

THE REVELATION 22:14 CONTROVERSY!

By Dr. Phil Stringer

One of the most commonly alleged errors in the King James Bible is in Revelation 22:14. The King James Bible reads, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” This is a clear translation of the Textus Receptus.

The New International Version of Revelation 22:14 is typical of the Critical Text. It reads, “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”

Bible Translations and Revelation 22:14

The Critical Text wording of Revelation 22:14 is very popular. It is found in the Revised Standard Version, the New World Translation (Jehovah’s Witness), the Weymouth Translation, the New American Standard Bible, the Williams New Testament, The Beck New Testament, the Living Bible, the New International Version, the New English Bible, the Contemporary English Version, the Moffatt Bible, and the New Scofield Reference Bible.

The J. B. Phillips New Testament leaves out the verse completely.

The New King James Bible has the Textus Receptus reading but includes a footnote, which casts doubt on it.

The Spanish Reina Valera 1960 translation and the French Louis Segond translations contain the Critical Text wording.

The Spanish Reina Valera Gomez 2004 contains the Textus Receptus reading.

Is Revelation 22:14 Too Hot to Handle?

It is amazing how many Bible commentators do not comment on this verse.

M. R. DeHaan’s commentary on the Book of Revelation completely ignores this verse. So do the commentaries written by Joseph Parker, Clarence Larkin, William Pettingill, Alexander McClaren, Lehman Strauss, James Gray, and James Knox. Even Mathew Henry, normally the most complete of commentators, ignores the verse.

Peter Ruckman ignores the verse in his commentary on Revelation but addresses it in his book, *Problem Texts* (chapter 15).

Endorsing the Critical Text

William Newell endorses the Critical Text reading. John Walvoord endorses the Critical Text reading, but admits that, “Good authorities can be cited for both readings.” Walter Scott claims that every scholar of note rejects the King James reading. *The Liberty Bible Commentary* endorses the Critical Text reading and belittles the King James Bible and the Textus Receptus reading. Arno Gaebelein says, “The King James here is faulty.” He goes on to say, “all leading scholars like Alford, Darby, etc. make the change.”

John R. Rice deals with the issue at length in his commentary on the book of Revelation. He calls the King James reading a “bad translation evidently derived from some gloss added by a zealous copiest to some ancient manuscript.” Rice endorses the American Standard Version reading.

William McDonald says that either reading could be correct.

Endorsing the Received Text!

Adam Clarke comments on the King James reading but does not mention the controversy. Albert Barnes, Dave Sorenson, and Rick Mosley do the same. Paul Fedena comments on the King James reading and briefly mentions the controversy.

The Pulpit Commentary mentions both wordings and some of the manuscript evidence for each. Jameson, Faucett and Brown mentions both readings and defends the Textus Receptus reading.

The Manuscript Evidence

The Textus Receptus reading for Revelation 22:14 is found in forty-six cursive manuscripts in Old Latin Bibles, in ancient Syrian, Coptic and Armenian translations. It is quoted by Tertullian and Cyprian.

The Textus Receptus reading is found in both the Latin and Greek Received texts of Erasmus and in the Protestant translations of the Bible in French, German, Dutch and Italian.

The Critical Text reading is found in Codex, Aleph, Codex A and is similar to a quote from the sermons of Athanasius. It is found in the Roman Catholic Latin Vulgate.

In reality there are relatively few ancient manuscripts that contain Revelation 22.

The Real Issue

The debate is simple. If you accept the Textus Receptus reading found in the majority of available manuscripts, the King James Bible is correct. If you accept the Critical Text reading found in a tiny minority of manuscripts the vast majority of the new English translations are correct.

Dr. Hyles

Some independent Baptists trying to justify their use of the Critical Text, point out the Dr. Jack Hyles said that the King James Bible was wrong at Revelation 22:14 and that the Critical Text was correct. However, “*Let’s Study the Revelation*” was written in Dr. Hyle’s ministry. In later years he would say, “If the day ever comes that some teacher at Hyles-Anderson College teaches that we have no perfect English translation in the King James Bible, that rascal will never walk on campus again.” (The Need for an Every Word Bible, 2003, Hyles Publications.)

Dr. Hyles cannot be rightly used as a reference for the Critical Text.

Salvation By Works

Some independent Baptists, trying to justify their acceptance of the Critical Text, claim that Revelation 22:14 in the King James Bible teaches salvation by works. They claim that the King James Bible must be rejected here in order to avoid heresy.

However, Revelation 22:14 is clearly not a verse about salvation. It is a verse about rewards for the believer in the millennium. These rewards are based upon works.

Conclusion

The evidence for the reading, “Blessed are they that do his commandments,” is as strong as the evidence for the Textus Receptus itself. When a translator chooses the reading, “wash their robes” or a commentator endorses that reading they clearly demonstrate their bias for the Critical Text.