

The Naked Bible Podcast 2.0

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“Debunking Greek NT Manuscript Conspiracies”

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With

**Residential Layman
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Debunking Greek NT Manuscript Conspiracies

This episode is in response to listener requests. Mike and Trey interview Rick Brannan, the information specialist for Greek New Testament products and databases at Logos Bible Software, about how we got the New Testament, the KJV-only idea, and conspiratorial views about the history and transmission of the Greek New Testament. We also talk about tools for learning about the Greek New Testament and its vocabulary. Rick is the general editor of the Lexham English Septuagint, translator of The Apostolic Fathers in English, and author of Greek Apocryphal Gospels, Fragments, and Agrapha.

Links:

Summary of [how the Byzantine-Majority Text \(and the Textus Receptus\) gets defended against the Alexandrian](#). Drawn from D. A Carson, The King James Version Debate, A Plea for Realism, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), pp. 39-78

[Codex Sinaiticus](#)

Rick's personal blog: <http://rickbrannan.com>

Rick's Twitter: @RickBrannan

Publisher: <http://appianwaypress.com> (Appian Way Press)

Lexical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: First Timothy

- Publisher page: <https://appianwaypress.com/lcpe-first-timothy/>

Second Timothy: Notes on Grammar, Structure, and Syntax

- Publisher page: <https://appianwaypress.com/second-timothy-notes/>

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 99, Debunking Greek NT Manuscript Conspiracies. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you doing this week?

MSH: Very good, I think listeners will be interested in this episode. I hope they're interested in all the episodes. We've been getting good listenership and traffic but this one's actually a response to listener requests that I've gotten by email. So I think this'll be something that not only answer's those questions or requests but just as of general interest to lots of people.

TS: Anything doing with conspiracies I love so please, let's get into it.

MSH: Absolutely, well, I asked my colleague and friend Rick Brannan who works at Logos Bible Software, now called Faithlife Corp. to sort of be the fount of information for this episode. Rick is the guy inside the building, the main guy inside the building, not the only guy, but certainly the main one who handles Greek databases and Greek products for Logos Bible Software. Rick why don't we start just by letting you do a little bit more of a self-introduction than that. Give people a general idea what you do inside the company.

RB: Thanks for having me Mike. I appreciate it. What I do at Logos we could probably do a whole show on that because I've done so many things here over the years. What I do, the team that I work on, my team is called Core Texts. What we really do is we develop and maintain all of the ancient language data so I'm not involved in just Greek but also Hebrew, Aramaic, and Latin, and other languages, so data about the Bible, about those Bible versions. So we'd do the versions but we also do all sorts of layers of annotation on those texts. So we would put a layer on the words like morphology, so whether it's a verb or noun or an adjective in the original language, and other information like the syntax layer, so where the clause breaks are and where the clause parts are, where the subjects and verbs and the objects are inside of the clause.

All these layers of data we maintained and from there we go up into more discourse analysis type stuff. So that's looking at really how the text is structured and coheres at the paragraph and sentence and even higher level. And then through that, we also do linkage with other material so we've got interlinear versions where we gloss the words. So for a Greek word or Hebrew word we would have the English translation under it. But we also do these things called reverse interlinears where we take a modern language version like ESV or the NIV and we align it at a word to word match with the underlying Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek text. So you can say you want to find all the Greek words and Hebrew words that are translated love or whatever. We marshal all of that data.

MSH: It's amazing. Let me just interject here. When I started 11 years ago, it's kind of amazing the stuff you guys have to think about, versification, when was it divided into verses? Why are different manuscripts not doing the same thing when it comes to something as simple as versification and chapter divisions? Rick is a guy who mucks around in ancient texts and actually has to produce something useful in the software world from that data.

RB: I actually found an actual title that I can use. It's data wrangler. That's actually something people call themselves nowadays. I finally found the right term for what I do. It was like an epiphany.

MSH: I wrangle data. It's like herding cats. I thought Rick would be the perfect person for this. There are lots of people, myself included, that could sort of talk about the history of the Greek New Testament and all sort of stuff. But I wanted somebody who really just on a day-to-day basis has to look at manuscript material. Rick, I'd like you to say something about some of the scholars and the agencies, like the German Bible Society as an example that you work with to produce what you do. Can you to just basically described maybe some of those projects as they relate to the Greek New Testament and maybe something like with Michael Holmes to produce the SBL GNT, something like that because I want people to know that this fellow, Rick Brannan, has more than a casual interest in this and also knows lots of important people in the field of textual criticism, the guys who actually do the work. Rick has to do something with the data they produce to make something useful for pastors and other customers, so go ahead.

RB: The thing you find out a lot about these people when you work with them is that these are just normal people. They just have got really specialized interests and they're really really smart and adept at what they do. I've worked with people from the German Bible Society, Mike Holmes from the SBL GNT. That was a really neat project where essentially we needed a new version of the Greek NT for all sorts of reasons. So what we did was we talked to Mike and said Mike, here's what we can do and we did it. So what we did was we did a comparison of a bunch of existing Greek editions of the New Testament and we found all the places where the editions varied.

So when I use a term like edition, I mean like the printed edition of the Greek New Testament that we have today. So that would not be a manuscript, like from history, from some historical period. But in addition to the Greek NT, like the Nestle Aland Greek New Testament or the Wescott-Hort Greek New Testament, We did a comparison of a bunch of additions to basically see where the text agreed and where these editions disagreed because that's an interesting thing to know, where people who've already combed over the text, spent their life doing it, disagree on something. So we found a bunch of spots where editions of the New Testament disagree, which is a fine thing. That's not a challenging thing at all. Different people look at evidence and come up with different ways to represent it.

And then what we did was we presented all of that information to Michael Holmes and he went through the whole Greek New Testament while he was on sabbatical, really in the space of less than a year. The man was a machine. I cannot say enough about the quality and volume of his work. And he basically found the reading that he preferred based on his principles. He would be a reasoned eclectic is the text critical school they would use to describe Michael Holmes and we ended up with an edition of the Greek NT that is actually pretty solid and pretty well received among the guild.

MSH: Mike Holmes is a Prof. of New Testament obviously Greek. He's still at Bethel isn't he?

RB: He's still at Bethel and he's actually also involved with the Bible Museum. I forget the name of the family but the Hobby Lobby guys. He's one of the directors of some of the manuscript stuff that they're up to as well, so he's highly involved and highly placed a lot of areas like that.

MSH: Mike is an evangelical and he's well recognized in the field of textual criticism. Maybe less known than Dan Wallace is but he's right up there.

RB: The thing about Mike Holmes that's really impressive is that a lot of these manuscript guys and text critic guys are mostly and almost completely into the New Testament. Their names are only associated with New Testament stuff. Mike Holmes has edited a critical edition of the writings of apostolic fathers and a translation that's popularly available and he's also edited an addition of the Greek New Testament. And I don't know of anybody else in that guild today who could say that they've done those two things. The other thing about Mike Holmes is he got his doctorate at Princeton and Bruce Metzger was the guy who supervised him. So when you're talking about top-notch people,

MSH: The same guy over at Bart Ehrman.

RB: That's right, and Mike and Bart's great friends.

MSH: They disagree quite a bit on how they approach things or at least some of their presuppositions. That's important to note. I'm glad you brought that up because Ehrman is a name that comes up in this a lot but what we're going to talk about today really isn't Bart Ehrman stuff. The questions that have come to me are things like what about these Wescott-Hort guys? We're they like Satanists or something? Did Satan employ them to produce a corrupt awful version of the Greek New Testament that denies the deity of Christ and other things like this? You'll see a lot of this stuff on the Internet, the wild world of the Internet, but it's been around a lot longer than that.

A lot of people who are into that will be what are called King James only advocates because the King James Version was based on a different manuscript family. We're going to talk about manuscript families here in a moment. But it's based on a different Greek New Testament, let's just put it that way, than a lot of your modern English translations like NIV, ESV, things like that. The King James had a different textual base. And so people who want to throw rocks at the more modern translations of the New Testament will attack the text that they used and that goes back to these two guys, Wescott-Hort. So I get questions like this a lot. Should I be a King James only person? Can I trust my NIV New Testament because it's not the King James? It's not made from the same source?

RB: It's different or it's missing verses.

MSH: Stuff like that. So let's just jump into this. If you can kind of sketch for us in broad strokes how we got the Greek New Testament that we use today, let's just start there and I'd kind of like to, give us an overview but ultimately we're going to focus on things like Wescott-Hort and manuscript discoveries in 19th and 20th centuries so go ahead.

RB: So in my head, I've got it broken down in about eight different parts of development. You can interrupt me any time here because I could go on forever Mike. I'm sure you know that. When we're talking about manuscripts, you have to go all the way back to the beginning. Where did they come from, right? Somebody had to write them. There had to be a setting in which they were written and a person who wrote them and an audience to whom they were written. So that's the autograph and that's kind of where you have to start. And that's, at least for the New Testament, we're talking 40, 50, 60 70 A.D. depending on how you date things, probably in that timeframe up in the first century basically. After that, it has to be transmitted in order for it to perpetuate, right? So for some reason, someone wrote a letter and other people found it helpful so they wrote copies of the letter or somebody wanted to tell the story of Jesus so we have these stores combined into a gospel.

And then other Gospels come around. There's this period, we don't know a whole lot about directly because our manuscript evidence only goes back to about the second, third, or fourth generation in there. We don't have the autograph. We have some early copies probably of autographs, some sort of transmission there. These things were typically transmitted in collections so probably the first things that were available were things like Pauline letter collection. So some of the longer Paulines, and then some of them was more personal letters and then they get combined into a collection. And then the Gospels also were collected and transmitted. One of the interesting things about Gospels though is this guy called Tatian where he took the four Gospels and he made this thing called the Diatessaron, which is from a Greek word that basically means through the four or by the four.

It was in a Gospel harmony where he took and stitched all the four Gospels, all the events of the four Gospels, into a coherent narrative taken bits and pieces from all of them, and then that started to be transmitted. So there was this real hunger for this material. People would copy it and would get transmitted, and recopy, retransmit. So one of the things about this guy named Tatian is that he probably wrote in Syriac, not Greek. So even early on, we've got people translating the Greek of the New Testament into languages like Latin and Syriac and another language called Coptic, which is essentially the last age of hieroglyphics but it used a Greek alphabet. All this kind of stuff is milieu of his early early period where all this stuff kind of happens. Then we move into a period of the 4th through the 8th century.

This is where we commonly think of our manuscripts today, at least the earliest ones outside of some really early papyri letters and codices and stuff, where we run into the stars of textual criticism, where we have our Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus and Codex Alexandrinus and this weird one called Bezae and some others that fill that void of major New Testament manuscripts from the early years. After that wonderful period where we have a lot of evidence, we have even more evidence but these are different manuscripts that are called Miniscules that use a cursive handwriting. If you've learned Greek at all and you can read a Greek New Testament imprint, you know one form of Greek. But the Miniscules you look at them and you're like what are those things even saying? The letters are all ligatured together and just a lot of expertise to read. After that, we come into a time of early printed edition, so I'm talking about like the 15th century 16th-century now where we get Erasmus, who published his first Greek NT to be the first one available one in print in like 1520 I think, somewhere in there. I don't know if that's exactly the date.

MSH: I think his first edition was 1518. It's in the teens.

RB: And then the funny thing is, even back then, people were erasing the published stuff because there's this other thing called Complutensian Polyglot, which if you've ever see a page of it, it's this magisterial wonderful thing where in the Old Testament and the New Testament it's actually whole Bible. This was published in the 1500s and the New Testament portion actually has got Greek. It's got Latin. And interlineared, it has got Latin, the system that aligns the Greek with the Latin. So you're reading along in the Greek and it's got like a number over it and then you look over in the Latin for the same number and it's like this weird interlinear thing. So they're even making these tools back then just to help people read the text.

You probably know Latin but you might not know Greek so here's how I can help you read the Greek a little bit better. That was published and was actually published before Erasmus' version. But because they were waiting to finish the Old Testament before they released the whole thing, Erasmus technically beat them to the market. Crazy story and kind of gives you an insight to Erasmus and just the kind of guy he was. After that, we turn into what we're going to be talking about for a lot of this time, the Textus Receptus. We got this French printer whose name I can never remember exactly what it is because he's called so many different things. What is this guys' name?

We call him Stephanus or Stevens or something like that, who was a publisher and he published a number of editions of the Greek New Testament so that's where this Textus Receptus comes from. It was a preface to an edition he published I think in either 1620 or 1623 that used the term Textus Receptus, which is the Latin for received text, to describe the text of the New Testament that he was publishing. After those early printed editions, which just recycled the same text that Stephanus had put out, who recycled the text that Erasmus had put out, we move into the 18th and 19th centuries where we have more manuscript discoveries. We've got Bangel and Tregelles, not a whole lot of manuscript discoveries, but Tregelles particularly, his Greek New Testament edition was unique because he and Bangel before him, started to move away from this text of Stephanus, or whatever the guy's name was. And this is where we started to see really where an apparatus would list where known manuscripts would differ with the reading of the Textus Receptus. So initially, we would have the Textus Receptus on the page of the text, and then like footnotes would say this is manuscript has got this and that manuscript has got that. So you start to get variations that way.

MSH: They're collecting their variances as opposed to producing their own edition.

RB: Tregelles actually started to produce his own edition. It's one of the points where they move away from this Textus Receptus started. After that, we get into Tischendorf, our friend Constantine Tischendorf, who was just amazingly, he was just an incredible guy. The stuff that he found and the work that he produced, he released like eight different major editions of the Greek New Testament. And his eighth major edition, which is volumes in print, like 2-3 volumes in print. It has a text that's like two lines on the top of the page and the apparatus for those two or three lines is the rest of the page of text. He was classifying and listing basically comprehensively everything he found, everything he knew, and it still used today. And one of the reasons it's still used today is it is one of the more accurate printings and transcriptions in spite of all of this apparatus stuff going on of the Greek NT and all the variations.

So it's still a reliable place to go back. That's how good his work was. So we start to get into this area where after Tischendorf, we're moving into Wescott-Hort where it is almost a textual revolution because there's so much more manuscript evidence available that was completely unknown even 100 or 200 years before. And Wescott-Hort particularly start to rely more on this manuscript evidence that they found recently than just reproducing the existing text and telling you where stuff they found differed. They started to change really that upper text or the main text.

MSH: Listeners are familiar with Deuteronomy 32:8-9 in the ESV, which of course is Old Testament, but I'll often make the comment what makes the ESV different here is that it has incorporated the Dead Sea scroll reading into the running text of its translation. So that's what you're describing. Wescott-Hort are not content like you said to reproduce the editions that had gone before and then adding lists of variance to the apparatus so people would know there's more disagreements now than we did 50 years ago. They actually started to incorporate those differences into the text itself.

RB: As important as those Dead Sea Scrolls are for our understanding of the Hebrew Bible today, you're the Hebrew Bible guy Mike so correct me if I'm wrong but most of the readings of the Dead Sea Scrolls completely confirm the text of the Hebrew Bible there had been before right?

MSH: It's a high percentage.

RB: So in that same way, especially Tischendorf's manuscript findings like Sinaiticus, and being able to get back to that in some way because facsimiles were becoming available, that was like the Dead Sea Scrolls only in about 1860/70/80/90. And it had as much impact on the New Testament as the Dead Sea Scrolls has on the Old Testament. This is the thing people don't really understand. It's not like they were two completely different things. So it's not like if I'm reading Codex Sinaiticus, I think one thing. If I'm reading the Textus Receptus, I think another thing. Those texts are largely similar. They are largely similar. If you'd actually describe their differences in percentages, they're highly similar, like 80-90% the same.

The places where they're different, they're really helped to establish and understand what the options are there so you can actually make an informed decision from a textual critical perspective of what that reading might be and mindful of whatever manuscript evidence you got so just amazingly formative time in the New Testament and understanding of the text of the New Testament, those centuries like the 18th and 19th and early 20th centuries. After that, we run into the 20th century, which is basically Nestle Islands century as far as text criticism is concerned. This guy whose last name is Nestle. Was it Erwin or Erberhard? His son was Erwin and he took it over later. 1898 was his first edition and it was essentially a comparison of three editions, the Wescott-Hort text and Tischendorf's text and another text by the name of Weymouth. And he basically compared the three and where they agreed, where the majority agreed, he took that as a consensus reading, and where they differed, he basically decided on his own or he took another version as a tiebreaker.

He did a rough and ready establishing of the text and then listed the some apparatus material underneath it. And that was basically it for his first version. He kept on going back to it

and revising and going back to it and revising it until his 13th edition came around and it was a complete reworking of the apparatus and really, one of the first apparatuses that listed a lot of common manuscript evidence. And then the 26th edition of Nestle- Aland, which was in 1979, was just a complete reworking the text and that one was like the gold standard. That's the one that all of our modern Bible translations are essentially based on in the New Testament. That was just really like the high point of the century as far as textual criticism was concerned from the production of edition.

MSH: So what you have to summarize for listeners is I'm hoping you're paying attention to some of these dates here because up until the 20th century, basically of the turn of the 20th century, if you are reading the Bible in English, you are reading the King James. That was all that there was. When you get into the 20th century, then you're going to have some new translations pop up. There's a couple, the American Standard Version right at the beginning of the 20th century, but you more or less have to wait until the 1950s to get the RSV. These newer translations are now using a Greek New Testament text that is different than the one the King James was based on.

Not totally different, not even substantially different, it is different 10% of the time. Let's just use round numbers. It's not a big difference but it is a difference and these differences are based on new manuscript discoveries. And a lot of this newer material that's being discovered was older because, we're going to talk about different types of manuscripts here when you're done with your survey. These manuscripts were older and so for that reason and other reasons, they came to the forefront when you had new publisher say we need a new English translation. So this material started to be read. Then when you hit past the midway point, past the 1950s, basically all of your English translations are going to be based on this newer manuscript material.

RB: Right, and another thing going on in the 20th century was this stuff that we know as the Dishno Papyri found in like 1952. And those are the Papyri that got separated into lots and sold off to guys like Martin Bodmer and Chester Beatty, who would have basically, these are hugely important New Testament manuscripts that were found in a cache in 1952. This is just new manuscript evidence that comes up. It's really important because these were really early texts, like P. 46 is third century, which is before Sinaiticus. Third century is two hundreds. So these things go way back and P. 46 is a Pauline letter collection and strangely enough, you do a lot of comparisons between Micah P. 46 and Codex Vaticanus and those guys agree a whole lot, two different texts, two different areas. But they have a lot in common in areas that differ from Byzantine sort of approaches, Textus Receptus approaches. And this is where this new evidence starts to come out and people start to deal with it and work with it and understand it and it just takes time because it's really hard stuff. But then they start to apply it to translations. That's why I think we're talking about the last half of the 20th century where that change in how all this stuff affects Bible translation really started to happen.

MSH: Do you want to add anything else?

RB: After the Chester Beatty and like the 20th century is where we are today. And the big thing in textual criticism now is imaging of manuscripts. Not only do these specialists have access to

manuscripts themselves so they can study them and look at them, there are high-quality digital images of thousands of them that are available at aggregated inquirable, meaning you can search them. You can look at them, just about anybody on the Internet, like anybody can go to Codex Sinaiticus dot com and see the entirety of Codex Sinaiticus in high-quality images with a transcription and even a translation you can find anywhere in the Bible, and like look and see what Sinaiticus says and all that kind of stuff. So now we've sifted through the inflation so much, we've taken pictures and now they're starting to make it more easily available to everybody and to specialists so that projects can continue and we can actually get an even better idea of the text of the Greek New Testament. That's the big change.

MSH: Before we go back and talk about manuscripts and manuscript families, or what lurks beneath or behind this whole King James only debate, TR only sort of thing, people might be wondering what other projects could they possibly be working on? I think it's worth commenting on that a little bit. For instance, I'm sure you follow the evangelical textual criticism blog. One example of a project(s) that still needs be done is it's an amazing amount of work to take a book of the New Testament and assemble in one place between two covers, one volume, every variant reading of every manuscript there is for that book. I'm thinking here of Tommy Wasserman with the Jude volume here. It's this tiny biblical book but it's a substantial volume. So give us a picture for how many books of the New Testament has that actually been done for where literally everything known to date has been collected and accounted for in a volume for specialists.

RB: It hasn't done enough. There's this project that the German Bible Society has been putting on for years and continues to have an effort on call the etito critical mayor. So that's basically Latin for major critical edition and their goal with that edition is basically to transcribe everything and make a new text. So what Tommy Wasserman did for Jude, which was basically go find all the manuscripts and if I can't find all the manuscripts, I'm going to find pictures of them. If I can't find pictures, I'm going to find old microfilm of them and read them the best that I can. I'm going to get everything.

MSH: I'm going to go kidnap a monk. Hold him hostage. I know you have this.

RB: What Tommy did wasn't necessarily find all the variants. He transcribed all the sources and then thank you 21st century wonderful computers, we've got techniques to be able to compare all of them and find and list and present all of the different sorts of variations among the texts in ordered and consistent ways. So what Tommy did there, there is a group that has existed since the 40s called the International Greek NT Project that now has sort of merged with the Etito Critical Mayor project from the German Bible Society. And they are about essentially doing that work. There is a group at Birmingham in the UK in England that is basically doing a lot of that work. They started with the Gospel John and I think they're nearing the end but they did it in phases.

First thing they did was they transcribed all the papyri. It's a technical class of manuscript. These are earlier things. These are fragments and it talks about material that they were writing on and the way it was transmitted. They transcribed all of the papyri and then they did comparisons. They transcribed all of what are called uncial or majuscule manuscripts. Those

are things like sinaiticus and all the other manuscript evidence used essentially as capital letters to write things in a manuscript, essentially not technically completely, but that's good enough for our purposes. And there's like 300 or 400 of them I guess, 300 total for the New Testament. For the book of John, I don't know, probably 100 or so. They transcribed, and they didn't just like some dude on the weekends say I am going to transcribe this thing of John and he just sat down and wrote it.

These are high-quality transcriptions of all the variations and not just the text but the page of the manuscript they occur, the line breaks they occur on. Is there any sort of marking in the text so instead of writing Theos for God, they just wrote a theta and a sigma and put a line over it. They take care of all that stuff. They transcribe everything you can consider about manuscripts for everything and they finished with all the majuscules. They published a volume and now they're working on all sorts of other stuff, but that's really sort of the process that goes through. They're on John and I think they're also doing a project on the Pauline letters. There's a project with Acts going on as well, associated with German Bible Society. And Revelation is another one that's going on that I know of. They're starting on some big stuff. Revelation's just fraught with textual peril so we don't need to talk about that but there's all sorts of stuff going on.

MSH: I'll bet Tim Lahaye knows that. Revelation is kind of notorious in the text critical world. But that's a subject for another episode. These aren't projects, individual books. You're talking about the Gospel of John, one of 27 books here. This isn't something that you can do in a few hundred hours. This is years of work just for one book to do the kind of thing that Rick has been describing.

RB: The John project was crazy because they had to reinvent all their technology along the way. That started in probably the 80s or early 90s and where it made sense to transcribe it on a computer but they invented their software along the way because these are highly specialized things. So not only are they transcribing text, they're developing the environment in which they transcribed texts and they're developing routines by which they compare texts to figure out where all the variations are. It's just like saying I don't have a great example but I suppose it could be like I'm going to drive my car to Seattle because I'm in Bellingham. Seattle's hundred miles away but I don't have a car. I don't know what wheels are. And I got to figure out how to make the engine work. And I don't know what an engine is anyway. That's basically what they're doing and they made the car.

MSH: It's amazing painstaking work that these people in the field of textual criticism do and we reap the benefit of it. But unfortunately instead of being grateful that there are people out there, and a lot of this began before Wescott-Hort. Wescott-Hort are major figures in this because their own work at the time took 28 years. They spent 28 years producing what we now know is this Wescott-Hort edition of the Greek New Testament. This wasn't something that hey, I don't have anything to do this summer. Let's get together and produce this thing, and we hate the King James and it's evil. We're just going to destroy it. That sounds like a great summer project. This is 28 years of hand work to produce something that tried to account for, maybe not everything, but the mass of Greek New Testament manuscript material that was available, that was known to exist. This was not a trivial task. You just mentioned a little bit about manuscripts so we don't

need to track through all that again, but basically manuscripts get named by virtue of what the text is written on, like papyri. Those are older than the next thing that sort comes along, the uncial, which is named after the style. This is capital letters so Sinaiticus, if you saw a picture it's written in all Greek capital letters and it has abbreviations and scribal this and that to it. But these were written typically on, is vellum typically the sort of the majority medium, animal skin?

RB: Generally, that was sinaiticus certainly and a lot of the major majuscules or uncials, yeah.

MSH: And then somebody has to make the decision let's not use those scroll things anymore so we don't have to roll them up. Level it off here, put some glue here. We're going to call this a codex or a book. Somebody had to invent that and they did. And often scholars know when this innovation, these kinds of innovations happen. So when the New Testament manuscript appears in one form or the other, it's not an absolutely certain chronological indicator. You got to have other factors considered.

RB: Most of this type of stuff shows up in the codex. There's very little I can think of offhand New Testament stuff that was a scroll. So it's actually pretty much a Christian innovation as far as embracing it and using it. You can also find where they've recycled scrolls and written Christian documents on them. So there is a bunch of cool stuff like that, too.

MSH: Miniscules are cursive as Rick pointed out. There's something Rick didn't mention but we don't need to go down that rabbit trail but lectionary's, you can just tell people what a lectionary is real briefly.

RB: A lectionary is a church document. So it would have a section that has a scripture reading in it and that's why it's valuable from a text critical perspective. But after the scripture reading, a lot of times that might be in red to clue the reader in. So the reader was like in an office in the church. So the reader guy reads the scripture and then you would know what the sort of the lesson is after that, which they would then read. It's like this hybrid thing and we even see lectionary's today. Lectionary's are highly in use in several traditions in Christendom, These are just the early early forms of them where you got a scripture and a reading.

MSH: You got a church document that quotes some passage of Scripture. So if those are ancient and they're quoting scripture that tells you what people were reading. That's a textual tradition for a New Testament verse or verses in that church document. There's all sorts of things that get used. Let's talk about manuscript families because this is sort of the heart of this debate. I guess in simplest terms, I don't know how you want to characterize it but I want to try to really only talk about two manuscripts families. There are more than two but the two that sort of are essential to the debate are the Alexandrian family. You can talk about why it gets that name and so-and-so forth. But those tend to be among the oldest witnesses to the Greek New Testament. And over against them, you have what is now known to us as the Byzantine majority textual tradition. And most of the manuscript data is found in that tradition but it tends to be later than the other one. So I guess with that little basic intro, go to town on this.

RB: Alexandrian manuscripts would be stuff like vaticanus and sinaiticus where those are sort of the exemplars of this Alexandrian thing. So it gets the name Alexandrian from the region in Egypt called Alexandria which is where they think at least sinaiticus came from. So that's then used as sort of this shorthand to describe texts that are like sinaiticus and they tend to be geographically sort of root, even though they don't have to be. Another problem here is with a lot of these manuscripts, we simply don't know where they came from. We don't know where a lot of this stuff originated or where the scribe was that actually wrote out the particular thing. Some we do, very few we've got that would be called provenance. We know the provenance of the range is but most of them we don't so you got to kind of guess. One way that people guess is to sort of group them in texts that handle passages similarly. The Alexandrian texts would be one group and then the Byzantine texts would be a different group. Byzantine texts tend to be texts that are found throughout the Byzantine Empire, the large core of that area. And they are the most numerically prevalent so if you're just going to count manuscripts you would have far more of the Byzantine category than you would of an Alexandrian category.

MSH: Ultimately, the Textus Receptus tradition, the Greek text that Erasmus created and then you have Stephanus and Elzevir brothers and ultimately this thing that became known as the Textus Receptus. Those editions are a product are based on the Byzantine majority tradition whereas a lot of the material that was discovered later, 19/20 centuries, tend to fall into the Alexandrian tradition. So when you have an English translation that's modern, that's typically going to reflect the translation work done using an Alexandrian text family as opposed to the King James. And so that's why you get differences that can be kind of startling if you're not used to really looking at your Bible, like what happened to this verse or why is this verse in brackets, that kind of thing.

So you can have some real significant differences. How does the argument go? We've titled this episode New Testament manuscript conspiracies and this is a subject like any other subject. There will be people who prefer the Byzantine majority family on which the King James is ultimately based for clearheaded rational kinds of reasons. But then it'll range from those sort of rational reasons all the way up to bizarro world. I reference the little chick tract that basically said all the other translations except for the King James are the product of Satan and has a picture of a devil walking behind the Pyramids in Egypt because this is the Alexandrian text. It's the Satan text. So you go from the sublime to the ridiculous. Most of it tends to be on the ridiculous side of things, very sort of illogically argued.

RB: I would like to interject here and say that if you're looking for a reasoned explanation of what some call the Byzantine majority, you need to go read Maurice Robinson. Maurice Robinson is levelheaded and clear and prefers the text and has no translation in mind when he's making an argument for the text. He doesn't prefer to Byzantine text because it's behind the King James. He's got principled reasons in his mind for preferring this text. If you want to read an actual positive case for the Byzantine text, then you need to read Maurice Robinson because that's where you're going to find them.

MSH: Is he still alive?

RB: Yeah, last I knew.

MSH: Did you happen to see him last year? It's been a couple of years since I've sort of run into him and seen him.

RB: I haven't run into him because he usually, the last few years I've only been going to the SBL conference instead of ETS. He's normally at the Evangelical theological Society conference but usually does not go to SBL. The last time I talked to him was an ETS conference. That was probably six or seven years ago.

MSH: He is the rational guy in the room, in that room. I don't want to really reference too many names on the wacky side but there are plenty of websites. There are films. There are videos, "documentaries" that literally literally demonize the other side, demonize the Alexandrian text, and frankly, just drift off into irrationality. They are flights from reason in many cases but I think Rick has given good advice here. If you sort of gravitate toward this or if you're curious, how would someone rationally defend the Byzantine majority text, Maurice Robinson would be your guy.

RB: The other thing I would say while I'm thinking about it Mike is that the Byzantine majority text is the text of the Greek Orthodox Church and those guys aren't King James only by any stretch. So if you would suggest another place to go look, especially if you say you've got friends in the Orthodox Church, you could probably talk to them about it and they would be able to tell you about why they think that's the right text. Their argument has to do more on the basis of tradition and not on a textual basis. But there you have a major tradition across the globe which prefers this text for reasons that have absolute nothing to do with the fact that Wescott-Hort were evil to demon worshipers or something because they've got historical reasonable reasons to do that. It's been the text of their church for 1500 years. Why change it?

MSH: Think about it. Eastern Orthodox Church, Byzantium, Byzantine majority text, the reason why this text family gets its name in broad strokes here, if you read a historical treatment of this, the reason why there are fewer Alexandrian texts, that's in Egypt and that has something to do historically with the rise of Islam. There were lots of manuscript destruction going on in Middle Eastern regions. The Christians deliberately took manuscripts to the Greek New Testament and fled to the east in what we would call the dark ages, late antiquity, and they were safe there so they could produce more copies there. Out of that came a whole textual tradition that Rick just used the number 1500 years. That's the case. They've had that text in that part of the world for 1500 years in Byzantium and other locations toward the east, the eastern part of what had been the Roman Empire. So that's why you get 75-80% of your manuscripts of the Greek Testament are in that family as opposed to 20-25% or whatever it is in the Alexandrian family. They're historical reasons for this. It's not that God was blessing the Byzantine ones and using the Muslims to stamp out this satanic text over here in Alexandria. But you get these absurdities, these arguments from selected providence.

RB: And really, their arguments only make sense in hindsight. I can only make the argument about Muslims going down and somehow eradicating the text. That's completely from hindsight. That's not actually looking at the evidence and understanding how it developed. That's looking

from where I am through the filters and that must have been what had happened. It's completely a backwards argument.

MSH: Those poor Christians in Egypt, they didn't really have a good New Testament.

RB: that's not true though.

MSH: I know but that's the logic.

RB: There's this place in Egypt. Basically, they found this garbage dump and it was just littered with manuscripts and papyri of all sorts of things but a lot of the early New Testament papyri comes straight from that garbage dump. It's just amazing to even think that somehow Egypt didn't have a great text. Well, maybe not in the Greek but they surely had Coptic. There's the Coptic Orthodox Church there that's preserved the text in Coptic forever all the way back. That's another important witness to the Greek New Testament. So it's just mind-boggling when arguments like that are made to me.

MSH: Let's talk about some of the argument. The basics of it are you have the minority generally speaking oldest and you have the majority mostest kind of thing, Alexandrian versus the Byzantine majority. That's why it gets the name majority because most of the manuscripts fall into that group. Most of them were produced later because that's the way historically it worked out. If you put them all together, you're going to have 90% of the same thing anyway but it's these variances, these differences that have surfaced. Let's pretend I'm the King James only guy and I've met Rick Brannan somewhere and I find out you work at a Bible software company doing Greek New Testament stuff. If I asked you a question or maybe made an assertion like you know that the King James is really the only translation you should be using because it was based on the textus receptus, what would you say?

RB: I would ask about what happens to people who don't speak English?

MSH: Well, the King James is God's word for English speakers. This is through the providence of God and really the act of God. And frankly, the most severe King James only people will say that the King James translation itself was an act of inspiration for the English-speaking world. Those other languages God has acted to produce the translation he wants them to have. The King James is the one for English. They never bothered to think about, I wonder what the Spanish and Portuguese and French, what text were those based on?

RB: That's why it asked the question because it starts with, really they even call themselves King James only. So the first question I'd ask is what about other languages, Spanish, French, whatever, because that gets back to the Greek text. The other question I'd ask is what about the Old Testament? Why aren't we so up in arms about that?

MSH: That is the dagger to the heart because nothing that Rick and I have been talking about in this episode has anything to do with the Old Testament. The textual situation for three quarters of your Bible, not just New Testament, Bible, the whole thing, three quarters of that has nothing

to do with Alexandrian texts, Byzantine majority text. It's a totally different ballgame textually and in the way it gets talked about, too. So the King James Bible is one thing but this textual debate is just New Testament. So that's a really good question to ask and a lot of people will not have thought about the difference between the Bible and the New Testament when it comes to this issue. But let's say I'm not deterred and I say I don't care about all that fancy academic stuff. You're just trying to confuse me. I can show you verses where these other translations take the deity of Christ out of the verse or fudge on it.

RB: I would immediately start to ask about those verses because for any one of these things, the thing I've heard, especially in the Gospels and I've seen this, where in the Gospels, the King James will have something like and Jesus and his disciples went into Jerusalem and then did a miracle or something like that. That's what the King James has, Jesus and his disciples they went into. And in the Alexandrian, the evil one, has and they went in to Jerusalem.

MSH: See, they took Jesus right out of the verse there. Wescott-Hort, they must have hated Jesus.

RB: But they didn't. There's still a pronoun referring to them and anybody who actually knows language could read that in English or Greek and still understand exactly who was there, number one, and number two, I could also probably, I don't have any offhand, but I could probably find some, exactly the opposite situation where the Alexandrian text has got Jesus went into the city and the Byzantine has text got he went into the city. Those types of things happen back and forth. More often than not, the textus receptus expands. Expands is the wrong word. Has expands kind of bias' the discussion but more often than not, the King James will have a fuller version. Jesus and his disciples went into the city, and those are technically, and I think best, explained as clarifying things that scribes did in a church like in the Byzantine Empire, like the Eastern Orthodox Church, where these things are being read. The priqepy is being read. The section is being read.

Think back to our lectionaries where they just have a section of Scripture and it starts off, and they went into the city. Well, who were they when I'm just starting off in the middle of it? Well, that seems to me to be a place where the guy who's putting the text in the lectionary says this is really Jesus and his disciples. I'm going to put that here. That's completely the kind of thing that happened. A lot of these sort of additions or let's say removal's of Jesus from the text, there are boundaries in the text where if you're reading the text just by itself might need to reinitialize that character, that person in the text in order to understand who's doing what and what's going on.

MSH: Scribes tend to try to make things less complicated rather than more complicated. They lean toward clarifying something rather than making it something more confusing. So you could have a scribe, whether it's a lectionary or just a copy of the text, where some scribe at some point in history looking at a pronoun thinks I know that's Jesus so I'm going to put Jesus's name in there because that will help. They've altered the text but for a good reason. They haven't changed the meaning at all but they have nevertheless altered the text so when that text gets copied, when their copy gets copied and so on and so on, you can see how these things sort of creep in.

RB: I wouldn't even say that first guy changed the text Mike. What very easily could have happened was that first guy and his copy of the manuscript wrote Jesus and his disciples off in the margin and then the guy who copied the text might have incorporated that in the margin or maybe not. Maybe what happened was a corrector to the transcription, they would have correctors go over the text, maybe the corrector wrote a note above, Jesus and his disciples because he read a text somewhere else that actually said that. Or he confused it with work in Matthew but in Mark it says Jesus and his disciples so I'm going to put that. There's 800 different reasons why it could happen.

MSH: The example you just gave us is a really good one. Well, Mark has it this way and Luke doesn't. Let's just put that in the margin or over the line or something like that.

RB: These are all the sorts of things that the text critics like Michael Holmes we talked about earlier, those are all the sorts of things they just innately know and they bring to any discussion they have about the text. This one says Jesus and his disciples. This one doesn't. He doesn't just say I'm going to flip a coin and pick which one's best. I think that always text guys get shorter. I'm just going to pick the shorter one. He doesn't do that. He looks at it and says well is that a paragraph boundary might somebody have reinitialize that, or is there a quotation here? Does this hand up somewhere else or is it quoted from the Old Testament somewhere or what does the Byzantine version say over here? Did it change over time? What's our earliest witness and how else does this document talk about that, like if there's a similar situation, does it always reintroduce Jesus and his disciples? He and all these guys, that's the kind of stuff they look at. It's not like they say this one has it. This one doesn't. The one that has it must be right. This one took it away. Those demons are

MSH: I hate this word. I'm not going to use it. By the way for listeners, all of these things that Rick just rattled off, they're not speculation. You will find examples of scribes doing all of these things in manuscripts. This is what textual critics, those who spend their life going through manuscripts like this, looking at every last line and every word and every feature of the manuscript. Over the centuries these things have been detected. They've been written about. They've been collected and collated. This isn't speculation as to how this particular difference, this one we're making up for illustration, is it a pronoun or is it the name Jesus, these things all have precedent in material that actually exists. It's not just once or twice. It's many times. As people spend their lives in this material, they get a feel for noticing. It's a good bet that this is why this one says this and that one doesn't because of XYZ reason because I've seen this happen 50 times in other manuscripts, just things like that.

RB: Going back to Holmes, because he's the gold standard, he's just a good honest guy and he would be in the school of what you call reasoned eclecticism.

MSH: We need to talk about reasoned eclecticism.

RB: What that basically means is when I come to this variation in the text, I'm going to look at everything. In shorthand what it means is the one I think is right here is going to be the one that best explains all the other variations that I see. A lot of times when you run across a variation in

a text in the New Testament, there's not just like two options. It's not just a binary option this or that. There's usually a lot of different ways that could have happened. So like Jesus and his disciples, maybe there is one variation that has none of them, there's one variation that has them all. There's one that just says Jesus and they, maybe there's one that just says they, maybe there's one that says Jesus and Peter and John.

There's a lot of different stuff that could happen there so what the reasoned eclectic guys do is they look at all of those and they look at what was called internal evidence and external evidence. Internal evidence would be the text itself, the variations we're talking about, how they were composed. When they look at external evidence, that would be like your manuscript date, where it came from if you know that. They're also going to look at style issues. They're going to look at this other stuff like how else does the same text say the same thing or does it do different things in other places or is there a parallel in Mark? And then if there's a parallel in Mark and Matthew, it's what are the variations of the parallel in Mark. What's really going on there? So what the reasoned eclectic guys do is, it's not like everybody does this but they say okay I'm going to try to find the one that best explains all the others. And in this case, they might say well I like they because I've got Jesus and his disciples, I've got Jesus and Peter and John. It makes more sense to me.

MSH: Like if the author uses they instead of Jesus, Peter, and John 95% of the time then chances are, they're at least good that they should be what we read here because of author style, all sorts of things like that. This is painstaking work. It's really work. It's not just flipping a coin. It's not just I like this one or this one's oldest. That must be the best.

RB: These guys are completely not like I like the Alexandrian text so if it's in vaticanus, that's it because the vaticanus is the best text. That is not how they do it. They're completely willing to say vaticanus messed this up because of all the other evidence I've seen. They're coming to the reading, working backwards to understand how it happened. They might even start looking at patristic citations of this material or how other early versions like so we do have coptic reserved for this passage in a couple different forms. What did they say? These guys have got to be not just ninjas in Greek, they got to be ninjas in all sorts of languages nobody knows today. So there's all sorts of stuff you have to do to bring all the pieces together in a way that completely respects the development of the text that we know, cherish, admire, and love.

MSH: Unless there is a second deity who's sovereign, all of this material we have by the sovereignty of God, not just one family. That's just a hobby horse for me because of the way God is used to argue a particular point. You either believe you got providence in history, and there is one person, one God behind all that, and we can figure out the reasons or not, or you don't. You either got one or you don't. If you got one then we all have it for whatever reason. This is the way it worked out. But it is just not this idiosyncratic I just have an ax to grind against this idea and that's why I'm making my choice. That is not the way textual critics work.

RB: It is completely an overtime thing, too. And what I mean by that is we had the period of the textus receptus in the early printed editions of the Bible and then we had more manuscript discoveries and we almost had, especially with Tischendorf, an overreaching to this Alexandrian thing. I love this older text. SInaiticus is awesome. I prefer its reading. Tischendorf was

particularly susceptible to that but I don't blame them. If I found a manuscript, I would think this the greatest thing in the world, too. So we've got this almost overreaching and you get that in Westcott-Hort as well although they're kind of dialed back from Tischendorf in a number of ways. So your over on that side of it and I think even today we've sort of got this like we're swinging the pendulum all the way back to the Byzantine readings. But there are some places where text critics today would even say we over-reached. And like for this reading right here, the Byzantine actually is probably the better reading.

I've been to papers at the SBL in the text critical groups, the guys who are actually doing the work on the Etita Critical Mayor or the International Greek New Testament Project, all these guys, and I can remember a paper by Clause who was one of the editors of the German Bible Society where he was talking about how we need to give the Byzantine a little more credence because we basically overlooked it and were discounting it and we need not do that because there's great textual evidence in there. We hear Byzantine, we throw it away. That's not right. There is a diversity to the Byzantine text just like there's a diversity on the Alexandrian side of it. And there are places where that diversity can witness something that is valuable and important that we need to integrate and use in our understanding and development of these readings. I forget what the case was.

I think it was probably somewhere in James or Jude, I don't remember but is taking this Byzantine reading at the 26th and 27th edition didn't take because we think it's right based on this new manuscript evidence we've got and all the different ways that we are sort of sifting this data and looking at it. So it's not like if I say I think the Alexandrian text is best. I'm going to completely hate the Byzantine. It's not like a Republican and Democrat sort of thing. It is not binary. It's not like if I like one I got to hate the other. This is all evidence and we are trying to deeply deeply understand this text and how it developed and the best representation of it today because so much further work of everybody, basically the believers of Christendom, is resting on this work. So we are going to go down all the rabbit trails. We are going to find all the readings. We are going to look at them all.

MSH: That's a nice segue way, too, because the bottom line for listeners and people who aren't specialists, really getting down to can I trust the New Testament or not, and the answer is of course you can. The fact that an English translation, English translations aren't going to agree with every English word they select, and even to the textual level they may adopt one reading over another, what most translators will do now, most publishers, if it matters, excluding nonsense like that where it might matter for some point of doctrine or interpretation, publishers and translation committees will give you other information in footnotes. It's not that one translation is just stellar and the other one is hopeless. It's just this either or fallacy that has sort of been a byproduct of this kind of conspiratorial way of looking at Greek New Testament manuscripts. I would say you are safe in ignoring all of this conspiratorial nonsense. If you're really interested in the subject, why does this one say this and another one say that, Rick, can you recommend a few good resources or books if someone wanted to read about the history the Greek New Testament or actually get examples.

RB: The best book that I can recommend is just a very basic introduction. This is like I just heard about this yesterday and I don't really understand it but I'd like to read something level, J. Harold Greenlee who is like one of my personal heroes. This guy was like a missionary and he

wrote introductions to textual criticism. He wrote grammars, Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias. I mean he was just, as far as getting resources in the hands of people to help understand the Bible better, J. Harold Greenlee was like a saint, the patron saint of that right now as far as I'm concerned. So J. Harold Greenlee has a little book called the Text of the New Testament. I'm pretty sure that's what it's called. It's like 120 pages.

Baker Academic publishes it now and it's just a wonderful little introduction written at the level of, I just heard about this yesterday but what does this all mean, written like that. He goes from a lot of the stuff we talked about, just basically what are manuscripts and he even walks through big examples of text critical issues, none of which we've talked about today, things like that in John, the longer ending of Mark 16:9 and following. He talks about all that kind of stuff. He does it in a way that is an honoring to both sides of the argument. He presents it all and he walks you through what he thinks and he lets you think what you think.

MSH: That's a good recommendation. I have that.

RB: So as far as I can just a general introduction, that's great. If you need something more reference oriented like you're reading the New Testament and you want to know are there any sort of manuscript things going on here, any sort of variations that I should be aware of? There are a couple of books but the classic is Bruce Metzger's Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament. That one's really kind of interesting because it was originally geared towards translators so they could be aware of areas where there are text critical differences that you should be aware of if you're translating the Greek New Testament.

MSH: You're going to need at least the alphabet there.

RB: Yeah, you're going to need the alphabet, yes and no because it does give you the verse reference and can find that without knowing Greek, and the descriptions are written in English. So you may not understand everything but it does translate some things. Dialing it a step back from that, and this one's only available from Logos Bible Software, and disclaimer, I helped write it. So I teamed up with a guy that I've worked with before, Israel Logan, and he wrote the notes for the Old Testament and I wrote the notes for the New Testament. It's called the Lexham Textual Notes. Where it situates itself is between the footnote you'd find in the bottom of your Bible where it says some manuscripts have ... and Metzger's textual commentary. So it's just a little bit more of an expansive discussion of a variation unit. It covers Old Testament and New Testament so it covers whole Bible, which I think is really important. And it is also written from my perspective to where you don't need to know anything about Greek. You don't need to know anything about Hebrew. You don't even know anything about text critical terminology or symbols which, if you read Metzger, you going to be overwhelmed.

MSH: You'll even get that in NET Bible which is a great resource with lots of textual notes/ But the NET Bible I think is fair to say will presuppose more of that.

RB: They're more about listing manuscript evidence and that's where you list all these weird symbols that you just have to assume everybody knows what they mean. We don't do any of that in Lexham Textual Notes. That's only available currently in LOGOS Bible Software. So that's

really the case I wrote that for. There is a big void between the person who sees this note on the bottom of their Bible and they're like what does that mean? They don't have any other place to look for it. I wanted to provide a bridge to give you more information about what's going on there and then sort of inform you so you could jump up to the next level of either like a NET Bible or Metzger's textual commentary, or there's another one. Another great one is Phillip Comfort's New Testament Text in Translation Commentary, which doesn't require as much of a Greek knowledge as Metzger would. So that would be another interesting area to look if you're interested in this.

MSH: Specifically for the King James Version debate, I would recommend the D.A. Carson's little paperback, the King James Version Debate: A Plea for Realism. We'll have a link to this episode to a three-page summary that someone out there in the Internet created. It's a live link but it's a three-page summary of a section in Carson where Carson responds to specific defenses of the Byzantine majority view because of this King James only kind of debate. So it's kind of a nice summation. It's in comprehensible English. I think Carson would be a reasoned eclectic, would he not?

RB: Sure, I mean that's really where most people lie, most people follow.

MSH: His book, it's for the layperson. You don't have to know Greek for it but just trying to talk people in off the ledge when it comes to this conspiratorial approach to the New Testament. I want to transition a little bit since you brought up this thing that you created. Before we come to the end of the episode, I want to talk to you a little bit about some other things you've made. You've made what I consider kind of a unique tool. If you're interested in Greek New Testament vocabulary, Rick has written a couple of books. Is it two? I'll let him described them. But a couple of books on the Pastoral Epistles. I guess its 1st and 2nd Timothy.

RB: There's two different books that do different things. One of them is on 1st Timothy, and that the one you're thinking about right now. I little back story, for Lexham Press, the publishing house for Logos for Faithlife basically, they publish a lot of other stuff, too. I did a lot of work from 2007 through 2012/13/14. I translated things and edited things. Stuff like the Apostolic Fathers in English, I did a translation of that for Lexham. We also published an English edition of the Septuagint and I also did the addition of the Greek Apocryphal Gospels. But the funny thing is that all of that work started with me studying the Pastoral Epistles back in my 2003-2006. I would be working through this text and I would be stuck on some words because the pastorals have a pretty unique vocabulary comparatively.

Some people make a big deal about that. I don't really but in order to understand it, what I noticed is that when I would look through Lexham articles, they would always take you out to other stuff that wasn't New Testament, like the apostolic fathers or to stuff in the apocryphal or to Deutero-Canon or to Philo or Josephus or the Greek Pseudepigrapha, or anything like that. And you can really get a better understanding of what these words meant in the context in which they were used back in the Pastoral Epistles. So I started working through the text of 1st Timothy in order but I would go and basically find anything written anywhere, whether it was New Testament, Old Testament, Septuagint, Apocrypha, Josephus, Philo, Apostolic Fathers, I didn't care, find something that was helpful in understanding what was going on in this letter of

Paul to Timothy. And this book on 1st Timothy is called a Lexical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles. I hope to do 2nd Timothy and Titus in the future, so this is like the first of three volumes. This is the result of it. It's like 350 pages. I worked through all of 1st Timothy and just try to give a better idea what's going on. So some people could call them word studies. I think sometimes that has a bad connotation. So I called it a lexical commentary because commentary is just helpful things.

MSH: Your focus is obviously vocabulary but you actually have full discussions. So just for the sake of comparison for people who've used like a Strong's tool or a more substantial lexicon, they will give you the locations of places where a particular word occurs but because the space, they can't actually take you to the location. And even if they could, they don't discuss it. Okay, you found it now, without really factoring in I'm looking at it but why should I care.

RB: That's the part that's really missing because a lot of these references. I'll be honest, I don't look up every reference I see in something that I'm reading. And maybe you do Mike. What this book on 1st Timothy does is it actually brings all those things back into the context. So if I'm in say 1st Timothy 6, and it's talking about the love of money, Polycarp's letter to the Philippians talks about that too and uses similar forms. He probably was thinking about 1st Timothy when he wrote it. And so I give you that excerpt in context in the discussion so you can read it, too. And then the words that are relevant, I put in italics so you can know that word must be the word we're talking about whether it's translated the same or not. It's not in Greek but the translation. So I try to bring that back into the context so you can follow through the argument and understand how this language was used. The goal isn't to tell you how to do a word study. I really look at this more as preparation for exegesis than the product of exegesis I guess. I want you to be able to use this information as you're reading the text to be able to understand more about what's going on there. So that's the 1st Timothy book.

MSH: I can tell listeners, I've obviously seen a lot of commentaries, a lot of word study tools, but what Rick has made here really is different. Dare I say it is actually helpful? I can say it because a lot of these tools will get you to the trough but they won't necessarily teach you how to drink or do how much to drink.

RB: Some people who write are really great about distilling information and walking you through how to think things and other people who write are essentially giving you a brain dump on the stuff they looked up. It's like I looked up all this stuff. There you go. It's in the footnote. Now go distillate and move on. That's just not helpful. I don't want to doom the stuff to footnotes because nobody ever looks it up. I just happened to look it up. This is really helpful so that how that book happened.

MSH: So that's one volume then, first of a three volume series. What's the other one that's currently available?

RB: The other book that has currently become available is a little book on 2nd Timothy called 2nd Timothy Notes on Grammar, Syntax and Structure. Essentially what that is is what's called an interlinear block outline of the text of 2nd Timothy in English and Greek. And so it's got the

Greek phrase with the representative English phrase underneath it. And then there's like a block outline. Some people who do block outlines indent text to show structure of the text. It does that, too. Both lines are indented. There's a Greek phrase and an English phrase translated underneath it. You can see the whole structure of what's going on and the part being discussed.

On top of that, there are notes on the grammar and syntax and structure so I talk about the discourse structure, different devices that are used, essentially random thoughts that came into my mind when I was actually working through the text. It was actually a lot of preparation for something else I did we can talk about some other time. But it was real helpful to me and I actually wrote it as a bunch of blog posts and when I pulled it out, it was 100 pages. How'd that happen? So I put it into a word document and I revised it and I rewrote it and I reformatted everything and I just figured you know this is just a nice little piece of stuff here that can be helpful so why not? So we published that, too.

MSH: I actually think somebody out there who's doing house church or doing a small group study in their church and they want to go through 1st or 2nd Timothy, I think either one of these for the person who's leading it, you don't really have to have Greek. If you're kind of used to reading somewhat academic material, I think these would be companion volumes that would really help prepare you for a discussion of what questions people are going to ask. What does this mean, what does that mean? Why does he say this and not that? I think it would really help.

RB: The 1st Timothy, probably so but the 2nd Timothy has a little more intense Greek requirement than the first one, but they are both helpful. If you're used to that sort of thing, it's not going to be dissuading to you at all. And I think there's useful stuff in the second volume even if you just skim over all the Greek letters.

MSH: Good, thanks for coming on. I want to give you a chance, you referred your blogs, you should tell people where you blog. Do you still blog? I assume you do because I follow you on twitter.

RB: On the twitter it's @rickbrannan. I have a blog at rickbrannan.com and you can find a more information about the books at the publisher, which is appianwaypress.com.

MSH: It's APPIAN, and you should spell your last name.

RB: Brannan. Not ON but AN.

TS: Rick, before we let you go, I have a question. Can you speak about any current modern translation efforts?

RB: That's a good question. I know that here at faith life, we did the Lexham English Bible which was within the past three or four or five years which is based on the Hebrew Bible that the New Testament is based on the SPO Greek New Testament that Mike Holmes put together for us. That's a relatively recent effort. We also did an English translation of the Septuagint which is a recent effort as well. It's hard to find in an English translation. There's one published by

Oxford which is called the New English Translation of the Septuagint which you can get in print which is alright. I happen like ours better but I would say I have a vested interest in it.

MSH: Have we bound ours> Can you get it in hard copy or is it just digital?

RB: It's just digital still.

MSH: Are there plans for that?

RB: It's out of my hands.

MSH: I get asked that and I direct people to the digital resources but I was fishing there to see if anybody had made a decision to put that into a hard copy.

RB: I don't know of anything that's going on right now. I'm just trying to remember. I haven't thought about that for a while.

MSH: Nothing pops into my head. Usually you'll hear about a publisher doing something in that regard because publishers like to have their own translations because they sell.

RB: Publication committees or translation committees, there are all these meetings so there may be a revision to the NIV in 10 years or 5 years. So they're always sort of working on it. I do know that we've been looking at revising the Lexham English Bible. I'm not quite sure when that will become available but that's one we've worked on internally.

MSH: The Study Bible, are we allowed to talk about the status of the Study Bible?

RB: I don't know.

MSH: Since I don't know either, we're going to do it. The LEB is going to appear with Study Bible Notes. It's going to appear in hard copy so it won't be this huge digital resource. I did a lot of these notes for certain Old Testament books.

RB: This is the faith life study Bible?

MSH: Yeah, the faith life study Bible that uses the LEB. That is at a publisher now. It's going to appear in a hardcopy volume. The notes obviously will be quite a bit trimmed but that would be an example of something that has not hit the mass market, the Christian bookstore market yet that is actually in process as we speak. That would be a new translation for a lot of people, the LEB. If they're not a Logos user, they would not have seen that before.

TS: What's some parting words just for the lay people out there who get caught up on this translation, that translation, this word says this and that. They kind of get lost in it all. What's the basic take away?

RB: I would say don't lose the forest for the trees. Trees are important to look at but just because one word differs in one spot, you need to sort of zoom back and look at the entire context and say is this passage really saying something different than his other passage. And also know that the text behind a given translation had a lot of work done on it by people who really know and are passionate about getting it right. Sometimes it's good to be skeptical about things but other times it's good to not let that skepticism override rationality when you're looking at the stuff. So I would say know that just because a word or two is different doesn't mean that one is junk and the other is holy.

Be rationally as you look at it and know that there are all sorts of reasons why these things happen, some that are understood, some that are not, and sometimes even the text critics don't know because they differ on a lot of different things. You talk to different text critics and will probably have different options on some things. So I would say know that it is God who makes this stuff available. We have a God who is sovereign. I believe that and that he wants us to know his Word so stop, look, be diligent, but don't go off the edge. The modern Bible translations that you can find from reputable solid publishers are all pretty good and they're all really developed by people who are pretty passionate about the text. I'm a fan, especially if you don't know much about Greek or Hebrew, look at 3,4,5,6 different translations and see what they all say. I'm not saying make your own reading from that. What I am saying is maybe get an idea on the variation of how important or not important it is.

MSH: I would say that there are a lot of people who believe the Bible is the Word of God. We'll put both Testaments into this. And they do translation work, a substantial amount of it, they work in the field of textual criticism, and they do the best they can to produce English translations that are reliable. Having said all that, they're not omniscient. None of them are going to claim to be omniscient. You aren't omniscient. None of us are but they did the best they can to produce a reliable translation. And broadly speaking, English Bible translations, especially all the way up from the King James to the modern era because they're basically committee translations, I'm actually wary of translations are produced by one person for a number of reasons.

All of these translations are committee translations. You have a number of people who are committed to trying to produce something that gives you a reliable reading, and when they can't agree, they will typically tell you in that source, that's what footnotes are for, or there are plenty of sources available to people now, Study Bibles is kind of like the next level up because a study Bible will give you textual notes, all way up into material online or little commentaries, that kind of thing. They'll let you know whether there's something think about here. That's just being honest. They're not hiding information from you. They're not like covering up a problem. We don't people read this or they won't think they're Bible's the Word of God. It's the exact opposite. We want you to know that we're not omniscient. There's something think about here. Do some study, talk your pastor, talk to this person or that person, and they can help you navigate whether this even matters. From one translation to the next there are different English words but I think Rick's advice is good. If you compare, you're going to realize there are very few places where you'll compare translation and it will be dramatically different. And that just tells you there's probably a manuscript issue here. Other than that, they're all doing the same thing and they're all doing pretty well.