

little mistakes invariably came in, so that no two manuscripts of the Latin Bible or of the Greek Bible are exactly the same. During this period, as visitors passed from one Byzantine monastery to another, and manuscripts were interchanged from time to time, the tendency naturally developed to bring the manuscripts into harmony with one another. Where early manuscripts differed slightly there was a tendency to combine the readings. Thus there developed a text which was found, with many variations, in the manuscripts copied in the Byzantine empire in the later middle ages.

**Sometimes a whole verse is said to be missing from the best manuscripts. Would not such an omission be obvious because of the verse number being skipped?**

Our system of numbering verses is not found in Greek manuscripts. The first publication in which the New Testament was divided into numbered verses was the 4th edition by Stephanus, which he published in Geneva in 1551, after fleeing from Paris.

**Some say that the last twelve verses of the Gospel of Mark were not part of the original. What do you think of this?**

There is a strong possibility that the end of the Gospel of Mark was lost from certain important manuscripts at a very early time. Some early manuscripts stop abruptly at the end of v.8 of the last chapter. Yet there was doubtless an ending, for it is extremely unlikely that the Gospel of Mark stopped with the words "and they were afraid." It may have been the short ending that is found in some ancient manuscripts, or it may have been the longer ending that occurs in the later manuscripts. Practically everything in this longer ending is also clearly stated in the Gospel of Luke. The question whether it was also stated at the end of the original Gospel of Mark is interesting, but not of any great importance for Christian life or thought. There is only one statement of importance in Mark that is not in Luke: "They shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them." Whether this was part of the original Gospel of Mark or not, it is certainly true that God can protect His people in this way when ever He chooses to do so, as is shown by the experience of Paul described in Acts 28:3-6.