

Revelation 22:14

Which is the correct reading of Revelation 22:14, “Blessed are they who keep His commandments,” or “Blessed are they who wash their robes”?

Revelation 22:14 reads differently in the Greek Textus Receptus of the Apostolic Scriptures, than it does in the critical Greek texts used today for most English Bible versions. In the KJV, Revelation 22:14 reads as follows:

“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.”

In modern English Bibles, using critical Greek texts, the verse reads slightly differently:

“Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city” (NASU).

The difference is obviously that the Textus Receptus includes the phrase, “Blessed *are* they that do his commandments,” versus “Blessed are those who wash their robes.” Some may claim foul play with the Scriptures, and that texts have been deliberately altered to support a particular doctrinal bias. However, the reading “Blessed are those who wash their robes” **is older**. Bruce Metzger notes in his work *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* that the change happened rather innocently, because in ancient times the Greek Scriptures were copied with one person reading the text out loud, and multiple scribes copying it. This inevitably led to some textual deviations occurring. He comments,

“Instead of πλύνοντες τὰς στολὰς αὐτῶν, supported by a A about 15 minuscules (including 1006 2020 2053) it^{ar} vg cop^{sa} al, the Textus Receptus, following 046 most minuscules it^{gib} syr^{ph,h} cop^{bo} al, reads the somewhat similar sounding words ποιῶντες τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ. The latter reading appears to be a scribal emendation, for elsewhere the author uses the expression τηρεῖν τὰς ἐντολὰς (12.17; 14.12).”¹

Hearing the audible phrase *plunontes tas stolas autōn*, some Greek copyists wrote *poiountes tas entolas autou*. This latter phrase means “Happy are those doing His commands” (YLT). There is no foul play here, but innocent human error. Metzger is keen to note that both Revelation 12:17 and 14:12 previously emphasize God’s people keeping His commandments, and how a copyist would have had this idea in mind when hearing what text to write down. However, the correct reading is *plunontes tas stolas autōn*, “Blessed are those who wash their robes.”

In a Messianic movement that strongly encourages Believers to keep and follow the Torah or Law of Moses, determining the correct reading of this verse can be a problem. When we determine what the correct reading of this verse should be, we have to ask the question of what is more important: Is keeping God’s commandments more important than having our robes washed in the Messiah’s blood? Or, is being covered by His blood and having salvation more important than keeping God’s commandments?

Many in today’s Messianic community, unfortunately, will say that observing the Torah is superior to knowing Messiah Yeshua as our Lord and Savior. As keeping God’s commandments is a theme of Revelation, we have to understand that you cannot hope to enter into His Kingdom without being washed by the Messiah’s blood. Our Torah observance is to come as a result of us being transformed by God’s power, and us being continually sanctified and renewed as we grow in our faith. But, our Torah observance is *not to precede our salvation experience—and is not more important than knowing Yeshua*. There may be many people who are disappointed—and who were “Torah observant”—when they are not allowed into the Messiah’s Kingdom.

¹ Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London and New York: United Bible Societies, 1975), 765.