

John 1:34

Textual Variants

See <https://www.biblegateway.com/verse/en/John%201:34> for details on the translations.

What do you do when your translation seems quite different from the one a friend is using? BibleGateway.com includes over fifty translations of John 1:34. Seven of them have a different wording near the end of the verse. For example, comparing *the New American Standard Bible* and *the New International Version*:

John 1:34 (NASB)

³⁴I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the **Son** of God.

John 1:34 (NIV)

³⁴I have seen and I testify that this is God's **Chosen One**.

These are not simply differences in translation (such as the difference between “I myself have seen” and “I have seen” in the two verses). These are translations of different words in the Greek text. Our New Testament comes from thousands of partial or complete documents dating back over the last two thousand years. Most of the text of the New Testament (about 99.5%)¹ is essentially identical across all those documents. But there are a few places, such as John 1:34, where there are clear differences between different copies of the document, such as the difference between “Son (*huios*, υἱὸς) of God” and “Chosen One (*eklektos*, ἐκλεκτὸς) of God.” These differences are called **textual variants**.

Understanding the basic idea of textual variants is important so that those kinds of differences do not undermine our confidence in the reliability and authority of the Bible. Critics of the Bible point to verses like this as “errors” or “inconsistencies” in the text of Scripture, and then they conclude that nothing in the Bible is worth reading or learning from or building a faith upon.

Textual criticism is the study of variants like this to determine, as best we can, what John (or Paul or James or any of the other authors) actually wrote. The “criticism” part of “textual criticism” is not a negative term. Rather the emphasis is on the critical or careful study to understand variations in the text.

Variants usually result from hand copying of the text hundreds of times. Textual critics examine the thousands of partial or complete New Testament documents. The earlier each document, the more likely it is what the author originally wrote. Often the mistake a scribe made is explainable, just as

¹ <https://carm.org/manuscript-evidence> Accessed March 3, 2015.

some mistakes or typos in English are easy to recognize (or is it easy?). Sometimes a word can be repeated without being noticed. (Did you catch both of those scribal errors?)

Some variants, such as John 1:34 are not quite as obvious. The science of textual criticism attempts to determine what might have caused an early copyist to substitute the words. As you can see from the list on BibleGateway.com, at least for this verse, there is a strong majority preference (45 out of 52 translations) based on textual criticism for “Son of God” as the original reading.

The key point to remember concerning textual variants is summed up by F.F. Bruce: “The variant readings about which any doubt remains among textual critics of the New Testament affect no material question of historic fact or of Christian faith or practice.”²

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A few of the other translations (from BibleGateway.com) are listed below.

John 1:34 (English Standard Version)

³⁴ And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the **Son** of God.

John 1:34 (Lexham English Bible)

³⁴ And I have seen and testify that this one is the **Chosen One** of God.

John 1:34 (King James Version)

³⁴ And I saw, and bare record that this is the **Son** of God.

John 1:34 (Mounce Reverse-Interlinear New Testament)

³⁴ Ikagō myself sawhoraō it, andkai I bear witnessmartyreō thathoti thishoutos man iseimi theho **Chosen One**eeklektos ofho Godtheos.

John 1:34 (The Living Bible)

³⁴ I saw it happen to this man, and I therefore testify that he is the **Son** of God.

John 1:34 (New Living Translation)

³⁴ I saw this happen to Jesus, so I testify that he is the **Chosen One** of God.

John 1:34 (Young’s Literal Translation)

³⁴ and I have seen, and have testified, that this is the **Son** of God.

John 1:34 (New English Translation)

³⁴ I have both seen and testified that this man is the **Chosen One** of God.

John 1:34 (New King James Version)

³⁴ And I have seen and testified that this is the **Son** of God.

John 1:34 (New International Version - UK)

³⁴ I have seen and I testify that this is God’s **Chosen One**.

John 1:34 (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

³⁴ I have seen and testified that He is the **Son** of God!

John 1:34 (Amplified Bible)

³⁴ And I have seen [that happen—I actually did see it] and my testimony is that this is the Son of God!

² F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are they reliable?* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968), 19-20.

John 1:34 (KJ21)

³⁴ And I saw and bore record that this is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (ASV)

³⁴ And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (BRG)

³⁴ And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (CEB)

³⁴ I have seen and testified that this one is God's Son.

John 1:34 (CJB)

³⁴ And I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (CEV)

³⁴ I saw this happen, and I tell you that he is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (DARBY)

³⁴ And I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (DLNT)

³⁴ And **I** have seen, and have testified that this *One* is the Son of God".

John 1:34 (DRA)

³⁴ And I saw, and I gave testimony, that this is the Son of God.

John 1:32-34 (ERV)

³²⁻³⁴ Then John said this for everyone to hear: "I also did not know who the Messiah was. But the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'You will see the Spirit come down and rest on a man. He is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen this happen. I saw the Spirit come down from heaven like a dove and rest on this man. So this is what I tell people: 'He is the Son of God.'"

John 1:34 (ESVUK)

³⁴ And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (EXB)

³⁴ I have seen this happen, and I tell you the truth [testify; bear witness]: This man is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (GNV)

³⁴ And I saw, and bare record that this is that Son of God.

John 1:34 (GW)

³⁴ I have seen this and have declared that this is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (GNT)

³⁴ I have seen it," said John, "and I tell you that he is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (HCSB)

³⁴ I have seen and testified that He is the Son of God!

John 1:34 (ISV)

³⁴ I have seen this and have testified that this is the Son of God.

John 1:32-34 (PHILLIPS)

³²⁻³⁴ Then John gave this testimony, "I have seen the Spirit come down like a dove from Heaven and rest upon him. Indeed, it is true that I did not recognise him by myself, but he who sent me to baptise with water told me this: 'The one on whom you will see the Spirit coming down and resting is the man who baptises with the Holy Spirit!' Now I have seen this happen and I declare publicly before you all that he is the Son of God!"

John 1:34 (JUB)

³⁴ And I have seen and have given testimony that this is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (AKJV)

³⁴ And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

John 1:32-34 (MSG)

³²⁻³⁴ John clinched his witness with this: "I watched the Spirit, like a dove flying down out of the sky, making himself at home in him. I repeat, I know nothing about him except this: The One who authorized me to baptize with water told me, 'The One on whom you see the Spirit come down and stay, this One will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' That's exactly what I saw happen, and I'm telling you, there's no question about it: *This* is the Son of God."

John 1:34 (MEV)

³⁴ I have seen and have borne witness that He is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (MOUNCE)

³⁴ Ikagō myself sawhoraō it, andkai I bear witnessmartyreō thathoti thishoutos man iseimi theho **Chosen One**eeklektos ofho Godtheos.

John 1:34 (NOG)

³⁴ I have seen this and have declared that this is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (NABRE)

³⁴ Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (NCV)

³⁴ I have seen this happen, and I tell you the truth: This man is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (NIRV)

³⁴ I have seen it happen. I am a witness that this is God's **Chosen One**.

John 1:34 (NIVUK)

³⁴ I have seen and I testify that this is God's **Chosen One**.

John 1:34 (NLV)

³⁴ I saw this happen. I am now saying that Jesus is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (NRSV)

³⁴ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (NRSVA)

³⁴ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (NRSVACE)

³⁴ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (NRSVCE)

³⁴ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.

Yochanan 1:34 (OJB)

³⁴ And I have seen and I have given solemn edut (testimony) that this One is the Ben HaElohim.

John 1:34 (RSV)

³⁴ And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (RSVCE)

³⁴ And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (VOICE)

³⁴ I have seen this *with my own eyes* and can attest that this One is the Son of God!

John 1:34 (WEB)

³⁴ I have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (WE)

³⁴ I saw the Spirit coming on him, and I have told you. This man is the Son of God.

John 1:34 (WYC)

³⁴ And I saw, and bare witnessing, that this is the Son of God.

