went to a tree that led to our life.” ― [**Max Lucado**](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/2737.Max_Lucado) (Preacher; Author)

Last week, we left off with a discussion about the NUMBER of copies of a document helping to validate its authenticity. Today, we'll examine whether DISCREPANCIES between the manuscripts invalidate them or weaken the Documentary Evidence.

**QUESTION:** Since the manuscripts that have survived were copied BY HAND, LETTER FOR LETTER, by dedicated (and maybe prejudiced) monks, is it possible these monks "embellished" the details? WHAT DO YOU THINK?

A. What we DO know is that TENS OF THOUSANDS of *slight* variations among these ancient texts have been uncovered. WHAT COULD POSSIBLY ACCOUNT FOR THIS?

1. Eyeglasses were not invented until the 1300s…some may have had poor eyesight

2. They were writing by candlelight so lighting was poor

3. They were copying from ancient, often damaged or missing parchment/skins

4. Human error

5. Sleepiness/boredom with doing the same thing over and over

B. However, the BEST EXPLANATION for the variations has to do with the actual TRANSLATION of the New Testament.

1. Remember, that the common, everyday language for Jesus, his disciples and the local Jews was Aramaic, so when Jesus *originally* spoke the words we read in Scripture; he wasn’t speaking Greek, or Hebrew or Latin but Aramaic.

2. Later, some of his disciples recorded these teachings for other believers. And they, naturally, wrote these accounts *in Greek* because it was the **common language for Jews (and Gentiles) at that time throughout the Roman Empire** and even beyond.

a. Consequently, whenever you have different people translating, there are *bound* to be variations. They will have the same meaning, but might use different words.

b. Imagine four different people INDEPENDENTLY translating a story from English into French. Do you think they're going to choose the same French words every time?

c. Also, idiomatic expressions (i.e., slang expressions) often (usually!) don’t translate well! (e.g., "get a move on", "make hay while the sun shines", etc.)

C. Now, what are some examples of TYPICAL VARIATIONS we find among the New Testament documents?

1. Deletions, rearrangements, repetitions, or replacements of one or more words

2. Most of these types of variations, however, can be easily explained:

a. If their eye skips to an earlier word, they may create a repetition (error of [dittography](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dittography)).

b. If their eye skips to a *later* word, they may create an error of omission.

c. Also, they may have resorted to performing a slight rearranging of words to retain the overall meaning without compromising the context.

d. The copyist may have added text, from memory, from a similar or parallel text in another location.

e. They may also have replaced some text of the original with an alternative reading.

f. Spellings have occasionally changed.

g. Synonyms may have been substituted.

h. Finally, a pronoun may have been changed into a proper noun (e.g., "he said" became "Jesus said").

D. So, do these slight variations mean that we should not TRUST the ACCURACY of these documents?

1. NO! Because after much scrutiny and comparison with THE most ancient of texts, the variations are so slight and so meaningless that they become (in a practical sense) INCONSEQUENTIAL.

2. Here's a modern-day example: What if a girl asks her mother, "Mom, can we have some ice cream?" and she answers, "No, you'll ruin your appetite." Then, the girl goes back to her brother and says, "Mommy said we can't have ice cream because we won't want to eat our dinner."

**QUESTION:** Did the girl change the words her mother said? Did the ESSENCE the message change?

3. Remember...the most VALUED characteristic among these monks was DISCIPLINE and discipline equaled a high level of accuracy.

E. So, let's now examine some ACTUAL examples of variations in the New Testament and see what YOU think:

1. **READ AS DIRECTED:** p. 65

a. So, let's go ahead and **read 1John 5: 7- 8** and see how each of our bibles might show some variations.

2. Other variation examples include: Hebrews 2: 9 ("apart from God" and "by the grace of God"; [John 1:28](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+1%3A28&version=NRSV), "Bethabara" over "Bethany" as the location where John was baptizing

3. There are many more variations that you can find yourself simply by searching for notations in your Bibles.

4. One more point: ancient writers did NOT use QUOTATION MARKS! When you see the words of Jesus, in RED, the copiers, NOT the original writers of the gospels, did this!

F. The conclusion is that EVEN THE MOST SIGNIFICANT VARIATIONS IN THE TEXTS DO NOT OVERTHROW ANY IMPORTANT CHURCH DOCTRINE.

1. In fact, Biblical scholars Norman Geisler and William Nix stated that "The New Testament, then, has not only survived in more manuscripts than any other book from antiquity, but it has survived in a purer form than any other great book…a form that is 99.5 percent pure." (p. 65)

**QUESTION:** Why do you think this is so? What do you think we can attribute this to?

Next week, we will continue with our examination of the Documentary Evidence and answer the nagging question: HOW DO WE KNOW WE HAVE THE WHOLE PICTURE?