GROVE BIBLE

PRESERVATION OF SCRIPTURE

BIBLIOLOGY PAPER





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. It begins with the specific instructions He gave His people to preserve it. It also includes the providential way in which God has kept His Word by the diligent efforts of human agents through the millennia” (Biblical Doctrine, John MacArthur, p.114).

Psalm 119:89 tells us that God’s Word will be preserved in heaven, “Forever, O Lord, your Word is firmly fixed in the heavens.” The term firmly fixed literally means to be established or set in place permanently. This passage lets us know that God will be establishing or preserving His Word, perfectly, in heaven. MacArthur tells us in Biblical Doctrine, that God has a permanent and perfect record of His Word, but it is kept in heaven. God has chosen to keep a perfect record of it in heaven, but He has also chosen to providentially preserve copies of His Word here on earth. One of Satan’s tactics is to undermine the Word of God. In Genesis 3:4, Satan denied God’s Word to Eve. In his wilderness encounter with Christ, he attempted to distort Scripture (Matt. 4:6-7). He would also attempt to use human agents to completely destroy the physical copies of God’s Word. In Jeremiah 36:23, we see King Jehoiakim burning the Word of God as it is being read to him.

Throughout history, man has attempted to destroy the Scriptures, but God has continually and will continue to preserve it. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever. (Isaiah 40:8 and 1 Peter 1:24-25). In Matthew 5:18, Jesus tells us that not even the smallest part of a letter of His Word will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Heaven and earth will pass away, but not His Word (Matt. 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 16:17). Isaiah 59:21 tells us that His Word shall not depart out of their mouths, nor the mouths of the following generations.



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God has providentially preserved His Word through people, whom He gave the responsibility to protect and transmit it throughout the ages. Repeatedly, God commanded His people not to add or take away from His Word (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Jer. 26:2; and Rev. 22:18-19). Here are two biblical examples of God preserving His Word through human agents after the original copy was destroyed. The first is when Moses was given the Ten Commandments that were written by the very finger of God. Moses came down the mountain and saw the people turning their backs on God. In anger he threw the tablets to the ground, destroying them. God had Moses write out the same commandments (Ex. 34). A second example is when Jeremiah was told by God to write God's Word and have them read to King Jehoiakim. After the king burned them, God had Jeremiah rewrite the same words (Jer. 36). These examples show human agents trying to destroy His Word and human agents being used by God to preserve His Word.

Throughout the ages God has preserved multiple copies of His Word in various forms. Archaeological discoveries have only continued to support the doctrine of the preservation of Scripture. Space will not allow us to cite all of these discoveries, but The Dead Sea Scrolls that were discovered in 1947 have provided further support of God preserving His Word. We can trust that the 66 books of the Bible that we have today are in fact the Word of God and He has providentially worked through human agents to preserve the same words that the ancient Hebrews and the early Christians would have read.

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