

A SURVEY OF THE TEXTUAL VARIANTS IN MARK 9:33-41

EXEGESIS OF MARK, NT811

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Due to the fact that no one has access to the autographs of Scripture, the texts in use today are open to criticism. It may thus be helpful to study the available Greek texts for Mark 9:33-41 in order to examine each textual variant found therein. If any of these variants seem significant for determining the authenticity of the text before us, it will have been worth the effort. Therefore, textual criticism is the next step in exegeting this passage.

Textual Variants in Mark 9:33-41

The following is a list of each variant found in NA²⁷ from Mark 9:33-41:

(v.)	Variants	English Translation	Witnesses
33	a.) hll qon *	“they came”	a B D W . . .
	b.) hll qen	“he came”	A C L Q Y . . .
34	a.) ejn th' odw' */	“on the way”	<i>most</i>
	b.) omitted (•)	---	A D D pc it sy ^s
35	a.) kai legei autoi" eij ti" qeiei prwto" eijhai ejstai pantwn ejscato" kai pantwn diakono". *	“and he said to them, “if anyone wants to be first, he will be last of all and servant of all.””	<i>most</i>
	b.) omitted	---	D k

37	a.) eh * (¢ ...)	“one”	<i>most</i>
	b.) ek	“from”	W Q f ...
	c.) omitted	---	D G pc ...
37	a.) toioutwn paidiwn * (° ... ¢)	“these children”	<i>most</i>
	b.) paidiwn toioutwn	“these children”	a C D (Y) pc
37	a.) dechtai *	“should receive” (present form, thus perspective of process)	a B L Y ...
	b.) dexhtai	“should receive” (aorist form, thus unmarked, views whole event)	A C D W Q ...
38	a.) Efh aujtw/ ol jlwannh" *	“John said to him”	a B L D Q Y ...
	b.) apokriqei" de eifh aujtw/ ol jlwannh"	“But answering him, John said”	C
	c.) kai apokriqei" aujtw/ ol jlwannh" eipen	“And answering him, John said”	W f ^{d3} pc
	d.) apekriqh de aujtw/ ol jlwannh" kai eipen	“But John answered him and said”	D
	e.) apekriqh de aujtw/ ol jlwannh" legwn	“But John answered him, saying”	A ÷ f q sy ^h
38	a.) kai ekwl uomen aujton olti ouk hkolouqei hmin * (° ... ¢)	“and we forbade him because he was not following us”	a B D Q ...
	b.) ol' ouk akolouqei hmin kai ekwl uomen aujton olti ouk hkolouqei hmin	“who was not following us, and we forbade him, because he was not following us”	pc?
	c.) ol' ouk akolouqei hmin kai ekwl usamen aujton	“who was not following us, and we forbade him”	W D ...
39	a.) jhsou" *	“Jesus”	<i>most</i>
	b.) apokriqei"	“answering”	D it

	c.) ---	---	<i>W f p c s y</i>
40	a.) <i>h m w n</i> ... <i>h m w n</i> *	“us ... us”	<i>a B C W D Q Y ...</i>
	b.) <i>u h w n</i> ... <i>u h w n</i>	“you ... you”	<i>A D ÷</i>
	c.) <i>h m w n</i> ... <i>u h w n</i>	“us ... you”	<i>L p c</i>
	d.) <i>u h w n</i> ... <i>h m w n</i>	“you ... us”	<i>X p c</i>
41	a.) <i>e h o j o m a t i o l t i C r i s t o u e j s t e</i> *	“because you are of Christ”	<i>a² A B C* K L N Y ...</i>
	b.) <i>e h t w o j o m a t i m o u o l t i C r i s t o u e j s t e</i>	“in my name, because you are of Christ”	<i>D D Q f^{d3} a l</i>
	c.) <i>e h o j o m a t i m o u o l t i C r i s t o u e j s t e</i>	“in my name, because you are of Christ”	<i>a* C³ D Q W f^{d3} ...</i>

Evaluation of Variants

Several observations can be made at this point. Most of these variants bear little or no exegetical weight. Furthermore, most can be explained by only a survey of the witnesses which testify to each. The following are true of most of the variants, either:

- a.) The variant chosen by the text is attested by *most* (vast majority) of the witnesses.
- b.) The difference is only in word order.
- c.) There is a minor verb form change.
- d.) The words in each variant are synonymous.

In verse 41, however, some slight change in emphasis is indicated by the variants, and each of them seems to have a good range of attestation. The following observations can be made:

- 1.) The first reading appears to be the most strange, considering Jesus' frequent use of the phrase "in my name." The phrase *ἐν ὀνόματι ὁπί τῆς Χριστοῦ ἐστὶν* focuses only on the issue of being of, or related to, Christ as the grounds for which someone might give someone (in context, an apostle) a cup of water. The prepositional phrase means "under the category that," "on the ground that," or "because." Metzger suggests that though this is perfectly acceptable Greek, it "appears to have struck some copyists as strange; they therefore modified it in various ways." (Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary* 86.)
- 2.) The second and third reading are virtually the same in meaning. Both are widely attested, but both bear the potential of having added words. Furthermore, Jesus uses the phrase "in my name" two times already, and each time he uses a *different* preposition. The phrase is *ἐπι τῷ ὀνόματι μου*. John does use the phrase *ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι σου*, which may weaken the argument, but it seems that Jesus would have again used the same phrase he had twice used already if he were speaking for the third time about the same issue, his name.

It is being suggested that the first reading is best. It is the harder and shorter reading, which may give it greater potential for authenticity, and the prepositions used throughout this passage have been shown to give support. This is by no means conclusive but rather a suggestion from a very amateur textual critic. The only bearing on meaning is that this statement of Jesus would be focusing on the fact that there will be eternal reward for anyone who recognizes and helps someone else *on the ground that* he is "related to Christ." Perhaps the phrase *ἐν ὀνόματι ὁπί* emphasizes one's relation to Christ in a stronger fashion than does *ὁπί*. The variant reading, on the other hand, uses the word *ὀνόματι* in its customary meaning to pose a second reason that such a person, who will be rewarded, might give a cup of water to one of the

apostles: in the name of Christ (*as well as* because of the apostle's relation to Christ.) Though the textual reading is preferred by this writer, both the variant and the textual reading are completely within reason and are well-attested.