

Session 35

Topic

Preservation of the Bible

Teacher


Neil Smith

Online Content

<https://sermonaudio.com/sermon/892305333188>

QR Code





SESSION THIRTY-FIVE
STUDENT NOTES



THE PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE

- Many Christians make the statement, "I believe in the divine, verbal, plenary, and inerrant inspiration of the original Scriptures"— a true statement to be sure....
BUT
...we DON'T HAVE the original Scriptures in our possession, and never will!
- So, making such a statement without qualification can be rather convenient.
- Believing in the inspiration of the originals "lets one off the hook" so to speak — giving license to anyone wishing to "correct" the Bible when it suits their purpose.
- How often do we hear or read statements like:
 - "That's what the Bible says...BUT...in the original Greek it really means ..."
 - "A better translation would be ..."
 - "This verse is not found in the most ancient manuscripts..."
- Such pronouncements are not forthcoming only from the modernist and neo-orthodox camps but also from the pulpits and writings of conservative and fundamentalists — including fundamental Baptists!
- There are some critical questions being raised here:
 - i. Is the Bible intended for every man—or just for the scholars?
 - ii. Do we need to know Hebrew and Greek to fully understand the Bible?
 - iii. If some verses in the Bible are questionable in their translation, can we really be sure of any?
 - iv. Does the average (four years of Bible College) Baptist preacher have the scholastic ability to "correct" the Bible on the basis of the Hebrew or Greek text?
- The doctrine of inspiration is m_____ without the parallel doctrine of the DIVINE PRESERVATION of the Scriptures.
- Without it, we could never be 100% sure we actually have God's inspired Word.

I. THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE PRESERVATION

- The preservation of the scriptures is just as much a doctrine as that of divine inspiration.
- Both are taught in the Bible and are evidenced by internal and external proofs.
- The doctrine of preservation is based upon the following scriptures:
 1. _____
 - These verses teach:
 - i. The e_____ of preservation — "words."
 - ii. The A_____ of preservation — "Thou" [the Lord].
 - iii. The p_____ of preservation — "for ever."
 2. _____
 - The "counsel of the Lord" refers to God's words.
 3. _____
 - This Psalm explains God's purpose in preserving His Word.
 4. _____
 5. _____
 - If a generation in scripture is 40 years, then 1,000 generations would be 40,000 years!
 6. _____
 7. _____



SHINING LIGHT INDEPENDENT BAPTIST CHURCH

8. _____
 - The "Word of God" chapter teaches that the Bible is "for ever" settled, founded, and enduring.
9. _____
 - This verse teaches that the preservation of the scriptures falls within the province of God's omnipotence.
 - He is able to keep them.
10. _____
 - Only preservation guarantees this "certainty!"
11. _____
12. _____
 - This verse teaches both inspiration ("My words which I have put in thy mouth") and preservation ("from henceforth and for ever").
13. _____
 - This verse brings the doctrine of preservation to bear upon the New Testament scriptures.
14. _____
 - The "Great Commission" requires that the Lord's churches teach believers "all things whatsoever I have commanded you" until the end of this world as we presently know it.
 - In order to be able to do this, the "all things" must be preserved until the end of the world.
15. _____
16. _____
 - This verse has reference to the unchanging nature of the Word of God.
17. _____
 - The words of the Lord are the basis for salvation.
 - The Word is the basis of judgment.
 - This judgment takes place in the "last day", after heaven and earth have passed away (Revelation 20:11,12).
 - Even at the end of earthly time, the Word of God is still in existence!
18. _____
 - These verses, which are usually cited with reference to "inspiration," give some remarkable truth about "preservation."
 - i. Timothy Had The Scriptures.
 - The verse does not say he had a "reliable facsimile."
 - And yet
 - ii. Timothy Did Not Have The "Original Autographs."
 - In his day, the (Old Testament) scriptures were anywhere from between 1,500 and 450 years old — and were copies of copies of copies, etc.
 - iii. The Copies Timothy Had Access To Are Called "Scripture" And Are Said To Be "Inspired."
 - This passage makes nonsense out of any reference to the "inspired originals."
 - The original autographs were indeed inspired — but so are the preserved copies, and what we are dealing with (since the 2ND Century A.D.) are preserved copies!
 - The "originals" are non-existent.



19.

- Notice that the Word of God:
 - i. Is Incorruptible — the promise of continued purity.
 - We can expect to find a pure Bible today.
 - ii. Lives For Ever — the promise of continued life (effectiveness - **Hebrews 4:12**).
 - iii. Abides For Ever
 - iv. Endures For Ever
- The doctrine of the preservation of the scriptures is based squarely upon the PROMISES of God, and falls within the realm of His PROVIDENCE.
- Thus we speak of "providential preservation."

II. **THE LOGIC OF PRESERVATION**

- Preservation is a l _____ doctrine.
- Why would God give us the Bible, taking meticulous care with the very words of scripture, then allow their loss or distortion to occur over time?
Would not God, Who through the miracle of inspiration gave us His very words in written form, also be able to keep them through a miracle such as preservation?
- **Ecclesiastes 3:14**

III. **THE EXTENT OF PRESERVATION**

- The doctrine of inspiration teaches that God was concerned with words.
- The Bible teaches verbal inspiration.
- A review of the scripture references cited above also shows very clearly that God has also preserved the w _____.
- Thus our understanding of preservation goes beyond the Books, chapters, thoughts, concepts, and sense (all of which have indeed been preserved).
- It extends to the words.
- At this point many encounter a real difficulty in comprehending the doctrine of preservation.
- There is a conflict between r _____ and f _____.

1. **THE OBJECTION OF REASON**

- The logic of human reason would argue thus:
 - A. Let us say the actual, original [Greek] writing by the hand of the apostle Paul in a particular passage is θεοπνευστος — "theopneustos."
 - B. Accepting the fact that this word may be translated into English (which might be argued against on the grounds of strict "word preservation"), it should be translated as "God-breathed."
 - C. But in our English Bible, this ONE Greek word is translated to read: "given by inspiration of God" — meaning the translators have:
 - i. Added words (1 Greek word to 5 English words).
 - ii. Changed words ("theopneustos" literally means to "expire" or "breathe out" to "inspire," or "breathe in").
- Reason then asks, "How can this possibly be word preservation?"

2. **THE ANSWER OF FAITH**

- The response of faith to the above reasoning is:
 - A. We do not have any "original" autographs. Neither did Timothy, but he did have the Scriptures!



SHINING LIGHT INDEPENDENT BAPTIST CHURCH

- B. Timothy had available to him the Book of Deuteronomy (from his childhood) and the Book of 1 Timothy (initially addressed to him).
- C. 1 Timothy cites both the Book of Deuteronomy and the Book of Luke, affirming them as scripture.
- 1 Timothy 5:18
For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.
 - Deuteronomy 25:4
Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.
 - Luke 10:7
And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.
- D. Sometimes when the New Testament quotes the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit uses a slightly different wording.
- One example is where Deuteronomy 8:3 is quoted by the Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 4:4, with slightly different wording (yet without loss of meaning).
 - Deuteronomy 8:3
...that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.
 - Luke 4:4
And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.
 - i. In the first place, the quotation was from the Hebrew to Greek.
 - ii. In the second place, both references are taken from Books (Deuteronomy & Luke) that are specifically stated to be SCRIPTURE.
 - iii. In the third place, the Spirit of God is well qualified to use different words since He is the Author of Scripture.
 - It is only an assumption that when a New Testament writer quotes from the Old Testament, he was sitting down and copying it from an existing scroll.
 - The example of Acts 20:35 and Jude 14 shows this not to be the case.
 - Acts 20:35
I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.
 - Jude 14
And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, Faith concludes that God will keep His promise to preserve His Word, working p _____ by the same Spirit through the processes of c _____ and t _____ to give us the very words He d _____.
- God's words are still His words when copied or translated.
We may not fully understand this fact, but the Bible clearly teaches it.



IV. THE NATURE OF PRESERVATION

- History bears witness to the providential preservation of the Bible in two areas:
 - i. Its physical p_____
 - ii. Its textual p_____
- 1. THE PERPETUITY OF THE BIBLE AS A BOOK**
 - On numerous occasions Satan has attempted to e_____ the Word of God from the face of the earth.
 - Hellish decrees by wicked men have seen the Bible banned, burnt, and banished, then battered by scornful critics.
 - **ILLUSTRATION**
The French infidel Voltaire (d.1778) once boasted that Christianity (i.e. Catholicism) would be a dead religion within 100 years of his day. He wrote many volumes against 'Christianity' and the Bible. Within 50 years of his death his own printing works was being used by the Geneva Bible Society for the printing of Bibles! Ninety-two volumes of Voltaire's works once sold at an auction for just a few dollars — at the same auction, one ancient Bible manuscript sold for over \$500,000.
 - Down through the many centuries, God has marvellously and miraculously preserved His Word from physical destruction.
 - A. The Perpetuity Of The OLD TESTAMENT**
 - According to **Romans 3:2**, the preservation of the Old Testament was committed to the Jews.
 - The history of the Jewish people and the desolations of Jerusalem account somewhat for this fact, but the primary reason lay with the methods used by the Jewish scribes involved in the transmission of the Old Testament text down through the centuries.
 - **QUOTE**
Copies intended for use in the Synagogue were to be written according to precise rules, and with the most minute attention to accuracy. Any copy which was found faulty or damaged was to be destroyed. When a new copy had been made, and its accuracy tested, the old manuscript (especially if it had been in any way damaged) was destroyed or consigned to a lumber cupboard. This practice accounts for the disappearance of all the early manuscripts, but it is also a guarantee of the accuracy of those that survive.
 - B. The Perpetuity Of The NEW TESTAMENT.**
 - In contrast to the Old Testament, there is a vast number of New Testament manuscripts extant.
 - According to the tally kept by Kurt Aland (as of 1968) there are existing today ...
 - 81 papyrus manuscripts and fragments
 - 267 uncial (upper case script) manuscripts,
 - 2,764 minuscule (cursive script) manuscripts
 - 2,143 lectionary manuscripts... of the New Testament text, along with approximately 10,000 Latin manuscripts and over 9,000 old manuscripts of other versions.
 - Not all of these texts are reliable, neither does the fidelity of the New Testament text depend upon the q_____.



SHINING LIGHT INDEPENDENT BAPTIST CHURCH

- The New Testament has been physically preserved over the last 1,900+ years in two streams — one living, and one dormant:
- i. The LIVING Stream of the Priesthood of Believers & New Testament Churches
 - New Testament Baptist churches are called the "pillar and ground of the truth" in 1 Timothy 3:15.
 - Christian believers are called "an holy priesthood" in 1 Peter 2:5.
 - The transmission of the New Testament text was committed to them.
 - They are the "living" vehicles of preservation. To this fact history bears abundant witness.
 - During the "Dark Ages," when the established 'Church' ruled with godless tyranny, hundreds of thousands of true Christians remained faithful to their Lord, though often persecuted into the obscure back-waters of history.
 - Early translations from the pure Greek text were made into Syriac (c.150 A.D.) and Latin (c.157 A.D.).
 - As pure Christianity spread across the Roman Empire these Bibles flourished and were later staunchly defended against the inroads of a perverted Christianity with its perverted Bible.
 - QUOTE
The old Latin versions were used longest by the western Christians who would not bow to the authority of Rome — e.g., the Donatists; the Irish in Ireland, Britain, and the Continent; the Albigenses, etc.
 - QUOTE
The Waldenses were among the first of the peoples of Europe to obtain a translation of the Holy Scriptures. Hundreds of years before the Reformation, they possessed the Bible in manuscript in their native tongue. They had the truth unadulterated, and this rendered them the special objects of hatred and persecution ... Here for a thousand years, witnesses for the truth maintained the ancient faith ... In a most wonderful manner it (the Word of Truth) was preserved uncorrupted through all the ages of darkness.
 - QUOTE
It is therefore evident that the translators of 1611 had before them four Bibles which had come under Waldensian influences: the Diodati in Italian, the Olivetan in French, the Lutheran in German, and the Genevan in English. We have every reason to believe that they had access to at least six Waldensian Bibles written in the old Waldensian vernacular.
 - Any student of Church History knows that the Donatists, Albigenses, and Waldenses (among others) are part of our Baptist heritage.
- ii. The DORMANT Stream of Eastern Christendom



SHINING LIGHT INDEPENDENT BAPTIST CHURCH

- The Greek New Testament was also preserved in the Greek-speaking branch of Christendom, even during the times of apostasy and darkness.
- The Roman emperor Constantine 1 (312-337 A.D.) moved the seat of his government to the city of Byzantium (re-naming it Constantinople).
- This divided the Roman empire into two legs (Daniel 2:33a), East and West, resulting in the emergence of the two great branches of Christendom — the Western (Latin) 'Church' centred at Rome, and the Eastern (Byzantine) 'Church' centred at Constantinople.
- The Byzantine period extended until the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 A.D.
- For most of its history the Eastern 'Church' dwelt in spiritual darkness, and yet within its monasteries the monks continued to reproduce thousands of manuscripts of the pure Greek New Testament.
- How this could be, when the very scriptures they were copying clearly taught against the infant baptism, the Mariolatry, the worship of icons, etc., they were practicing, is a miracle.
- The reason God's Word was preserved through this channel is tradition.
 - a. The language tradition
 - Greek continued to be spoken in the east, long after the west became latinised.
 - Hence an interest in the Greek scriptures was maintained.
 - b. The apostolic tradition
 - Greece and Asia Minor were the first major centres of Christianity.
 - Most of the "originals" would have been here!
 - c. The missionary tradition
 - Antioch was the first great missionary centre (Acts 11 & 13).
 - The East was the birthplace of Christianity.
 - d. The creedal tradition
 - All the ecumenical councils, from Nicea I (325 A.D.) to Constantinople IV (869 A.D.) were held in the east and in the Greek language.
- The great doctrinal controversies were dealt with at these councils.
- These traditions of language and influence resulted in the careful transmission of the New Testament text.
- Hence we refer to the pure, preserved text as the:
 - Byzantine text
 - Traditional text
 - Received text
 - Antiochan text



Syrian text

- Over 90% of all extant manuscripts belong to this textual family!

2. THE PURITY OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

- In conjunction with his attempts to destroy God's Word in a physical way, Satan used another, more subtle, device — that of t_____ c_____.
- Under the guise of s_____, Satan has succeeded in producing phoney, look-alike, counterfeit bibles.
- Nevertheless God has, according to His faithful promises, preserved His Word in its pure form.
- The story of how this was accomplished is remarkable.

A. God's Preservation Of The Old Testament Text

- The reliability of the Old Testament text rests upon the ability of the scribes.
- Its transmission is something that must surely cause us to stand in wonder.
- QUOTE
The Jews cherished the highest awe and veneration for their sacred writings which they regarded as the "Oracles of God." They maintained that God had more care of the letters and syllables of the Law than of the stars of heaven, and that upon each tittle of it, mountains of doctrine hung. For this reason every individual letter was numbered by them and account kept of how often it occurred. In the transcription of an authorised synagogue manuscript, rules were enforced of the minutest character.

B. God's Preservation Of The New Testament Text

- No set of rules was ever devised for the transmission of the New Testament text, but it is quite evident that great care was exercised.
- i. The early years of Christianity were strongly influenced by Jewish custom and tradition.
 - We would not expect churches and Christian scribes to do less.
- ii. There is evidence that the copying of manuscripts was taken very seriously.
 - QUOTE
'I adjure you who shall copy out 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.'
 - QUOTE
Pickering rightly asks, "If Irenaeus took such extreme precautions for the accurate transmission of his own work, how much more would he be concerned for the accurate copying of the Word of God?"
 - QUOTE
He also notes the great concern of Irenæus (115-200 A.D.) for the exact wording of Revelation 13:18 [as to whether John



wrote 666 or 616,] and concludes, "Irenaeus asserts that 666 is found 'in all the most approved and ancient copies' and that 'those men who saw John face to face' bear witness to it. And he warns those who made the change (of a single letter) that 'there shall be no light punishment upon him who either adds or subtracts anything from the Scripture.'"

- iii. There was considerable conflict over Biblical texts in earlier times.
 - For nine hundred years, we are told, the first Latin translation held their own after the Vulgate appeared (380 A.D.)
 - **QUOTE**
The Jesuits ... brought forth an English translation of the Vulgate [Rheims-Douay]. In its preface they expressly declared that the Vulgate had been translated in 1300 into Italian and in 1400 into French, 'the sooner to shake out of the deceived people's hands, the false heretical translations of a sect called Waldenses.'
 - Such conflict indicates there were differences between the various Biblical texts, and a willingness by many to care about those differences.

V. THE PRESERVATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

- See the separate flowchart as way of illustration of this.
- This chart shows the chain of transmission of the Old Testament — from the autographs to the Authorised, King James Version.
- The Masoretes were Jewish scholars whose life's work involved the transmission of the pure Hebrew Old Testament text.
- Their name comes from the word "masorah" which means "tradition."
- These Masoretic scribes were active between 500-1000 A.D.
- They followed the strict rules laid down by the Talmud.
- Because of their practice of destroying worn or faulty manuscripts, very few manuscripts are extant.

VI. THE PRESERVATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

- See the separate flowchart as way of illustration of this.
- This chart shows the chain of transmission of the pure New Testament text, from the autographs to the Authorised, King James Version.

MEMORY VERSES

Psalms 12:6-7

6 The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

7 Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

