

Matthew 11:12 and “suffereth violence” AV1611 vs. “forcefully advancing” 1984 NIV

Introduction

“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” Matthew 11:12 AV1611.

“From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it” Matthew 11:12 1984 NIV.

By inspection, the AV1611 and 1984 NIV readings given above for Matthew 11:12 are distinctly different for the expressions **“suffereth violence”** and **“forcefully advancing”** respectively.

Both *cannot* be **“the word of God”** therefore and one reading must be rejected as *not* scripture but merely **“the word of men”** 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

The date of the NIV Edition is important.

A comparison of versions has been carried out to determine which reading has the stronger witness among available versions.

33 pre and post-1611 versions have been compared with the AV1611 and the 1984 NIV in Matthew 11:12. This number is not exhaustive but the versions included in the comparison are believed to be the better-known ones.

The versions used for the comparison are as follows.

Pre-1611 Bibles

Wycliffe, Tyndale, Coverdale, Taverner (“*intruded*”), Matthew, Great, Bishops’, Geneva, 8 versions in all

1611 AV1611

This is the first edition of the 1611 Holy Bible. It reads:

“And from the dayes of Iohn the Baptist, vntill now, the kingdome of heauen suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” Matthew 11:12.

Catholic Bibles

1582 Rheims New Testament, 1582 RNT, Douay-Rheims Challoner Revision of 1749-1752, DRV, the Jerusalem Bible, JB, the New Jerusalem Bible, NJB, 4 versions in all

Non-NIV Post-1611 Bibles

1881 Revised Version, RV*, 1901 American Standard Version, ASV, New American Standard Version, NASV, RSV, NRSV, NKJV, Contemporary English Version, CEV, Holman Christian Standard Bible, HCSB, English Standard Version, ESV, New Century Version, NCV, the New Living Translation, NLT, Watchtower’s New World Translation, NWT, 12 versions in all

*Strictly speaking, the RV is a Catholic-minus-the-apocrypha version in all but name only.

NIV Bibles

1973 NIV, 2005 TNIV, 2011 NIV, 1996 and 2007 Gideons NIVs, 5 versions in all

Greek-English Interlinears

Three Greek-English Interlinears that reflect the main differences between available Greek New Testaments have been used in the comparison.

These are:

- the 1897 Newberry-Berry Edition of Stephanus' 1550 Received Text, agreeing mostly with the AV1611
- Nestle's 21st Edition, agreeing mostly with the 1984 NIV
- the Farstad-Hodges 'Majority' Text. It isn't a majority Greek New Testament text but it is nevertheless a distinct Greek witness to the New Testament. It agrees largely with the NKJV.

Sources

Many pre-1611 Bibles may be checked on www.biblesofthepast.com/.

Some pre-1611 and most of the post-1611 versions may be checked on:

www.e-sword.net/index.html

rockhay.tripod.com/worship/translat.htm

www.studylight.org/desk/

www.biblegateway.com/

biblewebapp.com/niv2011-changes/

The NWT may be checked on www.watchtower.org/e/bible/mt/chapter_011.htm.

The JB, 1973 NIV, 1996, 2007 Gideons NIVs checked are hard copies.

The Greek-English interlinears checked are hard copies.

Results of the Comparison #1 – Agreement with the AV1611 in Matthew 11:12

All 8 Pre-1611 Bibles

Wycliffe, Tyndale, Coverdale, Taverner ("intruded"), Matthew, Great, Bishops', Geneva

These are all bibles associated with the 16th century English Protestant Reformation or the lead-up to it i.e. Wycliffe.

1611 AV1611

All 4 Catholic Bibles

1582 RNT, DRV, JB, NJB

Note that Matthew 11:12 notwithstanding, Rome uses Matthew 16:18 to spread the kingdom by force. See the *Ruckman Reference Bible* p 1267 and his commentary *The Book of Matthew* pp 291ff.

9 Non-NIV Post-1611 Bibles

RV, ASV, NASV, RSV, NRSV, NKJV, CEV, HCSB, ESV

All 3 Greek-English Interlinears

In sum, 25 non-NIV versions of the 33 versions checked agree with the AV1611 in Matthew 11:12.

Results of the Comparison #2 – Non- NIV Agreement with the 1984 NIV in Matthew 11:12

3 Non-NIV Post 1611 Bibles

NCV, NLT, NWT (approximately)

The NCV, NLT, NWT read as follows.

“Since the time John the Baptist came until now, the kingdom of heaven has been going forward in strength, and people have been trying to take it by force.”

“And from the time John the Baptist began preaching and baptizing until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing, and violent people attack it.”

“But from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of the heavens is the goal toward which men press, and those pressing forward are seizing it.”

Results of the Comparison #3 – NIV Editions

3 NIVs, the 1973 NIV, 1996, 2007 Gideons NIVs agree with the 1984 NIV in Matthew 11:12.

The results for the TNIV, 2011 NIV with respect to the 1984 NIV in Matthew 11:12 are as follows. Note the highlighted phrases.

See biblewebapp.com/niv2011-changes/#summary and in turn biblewebapp.com/niv2011-changes/#040-011.

1984 NIV: *“From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.”*

2005 TNIV: *“From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing subjected to violence, and forceful men lay hold of violent people have been raiding it.”*

2011 NIV: *“From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing subjected to violence, and forceful men lay hold of violent people have been raiding it.”*

In sum, 3 non-1984 NIV Editions, the 1973 NIV, 1996, 2007 Gideons NIVs, agree with the 1984 NIV in Matthew 11:12 and the TNIV, 2011 NIV agree with the AV1611 in Matthew 11:12.

Overall Results Summary

In sum overall, 27 of the 33 versions checked agree with the AV1611 in Matthew 11:12 and 6 agree with the 1984 NIV, or approximately 80%/20% for/against the AV1611 or 4:1 ratio.

Overall Observations

Note first that none of the pre or post 1611 sources are authoritative with respect to the 1611 Holy Bible. They are simply witnesses for or against the text of 1611 Holy Bible, reflecting translators’ perceptions over the centuries of what is or is not **“the word of God”** 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

The pre-1611 sources usually agree with the AV1611 where the post-1611 sources, e.g. the 1984 NIV, depart from it, but in Matthew 11:12, *even the post-1611 editors*, by and large, couldn’t find either a textual or translational reason for disagreement with the AV1611 reading in Matthew 11:12 *and neither could those of the latest NIV edition, i.e. the 2011 NIV.*

It should be remembered that the 2011 NIV replaces both the 1984 NIV and the 2005 TNIV.

It appears therefore that the Biblica/Zondervan NIV editorial committee i.e. for the 2011 NIV, www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-International-Version-NIV-Bible/, decided that it was better to discard the 1973-1984 reading *“forcefully advancing”* in Matthew 11:12 and essentially abide by the time-honoured 1611 Holy Bible reading **“suffereth violence.”**

(Note in passing that any of the Lord's people, of an amillennial or postmillennial persuasion, who believes that God is "*forcefully advancing*" His worldwide kingdom through them as individuals is almost certainly experiencing Hebrews 12:11, with the Lord seeking to refine them as individuals, 1 Peter 1:6, 7, not forging ahead through them with any global kingdom. See remarks under *The Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God*.)

Hebrews 12:11 reads as follows:

"Now *no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*"

Such folk are urged to look forward to the peaceable outcome of their chastening from the Lord.)

Application

1 Thessalonians 5:21 should be applied.

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

In review, when 1 Thessalonians 5:21 is applied with respect to 33 of the most prominent witnesses for and against the AV1611 with respect to Matthew 11:12:

- 8 pre-1611 bibles agree with the AV1611
- The 1611 AV1611 agrees with the AV1611
- The 1582 RNT agrees with the AV1611
- 12 post-1611 non-NIV bibles agree with the AV1611
- 3 Greek-English Interlinears agree with the AV1611
- 2 NIVs, the 2005 TNIV, 2011 NIV, which replaces all earlier Biblica/Zondervan NIVs, agree with the AV1611
- 6 versions, the 1973 NIV, 1996, 2007 Gideons NIVs, NCV, NLT, NWT agree with the 1984 NIV.

The witnesses for the AV1611 in Matthew 11:12 number 27.

The witnesses for the 1984 NIV in Matthew 11:12 number 6.

The witnesses for the AV1611 in Matthew 11:12 outweigh the witnesses for the 1984 NIV in Matthew 11:12 in ratio 4:1.

The witnesses for the AV1611 and against the 1984 NIV in Matthew 11:12 include the current i.e. 2011 Biblica/Zondervan NIV.

In view of:

- The overwhelming majority of witnesses for the AV1611 in Matthew 11:12, including many i.e. the post-1611 sources that often disagree with it
- The quality of many of the witnesses for the AV1611 in Matthew 11:12, namely the pre-1611 English Protestant bibles
- The accuracy of the AV1611 in Matthew 11:12 with respect to the rest of scripture and history as a whole
- The agreement of *the latest* i.e. 2011 NIV in Matthew 11:12 with the AV1611,

The 1984 NIV reading in Matthew 11:12 must therefore be rejected as *not* scripture and not "*the word of God*" but merely "*the word of men*" 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

Appendix - The Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God

Devils are evil spirits, Matthew 8:16, Luke 8:2. Bizarre as it sounds, they are in the kingdom of God, because it is a *spiritual* kingdom. See 1 Kings 22:19-23, 2 Chronicles 18:18-22 for an account of how this works, overlapping with a physical kingdom i.e. the kingdom of heaven or part thereof. The Catholic Church is a visible, physical kingdom and as such, a manifestation of part of the visible, physical kingdom of heaven.

It follows that the Catholic Church is under the wrong king, ***“a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns”*** Revelation 17:3, ***“the great dragon...that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan”*** Revelation 12:9.

This church will have *the Devil incarnate* at its head in the End Times ***“the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority”*** Revelation 13:2, who ***“shall ascend out of the bottomless pit”*** Revelation 17:8. He will rule the world for ***“forty and two months”*** Revelation 13:5, having been given the kingship of ***“the kingdom of heaven”*** on earth until the Second Advent.

The Lord Jesus Christ will put down the beast and his rulership at the Second Advent, Revelation 19.

See Dr Ruckman’s commentary *The Book of Revelation* pp 464ff, 484ff.

Yet the Catholic Church is ***“the habitation of devils,”*** which, being spirits, are in the kingdom of God.

That is why the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are both mentioned in Matthew 13:31, Mark 4:31, Luke 17:6. Those verses have nothing to do with any kingdom advancing forcibly by aggressive evangelism, which is sheer amillennial or postmillennial fiction. (Paul’s term for his pre-conversion ***“all things”*** Philippians 3:8 is apt here.)

Without delving too deeply, Matthew 8:12 underlies the distinction between the two kingdoms.

“But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

“The kingdom” in Matthew 8:12 cannot be ***“the kingdom of God”*** for any individual *who enters it by the new birth, John 3:3, 5* because that individual is identified by Ephesians 5:30, cannot ***“be cast into outer darkness”*** and is in effect a child of the kingdom of God, being one of ***“the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus”*** Mark 10:14, Luke 18:16, Galatians 3:26 and ***“sealed with that holy Spirit of promise”*** Ephesians 1:13.

“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” Ephesians 5:30.

“The kingdom” of Matthew 8:12 *therefore cannot be “the kingdom of God.”* It is in fact ***“the kingdom of heaven.”***

“And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven” Matthew 8:11.

Observe the careful wording in the parallel passage in Luke 13:28, *with no reference to any “children of the kingdom.”*

“There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.”

(Apparently one theory, totally unsubstantiated in any way, why the expression ***“the kingdom of heaven”*** occurs only in the Book of Matthew is that the Jews to whom he was writing may have been offended by the expression ***“the kingdom of God.”*** However, this expression occurs 5 times in Matthew; Matthew 6:33, 12:28, 19:24, 21:31, 43.)

See Dr Ruckman's *Reference Bible*, pp 1259-1261 on the parables of Matthew 13 and his commentary *The Book of Matthew* pp 144-145 on Matthew 11:12 and pp 237-238 on Matthew 13:31, 32.

His book *The Sure Word of Prophecy* Chapter 4 *Conception and Development* is a detailed study on the kingdom of heaven versus the kingdom of God.

Dr Douglas Stauffer in his book *One Book Rightly Divided*, Second Edition, p 192 has an excellent summary on the kingdom of heaven versus the kingdom of God as a physical, visible kingdom versus a spiritual kingdom, with *both* kingdoms being present with the Lord Jesus Christ at the Second Advent, Isaiah 2:1-4.

Dr David E. Walker in his book *The Bible Believer's Guide to Dispensationalism* 2nd Edition, pp 88ff has an excellent study on the kingdoms of heaven and of God. Dr Walker notes that:

- the kingdom of heaven is a physical, visible kingdom on earth, Matthew 5:19, 8:12, 13:3, 19:14
- the kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom entered by the new birth, John 3:3, 5, Romans 14:17
- the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are each "*at hand*" when the Lord Jesus Christ "*the great king*" Matthew 5:3, 35, Luke 6:20 is present on earth.

In sum, though they *meet* in the Lord Jesus Christ because "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" Matthew 28:18 the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are *not* the same. Paul's admonition should therefore always be kept in mind *and applied*.

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" 2 Timothy 2:15.