

Acts 20:17-21 in Codex Bezae (D)

by

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A New Testament Colleague, specializing in Textual Criticism, brought to my attention the differences in the Bezae (D) text of Acts 20:17-21 along with some interesting observations, at the same time requesting my response. The following are a few simple remarks of mine on the Bezae text that perhaps may hold some interest for visitors of my web site.

The D text is as follows (different form/order in blue; different text in red):

17. Από δὲ τῆς Μιλήτου πέμψας εἰς Ἔφεσον *μετεπέμψατο* τους πρεσβυτέρους τῆς ἐκκλησίας. 18. ὡς δὲ παρεγένοντο πρὸς αὐτὸν *ὁμώσε ὄντων αὐτῶν* εἶπεν *πρὸς αὐτούς*, Ἡμεῖς *ἐπίστασθαι* ἀπὸ πρώτης ἡμέρας *ἐφ'* ἧς ἐπέβην εἰς τὴν Ἀσίαν *ὡς τριετίαν ἢ καὶ πλεῖον ποταπῶς* μεθ' ὑμῶν *ἦν, παντὸς χρόνου*, 19. δουλεύων τῷ κυρίῳ μετὰ πάσης ταπεινοφροσύνης καὶ δακρύων καὶ πειρασμῶν τῶν συμβάντων μοι ἐν ταῖς ἐπιβουλαῖς τῶν Ἰουδαίων 20. ὡς οὐδὲν ὑπεστειλάμην τῶν συμφερόντων τοῦ ἀναγγεῖλαι ὑμῖν καὶ διδάξαι *κατ' οἴκους καὶ δημοσία*, 21. *διαμαρτυρούμενος* Ἰουδαίοις τε καὶ Ἑλλησιν τὴν εἰς *τὸν* θεὸν μετάνοιαν καὶ *πίστιν διὰ τοῦ κυρίου* ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ *Χριστοῦ*.

1. Preliminaries

The Bezae text has a number of spelling mistakes:

In vs. 18 ὁμώσε is clearly a pronunciation mistake, perpetrated under the influence of the *Historical Greek Pronunciation*; it should be ὁμόσε (< ὁμοῦ) meaning "in the same place". This word occurs since the time of Homeros, all the way through the classical period down to Hellenistic times.

Ἐπίστασθαι, an infinitive, is clearly another mistake arising on account of the *Historical Greek Pronunciation*. The correct form should be the second person plural ἐπίστασθε.

The preposition ἐφ' ἧς ("on which") in verse 18, is undoubtedly a mistake for ἀφ' ἧς ("from which"). The latter is demanded by the earlier temporal phrase ἀπὸ πρώτης ἡμέρας, to which this is appositional. Strictly speaking (i.e. in classical Greek) the preposition should not be repeated. It would have been enough to say: ἀπὸ πρώτης ἡμέρας ἧς ... The repetition belongs to the later developments (in various directions) in which it was felt that earlier terse expressions needed strengthening. It all reflects the loss of the feeling that enough was enough and the unnecessary emphasis by means of extra words (a frequent phenomenon in the NT) in order to say what in earlier times had been said with a greater economy of words.

Verse 18. The adverb ποταπῶς could also be a pronunciation mistake for the adjective ποταπός. If ποταπός, the meaning would be "what manner of person I have been among you". If the adverb ποταπῶς was intended, the translation would be: "in what manner I have been among you", i.e. "how I have conducted myself among you". Both are possible grammatically, though the former is of more frequent occurrence.

The first pers. sing, ἦν, is classical and occurs only here in the NT. As is well known, the normal later form is ἦμην. With the

adverb ποταπώς, ἦν takes the sense of ἐγενόμην, i.e. "I have been ..." i.e. "I have conducted myself".

The temporal genitive παντὸς χρόνου (expressing time *within* which something happens) is less appropriate in this context, where the time is one of *extent*, an idea that is expressed in the accusative: πάντα χρόνον (so the alternative reading).

The omission of μή in verse 20 is not a problem. In either case the meaning is the same. If the negative particle is to be included, the meaning is "I did not withhold anything of importance/interest/profit to you, that is, [I did not fail] to announce to you and to teach you ..." If the negative is to be omitted, the implication is "I did not withhold anything of importance to you, such as announcing to you and teaching you ..."

The inversion κατ' οἴκου καὶ δημοσίᾳ is less likely. The public teaching would have had precedence. This was complemented by his private teaching in various homes.

Verse 21: διαμαρτυρούμενος is a future participial form of διαμαρτύρομαι ("to call as witness", "to protest", "to remonstrate"), which is out of place here, instead of the present participle, form διαμαρτυρόμενος. The form διαμαρτυρούμενος as such could also have been intended as middle present of διαμαρτυρῶ (-έω), i.e. present middle διαμαρτυροῦμαι, with participle διαμαρτυρούμενος. But this verb, which means "to confirm", "to give witness in a court of law" (in which case hypothetically Paul would be calling on God to give witness) perhaps does not suit the exigencies of the case as well as διαμαρτυρόμενος.

Your Questions

Now to come to your questions and observations:

1. «*In the Bezan text of Luke's writings, ὡς does not mean 'approximately'⁷, for which ὡσεὶ is used. Before a number, it usually draws attention to the symbolic value of the number*». To be able to make such a statement, we will need a sufficiently large number of instances, which will indicate clearly that this particular scribe attaches different meanings to these two words. I am not sure that the above observation that ὡς does not occur in the sense of "approximately" in the D text of Lk-Acts, holds. If I have not mistaken the apparatus, the following can be said:

Lk 1:56 ὡς μῆνας τρεῖς is omitted by D. This is no evidence for or against

3:23 ὡσεὶ ἐτῶν τριάκοντα accord, to the Alexandrian tradition. D has ὡς

8:42 ὡς ἐτῶν δώδεκα. D omits. Again, no evidence for or against

Acts 4:4 ὡς χιλιάδες πέντε. D omits. The same as above

5:7 ὡς ὥρῶν τριῶν διάστημα. No v.l. are taken up. Does this mean that D agrees in having ὡς?

5:36 ὡς τεσσαρακοσίων. No v.l. noted. Does this mean that D, too, has ὡς?

13:18 ὡς τεσσαρακονταετῆ χρόνον. D omits.

13:20 ὡς ἔτεσιν τετρακοσίοις καὶ πενήκοντα. D has apparently ἕως.

There may be other instances of ὡς or ὡσεὶ in D, to which I have no access at present.

I cannot see in which texts D in Lk-Acts uses ὥς before numbers symbolically. If Lk 3:23 is understood symbolically, I, for one, fail to see its symbolic nature. Nor do I see any symbolic intention in Acts 5:7. And I would think the same may be said of Acts 5:36.

2. «*Could ὥς have a comparative purpose?*» That ὥς could have had the sense of “approximately” is strengthened by the phrase ἢ καὶ πλεῖον = “or even more”, i.e. “about three years, or even more”.

The comparative sense, if accepted, would give a sentence that is hardly appropriate in Greek: “You know from the early days I set foot in Asia as (also) for three years or more”. It would be more natural in Greek to say: “You know from the first day I set foot in Asia [and] for about three years or more ...”. This implies that the sense of ὥς in *Greek* is one of “until”,— even though we may not be able to fit in “until” in an *English* sentence—that is, Paul is thinking of the period which began with his first visit to Asia and stretches all the way to a point of time which is to be placed about three years later, or even more. The idea of “even” is, of course, signalled by καί. The fact that Paul leaves the exact length of the period somewhat open does not justify us in seeing a symbolic reference to the given period. A symbolic understanding of this text does not make sense.

3. «*Could ὥς introduce the content of the verb ἐπίστασθε?*». You are right that ἐπίστασθε (vs. 18) continues with ὥς οὐδὲν ὑπεστειλάμην (vs 20) as its content. However, the two ὥς-structures are quite different. “You know” has its object in ὥς οὐδὲν ὑπεστειλάμην, where ὥς is declarative “that”, followed appropriately by the verb ὑπεστειλάμην. In the first ὥς-phrase,

however, there is no verb, so as for ὡς to function declaratively. The function of ὡς at this place, therefore, seems to be different. Ὡς either expresses the idea of approximation (“[and for] *about* three years or even more”), which is more likely, or introduces a temporal marker, the notion of “till”, “until”, i.e. “from the first day ... *till* about three years or more”, which is less likely. In the latter case ὡς would be the equivalent of ἕως “till”, “until”, a meaning which is found as v.l. already in a number of classical texts (e.g., Sophokles, *Aias* 1117: ἕως ἂν ἦς οἶος περ’ εἶ (L A: ὡς); Sophokles, *Philoktetes* 1330: ἕως ἂν αὐτὸς ἥλιος ταύτη μὲν αἴρη (Coddices: ὡς); Polybios I. 19.4: τοὺς δὲ λοιποὺς ἕως εἰς τὸν χάρακα συνεδίωξαν (v.l. ὡς); see also Jn 12:35: περιπατεῖτε ὡς τὸ φῶς ἔχετε “Walk as long as / while / until you have the light”) and is often witnessed at a much later stage (especially Byzantine and Neohellenic).

But in English this is better rendered with “from the first day ... and till about three years or even more”. Freely translated, the whole sentence could be: “You know, brethren, what manner of person (ποταπός) I have been among you [or in what manner (ποταπῶς) I have behaved among you] the whole time from the first day I set foot in Asia and for about the space of three years or even more”.

4. «*Is it possible to have ἐπίστασθε ὡς ... ποταπῶς ἦν, where ὡς seems to be redundant?*». The word ποταπός is a later form for classical ποδαπός (occurring first in Menandros [III B.C.]), whose original meaning was “of what country”, “from where” (cf. ἀλλοδαπός = “foreigner”, and ἀλλοδαπή = “abroad”, “in another country”, still used in Neohellenic), but which in Neohellenic has taken on the meaning of “cheap”, “mean”, “bad quality”, “base”, “vile”. I have found 151 instances of ποδαπός (from Aischylos down to the XVI cent.), but only 4 instances of the

adv. ποδαπῶς (all from Hellenistic and later times). Ποταπός occurs 161 times, mostly during Christian times, while of ποταπῶς no instance was supplied by TLG. This form of the adverb, however, does occur in Neohellenic.

The first person sing, ἤμην (here ἤν) would more naturally collocate with the adjective ποταπός, the adj. constituting a personal characterization. The adverb would be more natural in modifying a verb such as ἐγενόμην = “how I have behaved”. However, since the verb εἶμι also functions in a similar manner and as an equivalent to γίνομαι, the adverb is not impossible with ἤμην (or ἤν). Thus, whether we decide for ποταπός or ποταπῶς as the intended reading of the scribe, the meaning is the same. I think though, that in view of the fact that no examples of ποταπῶς have turned up in TLG (though there may exist some), but I know that it occurs in Neohellenic, the formation of the adverb may be later, but not later than Codex Bezae.

All this makes it rather likely that ποταπῶς should be regarded as a mistake for ποταπός.

My conclusion then is that the sentence should be understood in some such way as:

“You know, brethren, what manner of person (ποταπός) I have been among you the whole time from the first day I set foot in Asia and for about the space of three years or even more”, the idea being that he is saying these words around three years after his first visit to Asia.