

Sunday, January 24, 2010—Final Authority: Locating God’s Word in English—The People of Preservation

Review

- During the first three weeks of this study I have been challenging you to consider the viewpoint of faith regarding the word of God. We need to believe what the Bible teaches about itself.
- First, We began our study by looking at the doctrine of Inspiration:
 - II Timothy 3:16—the Bible’s claim for itself is that every word of scripture was given by inspiration of God.
 - God’s design in Inspiration was to make the living and the written word equal.
- Second, we began looking at the doctrine of Preservation:
 - Psalm 12:6-7—the doctrine of Preservation teaches that the vary words God inspired are the same words he is going to preserve. The doctrines of Inspiration and Preservation go hand in hand; you can’t have one without the other.
 - It is always to be remembered that the Bible is a spiritual book which God exerted supernatural force to conceive, and it is reasonable to assume that he could exert that same supernatural force to preserve.
- Third, we learned that Preservation is necessary because of Satan’s interest in and attack upon the word of God.
 - Genesis 3 outlines Satan’s policy of evil against the word of God.
 - It is Satan’s policy of evil to destroy the final authority of the Word of God. He does so by creating a competing authority to the truth of God. Thus forcing you to decide and become your own authority.
 - Satan desires to be worshipped. He has the ability to counterfeit God’s actions, and definitely will be involved actively in attempting to destroy God’s Word and/or our confidence in that Word, while seeking to replace it with his own version.
- Fourth, we studied the process of Preservation or what the Bible teaches about how Preservation would occur.
 - The originals no long exist and are not the issue with God.
 - God’s design is to Preserve his word through a multiplicity of accurate reliable copies that carry as much weight and authority as the originals.
- This week we are going to turn our attention to the people of Preservation. Not only did God design to preserve his word through a multiplicity of copies, he also charged specific men in Scripture with the responsibility of doing so.

The People of Preservation in the Old Testament

- God always over saw the copying process of the word of God. He did so by establishing a group of men whose job it was to guard the word of God.
- Romans 3:1-2—one of the reasons God created the nation of Israel is so that they could watch over God’s word. The oracles of God were committed or entrusted to the nation of Israel.
- Deuteronomy 31:24-28—the tribe of Levi was given the responsibility to teach Israel the word of God.
- Deuteronomy 10:2-8—Moses places the Ten Commandments into the Ark. In verse eight, who was given the responsibility of taking care of the Ark? The Levites
- Deuteronomy 31:9-13—the Levites were given the responsibility of copying and teaching the Word.
- Malachi 2:4-7—the Levites were the ones who knew God’s word.
- Ezra 7:6-7—Ezra was a member of the tribe of Levi. He was a ready scribe and an expert in the Law of Moses. He was part of the group of People who God had established for the handling of the Word of God.
- Ezra 7:10-11—Ezra made copies of the Word of God.
- Ezra 7:27-28—God’s hand was on Ezra to ensure that the copying was done right.
- Proverbs 25:1
- Isaiah 36:22-37:2
- Jeremiah 8:8-9—the scribes were responsible for copying the Word of God.
- My point is that God did not simply allow his word to be handled and copied by anyone. In the Old Testament he established a specific group of men whose job it was to take care of the Word of God.
- Scribes knew they were duplicating God’s word, so they went to incredible lengths to prevent error from creeping into their work. The whole process of copying the Bible was controlled by strict religious rituals, and the scribes carefully counted every line, word, syllable, and letter to ensure accuracy.

- Massoratic Text dates around 900 A.D. Discovered in 1947, the Dead Sea Scrolls date around 150 B.C. 1,000 years earlier. When compared with the Massoratic text the Dead Sea Scrolls were word for word identical in over 95% of the text. The 5% variation consisted of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling.
- This is historical confirmation of the Biblical doctrine of Preservation, not just of the thoughts but of the very words themselves.

The People of Preservation During the Dispensation of Grace

- When God set the nation of Israel aside the people who were responsible for the protection and preservation of the God's Word changed. When Israel fell the job of Preservation passed from the scribes of the tribe of Levi into the hands of the New Testament prophets.
- Ephesians 4:11—we know that during the infancy stage of the Body of Christ, before the Word of God was complete the gift of prophecy functioned in the Body of Christ.
- Exodus 7:1—one of the functions of a prophet in the Word of God is to be God's spokes person. A prophet also communicated God's Word to his audience. "thus saith the Lord."
 - Foretelling—means to predict the future.
 - Forthelling—means to deliver a message.
- I Corinthians 14:27-33—one of the functions of the gift of prophecy served for the body of Christ was to help identify what was God's word from what was not. This one reason why once the word of God was complete the gift of prophecy passed away.
- II Thessalonians 2:1-2—the gift of prophecy was critical during the early church because it helped distinguish between scripture and false epistles.
- II Peter 3:15-16—Paul's own epistles were being copied and sent all over the land.
- Colossians 4:15-16—the Word of God was being copied and shared between all the churches of 1st century.
- New Testament prophets followed by Bible believing Christians who knew they were handling the word of God continued the copying process.

The Finalization of the Cannon

- It was under the ministry of the New Testament prophets that the New Testament cannon was finalized.

- This is not what modern scholarship and textual criticism teaches. They teach that between 150-400A.D. the church fathers gather together the New Testament books.
- 170-200 A.D. theological discussion and between 220-400 the canon was settled by the church fathers. 393 A.D. Synod of Hippo
- The Gothic Translation of the New Testament was made in 360 A.D. and included all 27 books that are in your New Testament.
- How could Timothy rightly divide the word of truth unless he possessed a copy of the Word of Truth to divide?