

Luke 17:36 Is it inspired Scripture or not?

"Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left." Luke 17:36

Rick Norris and other Bible critics, (none of whom believe that there exists ANY Bible in ANY language that IS the complete, inspired and inerrant words of God) uses his usual "Yeah, hath God said...?" approach to raising doubts about the authenticity of this and many other verses found in our Holy Bible.

He asks: "Do you claim that the KJV translators called into question Luke 17:36 with their marginal note: "This 36 verse is wanting [lacking] in most of the Greek copies"? It is interesting that you never seem to mention the fact that several translations that KJV-only advocates themselves put in their pure stream of Bibles or good line of Bibles also do not include Luke 17:36. For example, all the editions of Luther's German Bible printed in his lifetime, Tyndale's 1526 New Testament, Tyndale's 1534 New Testament, the 1535 Coverdale's Bible, the 1537 Matthew's Bible, and the 1560 edition of the Geneva Bible did not have Luke 17:36. The 1560 Geneva Bible had a verse 36, but it was the text of what is verse 37 in the KJV."

First of all, it is true that the marginal note in the King James Bible does mention that "this 36th verse is wanting in most of the Greek copies". The marginal note does not say that the verse shouldn't be there, or even question whether it is authentic or not. It just states that it is not found in most Greek copies. This marginal note also shows that the KJB translators were familiar with far more than just the alleged "six manuscripts Erasmus had". They were familiar with every reading the Bible agnostics can come up with today. We should ask ourselves the simple question: Then why did they put it in the King James Bible and not even in italics nor in brackets, as the NASB frequently does, but in regular print just like verses 35 and 37 that surround it?

The verse is not found in Sinaiticus, Vaticanus or A. However Sinaiticus, one of the so called "oldest and best" also omits all of verse 35 as well as 36! Vaticanus contains 35 but not 36. Modern versions like the RSV, NRSV, ESV, some NASB's, the NIV and the Message omit the verse, based not on "the Majority" (which they constantly ignore) but primarily on Vaticanus.

The New American Standard omitted Luke 17:36 from their text from 1963 to 1972. But then in 1977 and again in the latest 1995 edition, they have once again included the verse in their text but in [brackets], indicating doubt as to its authenticity. They even have a false footnote which reads: "Early manuscripts do not contain this verse." It may be true that many Greek mss. did not have it, but as we shall soon see there is an abundance of early manuscripts, church fathers and ancient bible versions that did include the verse.

It was even in the Catholic Rheims version of 1582 as well as the Wycliffe Bible of 1380 (placed in verse 35) -"Luk 17:35 twei wymmen schulen be gryndynge togidir, `the toon schal be takun, and `the tother forsakun; **twei in a feeld, `the toon schal be takun, and `the tother left.**", and

in Cranmer's Bible of 1539. You can see them at this site here - <http://bible.zox.net/hex/hex.htm> It was also in the Douay version of 1950. The significance of the Catholic Rheims of 1582 and the Douay of 1950 containing verse 36, is that they have Vaticanus in the Vatican library, yet did not follow it in omitting the verse either. The more recent Catholic versions like the New American bible, the Jerusalem and New Jerusalem of 1985 have now omitted it from their ever changing bible versions. Oh, but wait. Now the latest Catholic bible version has come out. It is called the Catholic Public Domain version of 2009 and it has put the verse back in their bible version! You can see it for yourself here -

<http://www.sacredbible.org/catholic/index.htm>

It now reads: "Two will be in the field. One will be taken up, and the other will be left behind."

The textual evidence for the inclusion of Luke 17:36 as inspired Scripture is weighty and significant. Even according to the Nestle-Aland critical textual apparatus Luke 17:36 is found in the Old Latin (which bears witness to a text that preceeds Sinaiticus and Vaticanus by 200 years) copies of a, aur, b, c, d, e, f, ffr, f13, q, and r. It is found in ancient Greek lectionaries 68, 76, 673, 813 and 1223.

The verse is found in the Syriac Peshitta, Sinaitic, Curetonian, and Harclean ancient versions; it is in the Armenian, Ethiopian, and Slavonic ancient versions. According to John Gill, it is in the oldest Arabic, Persian and Complutensian bibles. It is also found in a multitude of Greek manuscripts like D, I, 030, 4, 262,476,700, plus about 25 others I could list.

In fact, the Modern Greek Bible used by the Greek Orthodox churches all over the world contains the verse in full. So too does the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. It uses the 1904 text of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and it includes the verse in its text. It can be seen on their website here - Luke 17:36 - δύο ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ, εἷς παραληφθήσεται καὶ ὁ ἕτερος ἀφεθήσεται.

<http://www.goarch.org/en/chapel/biblegreek/>

As for some early church fathers, the verse is also quoted by Taitian in 172 AD, Eusebius 339, Ambrose 397, Augustine 430 and others.

Since initially writing this article brother Tony Bones provided me with another useful bit of information. He says the text of the Gospels in western Saxon from 990 AD and 1175 AD, both have the 36th verse of Luke 17: (Western Saxon 990 AD) Twegen beoð æt æcere. an bið genumen & oðer bið læfed; (Western Saxon 1175 AD) Twegen byð æt akere an byð ge-numen & oðer beoð lefed.

Admittedly it was not in Tyndale's New Testament. But Tyndale had a few other quirks going on in his N.T. as well. He also omitted the entire verse of Mark 11:26 - "But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." In the book of Revelation Tyndale omits the words: "And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee" from Revelation 18:23 and the entire verse in Revelation 21:26 which reads: "And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it."!!

As for Norris's claim that Luke 17:36 was not in Luther's Bible during his lifetime, I have looked at two different websites which have Luther's 1545 German translation, and both of them have the verse included. The Unbound Bible site shows the Luther German Bible of 1545 with this reading at Luke 17:36 - "zwei werden auf dem Felde sein; einer wird angenommen, der andere wird verlassen werden." The updated 1912 edition of Luther's bible also has the verse, as well as the more modern German Bibles like Elberfelder 1905 and Schlachter 1951.

As for the Geneva bible, the entire verse is included in the 1587, 1599 and 1602 editions of the Geneva Bible. I have two of these reprints right here in my study. You can see the Geneva Bible 1587 edition at this site here called Studylight.com - <http://www.studylight.org/>

Luke 17:36 reads: "Two shall be in the field: one shall be received, and another shall be left." Regarding the various Greek printed texts, Luke 17:36 was not in Erasmus (as Norris correctly states) nor in Stephens first 3 editions, but it was in his 4th edition. It is in the printed Greek texts of Beza, Elziever brothers. It is also in George Berry's text which is that of Stephens 1550, and in Green's interlinear Greek N.T. The text is found in the Modern Greek Bible used in the Orthodox churches.

It was not in Tyndale 1525 nor in Coverdale 1535, but it was in the Wycliffe Bible of 1395, the Bishops' Bible of 1568 and later in the Geneva Bibles 1587 to 1602. Today Luke 17:36 is found in the NKJV 1982, the Amplified Bible, the Holman Standard of 2003, Youngs, Mace's 1729 translation, Wesley's 1755 translation, the Worseley Version 1790, Webster's 1833, the Etheridge Translation 1849, Murdock's Translation 1851, Lamsa's Translation of the Syriac Peshitta 1933, the New Berkeley Version in modern English 1969, the KJV 21st Century Version 1994, the Third Millennium Bible 1998, Green's 2000 literal, and in the 1996 International Standard Version.

The fact that a couple of pre-1611 English Bibles omitted the verse just shows that God was in the process of purifying the text and bringing it to full maturity in the English language. The indebtedness of the King James Bible translators to their predecessors is recognized most clearly in the Preface to the reader where they state in no uncertain terms: "Truly, good Christian reader, we never thought, from the beginning, that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one; but TO MAKE A GOOD ONE BETTER, or OUT OF MANY GOOD ONES ONE PRINCIPAL GOOD ONE, NOT JUSTLY TO BE EXCEPTED AGAINST that hath been our endeavour, that our mark."

The King James Translators also wrote: "Nothing is begun and perfected at the same time, and the later thoughts are the thoughts to be the wiser: so if we build upon their foundation that went before us, and being holpen by their labors, do endeavor to make better which they left so good...if they were alive would thank us...the same will shine as gold more brightly, being rubbed and polished."

As for foreign language translations, we see that the vast majority of all foreign language Bibles

contain Luke 17:36 as inspired Scripture. The verse is found in the Spanish Sagradas Escrituras 1569, the Reina Valera 1909, 1960 and 1995. The editors who put out the NASB (the Lockman Foundation) have made a modern Spanish version called La Biblia de las Américas 1997 and it contains the verse and not even in brackets. The Portuguese Almeida of 1681 and the modern Almeida both contain the entire verse of Luke 17:36 - "Dois estarão no campo; um será tomado, o outro será deixado.", and even the same people who put out the NIV (International Bible Society) have their modern version in Portuguese called O Livro 2000 and the same IBS has put out the 1997 Italian La Parola e Vita and the French 1999 La Bible du Semeur. They all contain the verse in the Bible text. You see, the International Bible Society is more than a little inconsistent when they translate into foreign languages.

Luke 17:36 is also found in the text of these other Bible translations in foreign languages: The Modern Hebrew bible, the French Martin 1744, Louis Segond 1910, Ostervald 1996 and the 1999 Bible du Semeur; the 1549 Italian Diodati, the New Diodati 1991 and the Italian Riveduta 1927; the Afrikaans bible 1953, Albanian, Armenian, Bulgarian, Finnish 1776, Dutch Staten Vertaling, Coptic New Testament, the Russian Synodal Version, Russian Zhuromsky, Chinese Union Version, Japanese JKUG, Romanian Cornilescu, to name just a few of the many.

Luke 17:36 - "Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left." - is either inspired Scripture or it isn't. I and many other Bible believers are convinced that it is. It is the "No Bible is inspired or inerrant" folks who will try to convince some that it isn't.

By His grace, believing The Book

Will Kinney

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