

The top textual variants of the Gospels

To get under the top-five or top-twenty,

1. there must be some theological implication.
2. there must be serious difficulties in evaluating the evidence.
3. there must be the "je ne sais quoi", some teasing peculiarity, something that thrills.
4. the man on the street should say: "Hey, yes, that's interesting!"

1. The top five

These are my personal favorites. This list is very subjective, of course.

1. Lk 23:34 "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."
2. Lk 22:43-44 "Then an angel from heaven appeared"
3. Lk 9:55-56 "You know not what manner of spirit you are of."
4. Mt 27:16 Jesus Barabbas
5. Mt 27:49 The piercing

2. The top 20

This is in my opinion the most objective list. The entries arose quite naturally.

Matthew:

- 11:19 "deeds" / "children"
- 16:2-3 "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, ..."
- 18:15 "sins [against you]"
- 19:16-17 "Good master" and "Why callest thou me good?"
- 21:29-31 The two sons
- 27:16 "Jesus Barabbas"
- 27:49 The piercing

Mark:

- 1:41 "moved with compassion" / "in anger"
- 9:49 "For everyone will be salted with fire."
- 14:41 APECEI TO TELOS
- 15:34 "why have you forsaken / reproached me?"
- [16:9 ff. The endings of Mark, I personally do not consider this a difficult variant, but because it is rather famous, I have included it.]

Luke:

- 3:22 "with you I am well pleased / today I have begotten you."
- 9:55+56 "You know not what manner of spirit you are of."
- 18:24 ["become very sorrowful"]
- 22:43+44 "Then an angel from heaven appeared"
- 23:34 "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

John:

- 1:18 MONOGENHS UIOS/QEOS
- 1:34 "this is the Son / Elect of God."
- 3:13 "who is in the heaven."
- 5:32 "and I / you know that his testimony to me is true."
- [7:53-8:11 The PA, I personally do not consider this a difficult variant, but because it is rather famous, I have included it.]
- 8:25 "Why do I speak to you at all?"

3. The top 50

Another list are the "top-50", but this list is not so fixed and clear as is the top-20 list. I think the content of this list is more debatable and I am continuously torn, what to include or exclude.

Matthew:

- 5:41 "go with him two" / "go with him two yet two more"
10:23 "flee to the next", plus various additions
11:19 "deeds" / "children"
11:23 "you will be exalted to heaven?" question or declaration?
14:24 "many stades from the land"?
16:2-3 "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, ...
17:20 "littleness of faith" or "unbelief"
17:21 "But this kind goes not out but by prayer and fasting."
18:15 "sins [against you]"
19:9 "and who did marry her which is put away does commit adultery"
19:16-17 "Good master" and "Why callest thou me good?"
21:29-31 The two sons
22:35 "which was a lawyer"?
27:16 "Jesus Barabbas"
27:49 The piercing
28:9 "and as they were going to tell to his disciples"

Mark:

- 1:1 "Jesus Christ, [the Son of God]"
1:41 "moved with compassion" / "in anger"
3:14, 16 ["whom he also named apostles"] + ["So he appointed the twelve"]
7:8 "baptisms of pots and cups; and many other ..."
7:24, 31 "Tyre and Sidon" + "coasts of Tyre and Sidon"
8:35 "for my sake"
9:49 "For everyone will be salted with fire."
10:46 "And they come to Jericho"
14:41 APECEI TO TELOS
14:30+68+72 The double cock-crowing
14:70 "and thy speech is alike"
15:34 "why have you forsaken / reproached me?"
[16:9 ff. The endings of Mark, I personally do not consider this a difficult variant, but because it is rather famous, I have included it.]

Luke:

- 3:22 "with you I am well pleased / today I have begotten you."
4:44 IOUDAIAS / GALILAIAS
6:1 DEUTEROPRW TW
8:43 ["though she had spent all she had on physicians"]
9:55+56 ["You have not known of what spirit you are"] ...
10:42 "there is need of only one thing"
18:24 ["become very sorrowful"]
22:43-44 "Then an angel from heaven appeared"
22:19+20 short form of cup and bread
23:34 "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."
23:17 omit verse
24:42 "and of an honeycomb"
24:12 omit verse

John:

- 1:18 MONOGENHS UIOS/QEOS
1:34 "this is the Son / Elect of God."
2:12 "[his] brothers"
3:13 "who is in the heaven."
4:1 IHSOUS or KURIOS
5:3b-4 the angel, troubling the water
5:32 "and I / you know that his testimony to me is true."
7:4 AUTOS / AUTO
7:52 "THE prophet"
[7:53-8:11 The PA, I personally do not consider this a difficult variant, but because it is rather famous, I have included it.]
8:25 "Why do I speak to you at all?"
10:26 "as I said unto you."
14:4 "ye know, and the way ye know."