

[Note to the reader: in this paper I separated the analysis of similar phrases based on whether they were genitive or dative case—and this should not have been done. Dr. Thielman wrote on the graded paper “The case of the occurrence may not be important since it is nearly always dictated by the syntax” or in other words, Paul did not have a choice about using correct Greek syntax, but he did have a choice of the phrase used, i.e. in Christ Jesus, in Christ, in Jesus, in Jesus Christ. I’m leaving the paper as is so that someone may learn from my mistake. For the grade he wrote “An excellent textual analysis, especially for the first attempt at this difficult exegetical skill. 98 A”]

THE TEXTUAL VARIANT AT EPHESIANS 3:1

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Introduction

There are six variant readings of Ephesians 3:1 within the manuscript (MS) evidence of the New Testament. This paper will evaluate the external evidence of each variant using a tabular diagram which includes the date and text type of each witness. The variants will be further evaluated based on Paul’s style and vocabulary within Ephesians. Lastly, each reading will be evaluated to determine if there is a plausible cause of how it came into existence.

External Evidence

Following are six tables (Variants 1-6) each representing a variant reading of Ephesians 3:1. The variant plus an English translation will be followed by its associated table. The table will give a visual representation of 1) if manuscripts (MSS) are primarily early, late, or both, 2) the text type of each MS, 3) the primary text type witness, and 4) the geographical distribution of the witnesses that support a variant. A summary will follow each table.

του Χριστου Ιησου - of Christ Jesus

	ALEXANDRIAN	WESTERN	BYZANTINE
Second Century	P ⁴⁶ 200		
Third Century	Origen		
Fourth	A ² B cop ^{sa}		
Fifth	A Cyril	vg Jerome Pelagius	
Sixth-Tenth	33 1739 075 0150 1175 1912 2464	D ² it ^{ar}	K L P syr ^h geo ²
Eleventh-Sixteenth	81 104 263 424 436 459 1241		

Variant 1

Variant 1 Summary. Variant 1 has a very early and strong Alexandrian text type. It is attested to by both Eastern and Western Church Fathers. In addition, it clearly has a broad geographical spread throughout the 5th-10th centuries. The external evidence favors this reading.

του Ιησου Χριστου (6 1962 omit του) – of Jesus Christ

	ALEXANDRIAN	WESTERN	BYZANTINE
Second Century			
Third Century			
Fourth	cop ^{sa}	Ambrose	
Fifth	Cyril Chrysostom	it ^b vg Jerome	syr ^p arm
Sixth-Tenth			geo ^l slav
Eleventh-Sixteenth	6 1962 1881 2200		/ 884

Variant 2

Variant 2 Summary. Variant 2 has a fairly early witness. It attested to by both Eastern and Western Church Fathers. In addition, it has a broad geographical spread throughout the 5th-10th centuries.

του κυριου Ιησου (Hilary and Ambrose omit κυριου) – of the Lord Jesus

	ALEXANDRIAN	WESTERN	BYZANTINE
Second Century			
Third Century			
Fourth		Ambrose 397 Hilary ^{1/2} 367	
Fifth	C		
Sixth-Tenth	Ψ		
Eleventh-Sixteenth			

Variant 3

Variant 3 Summary. Variant 3 witnesses are not as early as Variants 1 and 2. It is attested to by the Alexandrian C and Ψ. The geographical distribution, especially throughout the centuries, is weak.

του Χριστου - of Christ

	ALEXANDRIAN	WESTERN	BYZANTINE
Second Century			
Third Century			
Fourth	A ⁺ cop ^{sa}	Ambrosiaster Victorinus-Rome	
Fifth		it ^d Hilary ^{1/2}	
Sixth-Tenth		it ^g D F G	eth
Eleventh-Sixteenth	256 1319 1573 1852 2127	it ^o	

Variant 4

Variant 4 Summary. This variant boasts the original version of the Codex Sinaiticus. There is a strong Latin text type and weak geographical distribution in the Byzantine category.

εν Χριστω - in Christ

	ALEXANDRIAN	WESTERN	BYZANTINE
Second Century			
Third Century			
Fourth			
Fifth			
Sixth-Tenth	365		
Eleventh-Sixteenth			

Variant 5

Variant 5 Summary. This variant has weak external witness in all three categories.

εν Χριστω Ιησου - in Christ Jesus

	ALEXANDRIAN	WESTERN	BYZANTINE
Second - Fourth			
Fifth			
Sixth-Tenth			l 156
Eleventh-Sixteenth			l 170 l 617

Variant 6

Variant 6 Summary. This variant has weak external witness in all three categories.

Intrinsic Probability

This section will evaluate what Paul most likely wrote. Comparative data from the Book of Ephesians will be used. Within Ephesians there are 46 combinations of phrases containing “Christ”, “Jesus”, “Christ Jesus” or “Jesus Christ”. These 46 combinations are contained in 44 verses spread throughout the book. Of these 44 combinations, six are in the nominative case, four are in the accusative case, and there are 18 in both the genitive and dative cases. Since the variants are either genitive or dative, an analysis of the genitive and dative uses of each of these phrases will be evaluated.

Following is a table of the 18 genitive constructions (Table 1) which will provide a concise representation of each of the genitival uses of “Christ”, “Jesus”, “Christ Jesus” or “Jesus Christ”. Each entry in the diagram contains 1) the verse reference, 2) the genitive expression, and 3) an abbreviated portion of the how it is used in the verse.

Genitive Uses With combination of Ἰησοῦ, Χριστοῦ, κυρίου

1:1	Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ	apostle of ...by the will of God
1:2	απο... κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ	Grace and peace from God and...
1:3	του κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ	God and Father of our...
1:5	δια Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ	He (God)...adoption as sons through...
1:17	του κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ	that the God of our...
2:12	χωρις Χριστοῦ	separate from..., excluded
2:20	αυτου Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ*	...being the chief cornerstone
3:1	του Χριστοῦ [Ἰησοῦ]	the prisoner of...
3:4	του Χριστοῦ	the mystery of...
3:8	του Χριστοῦ	unfathomable riches of...
3:19	του Χριστοῦ	may know the love of...
4:12	του Χριστοῦ	building up of body of...
4:13	του Χριστοῦ	belongs to the fullness of...
5:5	του Χριστοῦ	kingdom of ... and God
5:20	του κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ	giving thanks in name of...to God
5:21	Χριστοῦ	reverence of...
6:6	Χριστοῦ	as slaves of...
6:23	απο... κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ	from God the Father and the...

*Genitive Absolute

Table 1

There are several issues to note in regard to the genitive uses:

1. From vv. 2:12 through 5:5, with the exception of the 3:1 variant and the genitive absolute, Χριστοῦ is always used alone in a prepositional phrase. Only one of these is not with του.
2. The densest use of “*Jesus Christ*” is in Chapter 1 although this phrase also appears once each in Chapters 5 and 6.
3. Each time “*Jesus Christ*” is used the phrase also contains κυρίου with the exception of v. 1:5.

Variant 4 του Χριστου. At this point the intrinsic probability seems to be leaning towards Variant 4, του Χριστου. In addition to the consistent use of the phrase minus the genitive absolute, beginning with vv. 2:12 through 5:5 and then again in 5:21 and 6:6, there seems to be something more in Paul's use of either "Christ" or "Jesus Christ". In Chapters 1, 5, and 6 when Paul refers to "Jesus Christ" it seems to be in relation to something that God is doing through Christ or God's relation to Christ, i.e. apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God (1:1), God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (1:3), adoptions as sons through Jesus Christ (1:5), the God of our Lord Jesus Christ (1:17), in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God (5:20), and from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ(6:23). 6:23 relates God and Christ together but does not fit neatly in the category defined.

In addition, to the "special use" of "Jesus Christ" discussed above, there seems to be an equally special use of του Χριστου. Acknowledging up front the overall reference to God throughout the letter, it seems that each instance of του Χριστου is in reference to something made available to believers through the work of Christ. Admittedly, God is sovereign over everything made available to believers, but in general these have to do with things "of" Christ, i.e. Paul is a prisoner of Christ (3:1), the mystery of Christ (3:4), the riches of Christ (3:8), the love of Christ (3:19), the body of Christ (4:12), the fullness of Christ (4:13), be subject to one another in the fear of Christ (5:21), and as slaves of Christ (6:6).

Variant 1 του Χριστου Ιησου. On the side of Variant, 1 however, Paul begins the letter by saying he is an apostle of Χριστου 'Ιησου. Paul refers to himself again at 3:1 saying he is a prisoner of Χριστου 'Ιησου which maintains a stylistic consistency, i.e. beginning of new section, reference to self. Also, Paul being a 'prisoner of Christ' does not fit nicely into the other 'of Christ' sayings throughout Chapters 2-5 which would be a strike against the argument for Variant 4 and a plus for Variant 1.

Variant 2 του Ιησου Χριστου. It is possible that Paul wrote this although it is missing κυριου which normally accompanies 'Ιησου Χριστου.

Variante 3 του κυριου Ιησου (Hilary and Ambrose omit κυριου). It is unlikely that Paul wrote this.

Του κυριου 'Ιησου is always followed by Χριστου. There is one dative use of the Lord Jesus.

As stated earlier, there are also 18 dative uses of the words under study. Following is a table of the 18 dative constructions (Table 2) which will provide a concise representation of each of the dative uses of “Christ”, “Jesus”, “Christ Jesus” or “Jesus Christ”. Each entry in the diagram contains 1) the verse reference, 2) the dative expression, and 3) an abbreviated portion of its use in the verse.

Dative Uses With combination of 'Ιησου, Χριστου, κυριου

1:1	εν	Χριστω 'Ιησου	who are faithful in ...
1:3	εν	Χριστω	blessed us every blessing in heavenly places in...
1:10	εν τω	Χριστω	summing up all things in...
1:12	εν τω	Χριστω	first to hope in...
1:15	εν τω κυριου	'Ιησου	heard of your faith in...
1:20	εν τω	Χριστω	which He brought about in...
2:5	τω	Χριστω	(God) made us alive together with...
2:6	εν	Χριστω 'Ιησου	(God) seated us with
2:7	εν	Χριστω 'Ιησου	(God) show...kindness...in
2:10	εν	Χριστω 'Ιησου	created in...
2:13	εν	Χριστω 'Ιησου	now in...you have been brought near
3:6	εν	Χριστω 'Ιησου	promise in...
3:11	τω	Χριστω 'Ιησου τω κυριου	purpose which He carried out in...
3:21	εν	Χριστω 'Ιησου	to Him be the glory in the church and in...
4:21	εν τω	'Ιησου	truth is in...
4:32	εν	Χριστω	God in...has also forgiven you
5:24	τω	Χριστω	Church is subject to...
6:5	τω	Χριστω	slaves be obedient as to...

Table 2

The dative uses appear to be almost the reverse of the genitive uses, i.e. Chapter 1 contains mostly Χριστω alone, while Chapters 2-3 contains the phrase Χριστω 'Ιησου. In general, the dative uses are extremely uniform giving Variants 5 and 6 a high degree of possibility from an intrinsic probability view.

With a few exceptions (1:1, 5:24, 6:5) the general uses of the dative seem to all relate to things that God is doing εν Χριστω. With this in mind, it seems unlikely that Paul would have written that he was a ‘prisoner in Christ Jesus’.

Variante 5 εν Χριστω. Of the 18 dative uses, there are 2 other uses of εν Χριστω. It is possible that Paul wrote this.

Variant 6 εν Χριστω Ιησου. This phrase is quite regular in Ephesians. It is especially used in 2:6 – 3:6. It is also possible that Paul wrote this phrase.

Transcriptional Probability

There are several factors to consider in determining the transcriptional probability of each of the variants. The first factor to consider is that ‘the more difficult reading is to be preferred’.¹ The textual variant at Ephesians 3:1 does not require this consideration. The second factor is that ‘in general, the shorter reading is to be preferred’² except for obvious scribal errors. Once again, Variant 4 του Χριστου seems to emerge as the leader, although Variant 5 εν Χριστω is also a contender on this basis.

From here each variant needs to be evaluated to determine if a viable reason exists for an error in transmission.

Variant 2 του Ιησου Χριστου. Compared to Variant 1, this seems to be a simple matter of a word order error. In addition, there is a strong use of κυριου prior to ‘Ιησου Χριστου making it unlikely that Paul wrote this.

Variant 3 του κυριου Ιησου (Hilary and Ambrose omit κυριου). Since Hilary and Ambrose omit κυριου, it is possible that the Alexandrian witnesses attempted to harmonize or eliminate a discrepancy in this passage. Paul is saying he is a prisoner of ‘the Lord Jesus’. A harmonization could have been made with 4:1 which says that ‘I (Paul) am a prisoner of the Lord.’

Variant 4 του Χριστου. Compared to Variant 1 this could be simply an error of word omission. On the other hand, there is strong evidence that a scribe was making the use of this phrase “consistent” throughout the main body of the letter.

Variant 5 εν Χριστω. While copying, a scribe could have glanced and looked at 3:6 or any of the several uses of this phrase.

Variant 6 εν Χριστω Ιησου. All witnesses for Variant 6 are from lectionaries.

¹ Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1994), 12*-13*.

Conclusion

Variants 3, 5 and 6 can be ruled out because of weak external witness. Variant 2 has a low intrinsic probability with the omission of Χριστου with the word κυριου. Variants 1 and 4 both have strong intrinsic probability, both phrases that Paul employed plus both were likely to have appeared in the letter at 3:1. The transcriptional evidence leans in favor of Version 4 choosing the shorter reading, however, on the whole it is not that much shorter nor less complicated. In addition, the use of του Χριστου at 3:1 doesn't exactly fit with the long line of 'of Christ' sayings in this part of Ephesians.

Nevertheless, variant 1 and 4 both have strong degrees of internal evidence. They also both have strong degrees of external evidence; however, Variant 1 definitely has the earlier attestation and a longstanding Alexandrian witness. Because of the strong external witness of Variant 1, Paul probably wrote that he was ο δεσμιος του Χριστου 'Ιησου.

² Ibid.