

## **Revelation 22:14 "Blessed are they that DO HIS COMMANDMENTS"**

"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 verse is sometimes criticized as teaching a works salvation, and thought to be based on inferior Greek texts. Let's examine the issues more closely.

Other modern versions that began to appear with the Revised Version of 1881 are based on a very different Greek text than the Traditional text of the King James Bible. Westcott and Hort introduced textual changes in the New Testament affecting some 5000 words, most of these being omissions; but there also were some additions, and other cases of substitutions.

### **Westcott and Hort - (Textus Corruptus)**

**Μακάριοι οἱ πλύνοντες τὰς στολὰς αὐτῶν**, ἵνα ἔσται ἡ ἐξουσία αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον τῆς ζωῆς καὶ τοῖς πυλῶσιν εἰσέλθωσιν εἰς τὴν πόλιν.

### **Byzantine (Majority text, Textus Receptus)**

**Μακάριοι οἱ ποιοῦντες τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ**, ἵνα ἔσται ἡ ἐξουσία αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον τῆς ζωῆς, καὶ τοῖς πυλῶσιν εἰσέλθωσιν εἰς τὴν πόλιν.

Some anti King James Bible critics are so rabid in their hatred of the final authority of God's Book that they go completely over the edge of reason or any form of sound scholarship. Such a man is Robert Joyner. In his article "Is the KJV Bible Inerrant?" he writes: "Revelation 22:14 teaches salvation by works in the KJV. It says, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life." This is a verse taken from the Latin Vulgate and inserted by Erasmus because he did not have a complete Greek manuscript of the book of Revelation. The KJV translators continued this error. There is no Greek manuscript in existence that has the KJV reading. The NASB says, "Blessed are they who have washed their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life." (Note: you can see Mr. Joyner's anti KJB article here -

[http://www.kjvonly.org/robert/joyner\\_kjv%20of%20the%20bible%20infallible\\_1.html](http://www.kjvonly.org/robert/joyner_kjv%20of%20the%20bible%20infallible_1.html)

First of all it should be noted that Mr. Joyner is not even remotely close to being right when he says "There is no Greek manuscript support in existence that has the KJV reading."

The case presented in Revelation 22:14 is one of substitution. The traditional texts read as does the King James Bible - "Blessed are those that DO HIS COMMANDMENTS". This is the reading found in the vast Majority of all Greek texts, as well as some Old Latin copies, the Syriac versions (Peshitta, Harkelian, and Philoxenian), Lamsa's 1936 translation of the Syriac Peshitta, the Coptic Boharic (3rd to 4th century), and the Armenian ancient versions.

It is also so quoted by several church Fathers, including Tertullian 220, Cyprian 258, Tyconius 380 A.D., Andrew, Beatus and Arehas. All this information is found in his own UBS Greek

New Testament critical text First edition! Obviously Mr. Joyner has an axe to grind and is nowhere even close to being accurate in his assertions. Secondly, the Latin Vulgate editions do NOT read "do his commandments" as Mr. Joyner has affirmed. Rather, they read just like the modern critical text versions - "wash their robes. Here is the Latin Vulgate of Jerome 382 A.D. and here is the Clementine Latin Vulgate as well. They both read "wash their robes" NOT "do his commandments" - "Beati, **qui lavant stolas suas**". Mr. Joyner's information is completely bogus. You can see the Latin Vulgate here -

<http://www.drbo.org/lvb/>

And here is the Clementine Vulgate -

<http://vulsearch.sourceforge.net/html/index.html>

"They that do his commandments" is the reading found in all English translations that were based on the Traditional Greek texts widely used before the Westcott-Hort texts began to be accepted in the Protestant churches. This includes Tyndale 1525, Coverdale 1535, the Great Bible 1540, Matthew's Bible 1549, the Bishop's Bible 1568, the Geneva Bible 1587, and the 1611 King James Holy Bible. After 1611 it continued to be the reading in Whiston's Primitive N.T. 1745, John Wesley's 1755 translation, Worsley Version 1770, Webster's 1833 version, Etheridge Translation 1849 and Murdock's Translation of the Syriac 1851. It is also the reading of Young's literal, the NKJV 1982, the KJV 21st Century Version, Green's Modern KJV 2000, the Hebrew Names Version, World English Bible, the Worldwide English New Testament, the English Majority Text Version of 2002 by Paul Esposito, the Heritage Bible of 2003 by Guin Turner, the Lawrie Translation of 1998, the Holy Scriptures Jubilee Bible of 2000, the Online Linear of 2009 by Andre de Mol, and the Third Millennium Bible 1998.

Among foreign language Bibles "Blessed are they that DO his commandments" is the reading found in Luther's German Bible of 1545 - "Selig sind, **die seine Gebote halten**", the Dutch Staten Vertaling Bible - "**die Zijn geboden doen**", the Italian Diodati of 1649, La Nuova Diodati of 1991 - "Beati coloro che mettono **in opera i comandamenti d'esso**", the Russian Synodal version and the Russian Victor Zhuromsky all read as does the King James Bible. So too do the French Martin 1744 and the French Ostervald of 1996. - "Bienheureux sont **ceux qui font ses commandements**", the Spanish Sagradas Escrituras of 1569, as well as the Spanish Reina Valera from 1602, 1858, 1909 and the Reina Valera Gomez of 2010 - "Bienaventurados **los que guardan sus mandamientos**" (Note: The Spanish Reina Valera's of 1960 and 1995, under the influence of critical text promoters like Eugene Nida, have changed their text and now reads as do the NASB, ESV, NIV.) and the Portuguese Almeida Corrigida e Fiel - "Bem-aventurados aqueles que **guardam os seus mandamentos**". The Modern Greek New Testament, used by the Greek Orthodox churches today, still reads as does the King James Bible - **Μακαριοι οι πραττοντες** τας εντολας αυτου, δια να εχωσιν εξουσιαν επι το δενδρον της ζωης και να εισελθωσι δια των πυλων εις την πολιν.

You can see the Greek New Testament used by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

here -

<http://www.goarch.org/en/chapel/biblegreek/>

The reading found in such versions as the RSV, NASB, NIV, ESV, NET, ISV, Holman Standard, Darby, the Jehovah Witness New World Translation, and all Catholic versions like the Douay-Rheims, St. Joseph NAB and New Jerusalem bible is quite different. These versions read: "Blessed are those WHO WASH THEIR ROBES, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city."

**Μακάριοι οἱ πλύνοντες τὰς στολὰς αὐτῶν**, ἵνα ἔσται ἡ ἐξουσία αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον τῆς ζωῆς καὶ τοῖς πυλῶσιν εἰσέλθωσιν εἰς τὴν πόλιν.

This reading is found in very few Greek manuscripts, the most notable being Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus. The entire book of Revelation is missing from the Vaticanus copy, so it is of no help in determining the correct text. The reading of "those who wash their robes" is also that of the Latin Vulgate 425, and the Old Latin manuscript ar, as well as the Coptic Sahidic, and Ethiopic ancient versions. It is also so quoted by Fulgensius.

The Greek evidence for the King James reading of "those that do his commandments" is far more extensive and numerous, but there is also evidence for the reading found in the RSV, NASB, NIV, Holman Standard, and the ESV. However the Greek evidence is primarily limited to that of the Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus copies, and it should be noted that these two frequently differ from each other and Sinaiticus is notoriously wild in some of its readings.

Sinaiticus gives us some really strange readings in the book of Revelation, none of which are followed by any modern version. For example:

Revelation 4:8 "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

But Sinaiticus says: " Holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty..."

Revelation 7:4 and 14:3 Both these verses mention the number of 144,000. However Sinaiticus has 140,000 in 7:4 and 141,000 in 14:3.

Revelation 10:1 "And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and A RAINBOW was upon his head..." Sinaiticus says: "clothed with a cloud with HAIR on his head."

Revelation 21:4 "For THE FORMER THINGS are passed away". Sinaiticus reads: "For THE SHEEP are passed away."

Revelation 21:5 "Behold, I make all things NEW", while Sinaiticus says: "Behold, I make all things EMPTY."

To affirm that Sinaiticus is one of the oldest manuscripts and therefore the best, is to ignore the plain evidence of its many erratic readings and omissions.

Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus (the two primary manuscripts from which "they that wash their robes" come from) constantly disagree with each other. For example, in Revelation 21:3 the words "and be their God" are missing from Sinaiticus, but found in Alexandrinus. In Revelation 21:1 the word "GOD" in "God shall wipe away all tears" is found in Alexandrinus but omitted by

Sinaiticus. Sinaiticus also omits the words "any more pain" in 21:4, but they are found in Alexandrinus.

In Revelation 21:11 and 12 the words "Having the glory of God" and "at the gates twelve angels" are omitted by Alexandrinus but found in Sinaiticus, and in Revelation 22:2 Sinaiticus omits "of the nations" in the phrase "for the healing OF THE NATIONS", but they are found in Alexandrinus. This is the true character of these two "oldest and best" manuscripts.

Now, to address the meaning of the verse as it stands in the King James Bible. "Blessed are they that do his commandments...that they may enter in through the gates into the city." This verse cannot mean that we do all the commandments of God perfectly, for no one can possibly attain unto perfect obedience in this life; but in the believer there is a degree of change and submission to Christ as our Lord and Saviour. This is in contrast to those described in the very next verse which reads: "For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."

Our ability to believe in Christ and obey Him are themselves the results of His grace working in us. Christ Himself is the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2), and "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13). Again, we read in Hebrews 13:20-21 "Now the God of peace...make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Even king David, who, as a believer had at times sinned grievously, could say in Psalms 119:166 "LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments." Had he done them perfectly? By no means, but there was a change in David's life resulting from his knowing the true God.

The principal commandments of our Lord and Saviour are to believe on Him and to love other Christians. "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." 1 John 3:23.

John Gill remarks concerning Revelation 22:14 that the commandments of Christ are "done evangelically, when they are done in the strength of Christ, from love to God, in the exercise of faith upon him, with a view to his glory, and without dependence on them, acknowledging the imperfection of them, and looking unto Jesus for righteousness and life, and so are blessed persons."

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown comment about the two different readings, and have this to say regarding the text of the King James Bible: "The English Version (King James Bible) reading is quite compatible with salvation by grace; for God's first and grand Gospel "commandment" is to believe on Jesus. Thus our "right" to the tree of life is due not to our doings, but to what He has done for us. The right, or privilege, is founded, not on our merits, but on God's grace."

Surprisingly, Adam Clarke mentions only the King James reading and remarks that the obedience seen in Christians is only the result of the grace of God working in them.

Obviously I take the position that the King James Bible reading is the correct one. I find it ironic that the modern version promoters often tell us that the more difficult reading is to be preferred, but in this case they reject what would initially seem to be the more difficult reading in favor of an "easier" reading found in a minority of manuscripts. In fact, I believe this is why some early scribes changed the reading found in the vast Majority of all Greek copies. They wrongly thought the KJB reading teaches a works salvation, and so they changed the text. When properly understood, the King James Bible consistently teaches that salvation is solely by the grace of God in Christ.

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