

Systematic Theology

A systematic study of the major doctrines of Scripture.

Topic 1 – The Doctrine of Scripture

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The Doctrine of Scripture

- Second London Baptist Confession of Faith – Chapter 1
- The Inspiration of Scripture
- The Authority and Perspicuity of Scripture
- The Inerrancy of Scripture
- Hermeneutics and Application
- The Preservation of Scripture
- Teaching and Preaching the Scriptures
- Translation Theory

The Preservation of Scripture

- How can we be sure that the inspired, written Word of God has been handed down to us today without anything missing or changed?
- The Devil seeks to undermine the Scripture from the beginning, denying God's Word to Eve. He distorted the Scripture when tempting Christ. And through King Jehoiakim attempted to literally destroy the physical Scriptures.
- And it happened, when Jehudi had read three or four columns, that the king cut it with the scribe's knife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the scroll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. Jeremiah 36:23

The Preservation of Scripture

- We have this assurance, that God has said He will preserve His Word. The content of Scripture will be perpetuated on earth and in heaven.
- “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.” – Isaiah 40:8
- “As for Me,” says the Lord, “this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants’ descendants,” says the Lord, “from this time and forevermore.” – Isaiah 59:21
- Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven. – Psalm 119:89

The Preservation of Scripture

- Preservation as a doctrine refers to the acts of God whereby He has preserved through the centuries the written record of His special revelation for His people.
– MacArthur, pg. 114
- He instructed His people to preserve it!
- He has providentially kept His Word through the diligent efforts of human agents through the millennia.
- The Old Testament in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek, being immediately inspired by God, and, by his singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as, in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them. Westminster Confession I.8

The Preservation of Scripture

- Perfectly in heaven, and faithfully on earth.
- Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. – Matt. 24:35
- God commands not to take anything away from or add anything to His Word.
- You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. – Deut. 4:2
- “Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.” – Deut. 12:32
- Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar. – Prov. 30:6

The Preservation of Scripture

- “Thus says the Lord: ‘Stand in the court of the Lord’s house, and speak to all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord’s house, all the words that I command you to speak to them. Do not diminish a word.’” – Jeremiah 26:2
- For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. – Rev. 22:18-19
- For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. – Matthew 5:18

The Preservation of Scripture

- Jeremiah 36:27 Now after the king had burned the scroll with the words which Baruch had written at the instruction of Jeremiah, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying: 28 “Take yet another scroll, and write on it all the former words that were in the first scroll which Jehoiakim the king of Judah has burned. 32 Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah, who wrote on it at the instruction of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire. And besides, there were added to them many similar words.
- Jeremiah’s first scroll was burned. He replaced it word for word, and added to it even more of God’s revelation (describing what King Jehoiakim did, etc.) to complete the Book as we have it today.

The Preservation of Scripture

- Canonization – how can we know what writings are supposed to be included in the “canon” of Scripture?
- With regard to the Old Testament, by the time of Christ’s incarnation the entire Old Testament had been written and acknowledged by the Jewish Community.
- The work of Eusebius and Athanasius was confirmed by the Council of Hippo in AD 393, identifying for the church the 27 books of the New Testament.
- Tests for canonicity for the Old Testament were applied to the collection of writings for the New Testament:
 1. The writings had to be authored by a recognized prophet or apostle, or by someone associated with one.
 2. The writings could not contradict or disagree with any previous Scripture.
 3. The church had to display a general consensus that a writing was an inspired Book.
- Hebrews has an unknown author, but the content is so in line with the rest of Scripture it was not contested. It is believed to be written by an Apostle or his close associate.

The Preservation of Scripture

- The Apocrypha was not included by the Jews, and even though it was translated into Greek with the Old Testament in the Septuagint and Latin Vulgate, but these books were never considered part of Scripture. They were referred to not as “books of the canon, but books of the church” that could be useful and helpful to believers.
- There are clear and obvious theological, historical, chronological, and geographical errors throughout the Apocryphal writings.
- The Canon was determined before the Council of Nicea (by 350 AD), and it was not until the Council of Trent (1546) that the Roman Church declared the Apocrypha to be part of the Canon, excluding 1 and 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh.

The Preservation of Scripture

- Scripture was copied by hand until around 1450 AD with the arrival of the printing press.
- Translation and printing allows for the introduction of errors, even if unintentional.
- The Hebrew texts compared with the Septuagint and the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has removed most doubt as to the accuracy of copies and translations, as these manuscripts cover thousands of years with little to no variance.
- The number of existing Biblical manuscripts (over 5000 Greek) dramatically outdistances the existing fragments of any other ancient literary work. By comparing text with text, we can confidently determine what the original prophetic/apostolic writing contained. Over 99% of the original writings have been preserved. Nothing of the less than 1% in question affects Christian doctrine.

The Preservation of Scripture

- Key Critical Texts:
- 1. Masoretic Hebrew
- 2. Greek Septuagint – Greek translation of the OT produced 2 centuries before Christ's incarnation, used by NT writers.
- 3. Latin Vulgate – translated by Jerome during the time of the early church fathers, fifth century AD.
- 4. Syriac Peshitta – the first and oldest version of the entire Christian Bible.
- These all agree nearly verbatim, even as they are all translated into different languages.