

Although only a few New Testament manuscripts that were copied between the 4th and 6th centuries after Christ still exist, there are far more differences between these early manuscripts than between the later ones, and some of the earlier manuscripts lack certain verses that occur in most of the later ones.

In the attempt to determine the exact original text of the New Testament three different approaches are made. Some feel that where there are differences between manuscripts we should accept the reading of the majority of the hundreds of existing manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament. All copies of the Bible were manuscript copies until after the invention of printing in the 15th century. Since most of these copies were made hundreds of years after the time of the original writing many scholars feel that this is not a safe method for determining the correct text.

A second method that is now widely followed is to take the very earliest manuscripts that are available and build our Scripture entirely on them. When the earliest manuscripts discovered to date became available, during the latter part of the 19th century, some scholars carried this method to a rather absurd extreme, sometimes even declaring that a reading or omission found only in one manuscript that was copied a few centuries after the time of Christ should be given more weight than the readings of all the others put together. Hardly anyone would now go to such an extreme, but the tendency among most New Testament scholars today is to pay special attention to the small group of early manuscripts and generally ignore all that were copied later.

A third approach, advanced by a small but extremely vociferous group of people, really amounts to taking the few manuscripts that were known to those who made printed copies of the New Testament between 1515 and 1611 as the sole factor in deciding on the text of the New Testament. Those who follow this approach base their view on the assumption that the Greek text used by the scholars who prepared the King James Version of 1611 must be accepted as right in all respects. If the text is to be based only on a small number of manuscripts, this view must be considered as far less reasonable than the view of those who pay attention only to the earliest manuscripts.

Supporters of this approach declare that they consider the *textus receptus* as the inspired text of God's Word. This phrase, *textus receptus*, did not come into use until a few years after the