

How to Interpret the Bible

Lesson 4

The Preservation of the Scriptures

A. The _____ of the Scriptures

- The question of the preservation of the Scriptures is simply this: Do I have access to the Word of God today? Many would be happy to declare that they believe in the divine, verbal, plenary, and inerrant inspiration of the original Scriptures, but because we do not have “the originals” their statement must be qualified. But what saith the Scriptures?

a. The _____ of Preservation

1. Psalm 12:6, 7

- a) Many have said that this passage refers to God preserving the poor and oppressed of verse five. However the context of the passage is contrasting the words of man vs. the words of God.
 - 1. Man’s Words: vain and flattering v2, proud and rebellious v3-4,
 - 2. God’s Words: pure, tried and purified v6, they are not as the words of vanity or those that speak proud lies but rather God will keep, and preserve them forever v7.
- b) These verses teach:
 - 1. The extent of preservation – “words”
 - 2. The Agent of preservation – “Thou” (God)
 - 3. The period of preservation – “for ever.”

2. 1 Peter 1:23-25

- a) The word of God is *living* and *abiding* (remaining) for ever.
- b) V25 – The word of the Lord endures for ever contrasted to a fading flower.

3. 2 Timothy 3:15, 16

- a) Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures from a child.
- b) Timothy did not have the “original autographs.”
- c) Timothy’s copies of the Scriptures were called “Scripture”
- d) Those copies lay the foundation and context of the inspiration of verse 16.
 - God’s method of preservation is through the faithful copying and reproducing of the originals.

4. Other Passages: Matthew 24:35; Matthew 5:18; Psalm 119:89

b. **The _____ of Preservation**

1. Logical Purpose

- a) The logic behind the purpose of preservation is simple. It is that God desires all people throughout all generations to have His very words.
- b) It makes no sense that God would take such care and place such seriousness upon His words then just allow them to be lost shortly after His speaking.
- c) It is logical to suggest that if God performed the miracle of inspiration that the miracle of preservation should follow.
- d) If God expects us to obey His words today – could we make an excuse by saying “You haven’t preserved them for us?”

c. **The _____ of Preservation**

1. From Copying

- a) The Old Testament Scribes:
 1. Scribes copied the Old Testament Scriptures meticulously. The Jews cherished their sacred writings. They believed God had more care of the letters and syllables of the Law than the stars of heaven. They numbered every letter and kept record of how often it occurred. Any copy that was found faulty or damaged was destroyed. They were governed by strict rules of copying.
- b) The New Testament Saints:
 1. There are no set rules given for the copying of the New Testament text, nevertheless great care was given. This can be concluded by Jewish influence upon early Christianity, therefore many Jewish believers would’ve upheld the same respect for the New Testament Scriptures.
 2. Also there is evidence that copying of manuscripts was considered very important. Irenaeus attached this statement to the closing of his writing *“I adjure you who shall copy out of this book, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by His glorious advent when He comes to judge the living and the dead, that you compare what you transcribe, and correct it carefully against this manuscript from which you copy; and also that you transcribe this adjuration and insert it in the copy.”* If Irenaeus had such strictness concerning accurate copying of his writings how much more the Apostles knowing they delivered the Word of God!

2. Through Persecution

- a) Diocletian (284-316 A.D.) - published royal laws everywhere commanding that the Scriptures be destroyed by fire. Two years after this law – Diocletian said: "I have completely exterminated the Christian writings from the face of the earth!" We know that’s not true!
- b) During the “Dark Ages”, the Roman Catholic Church burned thousands of copies of the Bible! There was even a decree that all who read the Bible should be put to death.

- c) Voltaire, the noted French infidel, who died in 1778, made his attempt to destroy the Bible. He boldly made the prediction that within one hundred years the Bible and Christianity would be non-existent. But Voltaire's efforts and his bold prophecy failed. In fact, within 50 years of his death, the very printing press upon which Voltaire had printed his infidel literature was being used to print copies of the Bible. And afterward, the very house in which Voltaire lived was stacked with Bibles prepared by the Bible Society.

3. Into Translation

- a) The Hebrew Text of the Old Testament has been preserved in the "Masoretic Text." The Masoretes were Jewish scholars whose life's work involved copying and circulating the pure Hebrew Old Testament text.
- b) The Greek Text of the New Testament comes from a family of 5,000 texts called the Byzantine texts. These are the traditional texts of the New Testament. The best single copy representing this family of texts is the Textus Receptus (Received Text).
- c) By God's providential guidance we have now the King James Bible which is an honest, faithful and accurate translation of these texts. Fifty-four of some of the finest skilled linguistic scholars used by God to produce a translation that excels all others.

Homework:

- Reading and Quotations: Bible Explorers Guide, J. Phillips – Part 1 – Ch. 5 - 7