



IV. THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

A. The Definition of Preservation

1. Basic meaning
 - a. Negative meaning used externally—to keep from harm, injury, damage, danger, destruction, evil, etc.
 - b. Negative meaning used internally—to keep from spoiling, rotting or decaying
 - c. Positive meaning—to keep up, carry on, maintain, uphold, sustain;
2. Biblical meaning
 - a. The act of God by which He keeps and protects the word of God so that every word is exactly of His choosing and completely without error.
 - b. Simply put, preservation keeps the revealed and inspired word(s) of God in the original state of purity.

B. The Need for Preservation

1. Introductory thoughts
 - a. The word of God is under attack from every side.
 - b. There are, however, two primary avenues of attack that merit consideration: *adding to* and *subtracting from*.
2. Attacks on the word
 - a. The garden of Eden
 - (1) The word of God came under attack by and through man shortly after his creation.
 - (2) Genesis chapter two contains the commandment of God given to Adam (Genesis 2:16-17).
 - a) God began with a thou mayest in verse 16 when the Lord said, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat."
 - b) Verse 17 then continues with the thou-shalt-not portion of the command where the Lord said, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it."
 - c) Disobedience has consequences explicitly spelled out at the end of verse 17 when the Lord said, "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."
 - (3) Having seen the commandment given and the judgment for disobeying, think about the kind of assault launched against the words of God.
 - a) The word of God was questioned (Genesis 3:1).
 - b) God's words were changed (Genesis 3:2-3).
 - c) The word of God was denied outright (Genesis 3:4).
 - (4) The Bible student is told that "we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11). Any believer, who carefully considers how the Devil attacked God's words here, will not be caught off guard when the Devil uses the same tricks again.



- b. Moses and the commandments (Exodus 32:15-20)
 - (1) The attack (Exodus 32:15-20)
 - a) Moses ascended up the mount to receive the Lord's words.
 - b) While he was with God, the children of Israel turned to folly.
 - c) They crafted a molten calf and worshipped it.
 - d) The Lord, in His fury, instructed Moses to go down, for the people had "corrupted themselves."
 - e) Moses caught a glimpse of the calf and the dancing as he made his descent.
 - f) In anger he hurled the tables to the ground.
 - g) These two tables contained the original words of God.
 - h) In fact, they are said to have been the very "work of God" (Exodus 32:16).
 - i) Yet, they were destroyed.
 - j) Without preservation, the words of God on those tables would be lost forever.
 - (2) The preservation
 - a) God, in His goodness, came to the aid of Moses by giving His words again (Exodus 34:1-4, 28).
 - b) This example demonstrates the need for preservation and also reveals that it is God Who preserves His word, no matter how man treats it and regardless of the cause of need for preservation.
- c. Jehudi burning the originals
 - (1) The attack
 - a) The Lord gave Jeremiah a message of judgment against Israel and Judah (Jeremiah 36:2).
 - b) The message was to be delivered to Judah to give the people ample opportunity to repent (Jeremiah 36:3, 6-7).
 - c) God's words were rejected and destroyed by the king.
 - d) The Bible says that "all the roll was consumed in the fire" (Jeremiah 36:23).
 - e) If God did not intervene with a supernatural preservation, His words would have been lost forever.
 - (2) The preservation
 - a) As the passage continues, it is evident that God is fully capable and willing to preserve His own word.
 - b) Take note that the Lord preserved "all the words" from His previous message (Jeremiah 36:32).
 - c) In addition to preserving the original words, He added many more to it (Jeremiah 36:32).
- d. General New Testament corruption (2 Corinthians 2:17; 2 Corinthians 4:2)
 - (1) False gospels (Galatians 1:7-9)
 - (2) False doctrines (Ephesians 4:14)
 - (3) False epistles (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2)



3. The results of corruption
 - a. Doctrine becomes corrupted (2 Corinthians 11:3-4; Galatians 1:6-9).
 - b. Other authorities are introduced (Matthew 22:29; 2 Timothy 3:7).
 - (1) Traditions are magnified equal to or above the word (Matthew 15:6).
 - (2) Philosophy is exalted (Colossians 2:8).
 - (3) False knowledge is accepted (1 Timothy 6:20-21).
 - c. If God fails to preserve His word, there is no final authority in the world. People then exalt traditions (Roman Catholicism), philosophy (Aristotle and Philo), “science falsely so called” (evolution), and scholarship (Westcott and Hort). And whatever “truth” at which they arrive is unquestionable to them—it becomes the authority upon which all other things are judged. Subsequently, the man who creates the “truth” becomes the final authority.
4. The declaration of corruption
 - a. The Lord gave His word by revelation and inspiration. Even the Bible critics agree that He gave it perfectly.
 - b. God knew that mankind through Satan’s influence would frequently question, change, and deny His word. God foreknew that He would need to preserve what He had given.
 - c. Those who question the doctrine of preservation question the very intelligence of an omniscient (all-knowing) God.

C. The Promise of Preservation (Ecclesiastes 3:14)

1. Layers of promise—Most critics have no trouble believing that God would preserve His overall message, but God promised to preserve His word all the way to the minutest of details.
 - a. His truth or His word
 - (1) God promised in His word that He would preserve His truth (Psalm 100:5).
 - (2) He also promised that He would preserve His word (Psalm 119:89; Isaiah 40:8; 1 Peter 1:25).
 - (3) Clearly, God promised that the message of His word would be preserved. The Bible critics usually stop at this point. They believe that none of God’s truths have been lost.
 - b. His commandments, testimonies, and judgments (Psalm 111:7-8; Psalm 119:152, 160)
 - c. His words (Psalm 12:6-7; Matthew 24:35)
 - d. Every jot and tittle of His Law (Matthew 5:18; Luke 16:17)
 - (1) The jot is a letter of the Hebrew alphabet called the Yod (י). It can be found in the subtitle above Psalm 119:73. God promised to preserve even the very letters of His words.
 - (2) A tittle is a hornlike projection on some of the Hebrew letters. In Psalm 119, compare verses 9 and 81 or verses 25 and 153. A tittle would be the equivalent of a dot at the top of a lowercase j.



2. Locations of promise
 - a. In heaven (Psalm 119:89)
 - b. On earth (Psalm 12:6-7; Ephesians 6:17; James 1:21; see also John 14:15)
3. Lengths of promise
 - a. To all generations (Psalm 100:5)
 - b. Till heaven and earth pass away (Matthew 5:18)
 - c. Forever
 - (1) Settled for ever (Psalm 119:89)
 - (2) Stand for ever (Isaiah 40:8)
 - (3) Endureth for ever (Psalm 119:160; 1 Peter 1:25)
 - (4) Stand fast for ever and ever (Psalm 111:7-8)
 - (5) Founded for ever (Psalm 119:152)
 - (6) Preserved for ever (Psalm 12:6-7)
 - (7) Shall not pass away (Matthew 24:35)

D. The Means of Preservation

1. Generally
 - a. By moving upon men (Exodus 4:10-16, 27-31; Romans 16:22 compare with Romans 1:1; Jeremiah 36:1-4, 20-24, 32)
 - b. By guarding the word (2 Corinthians 2:17; 2 Corinthians 4:2)
 - c. By accepting only God's word (Isaiah 8:16; 2 Timothy 1:13; 2 Timothy 3:14; Titus 1:9)
2. Old Testament preservation
 - a. Preserved by the priests
 - (1) They kept the tables of the Law (Deuteronomy 31:24-26).
 - (2) They taught the words of the law (Deuteronomy 17:8-13; Deuteronomy 31:9-13).
 - (3) They copied the words of the law (Deuteronomy 17:18-20; 2 Samuel 8:15, 17; Ezra 7:6, 10-12, 21; Proverbs 25:1; Jeremiah 36:4, 17-18, 32).
 - b. Preserved by revivals (2 Kings 22:1, 8-20; 2 Chronicles 15:1-15; Ezra 7:6, 10; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Nehemiah 9:1-3).
3. New Testament preservation
 - a. The New Testament books were immediately accepted as scripture
 - (1) The claims of the authors (Matthew 10:20; Luke 12:12; Luke 21:15; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Corinthians 10:7-13; Galatians 1:6-12; Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 12-14; 2 Peter 3:1-2).
 - (2) The acceptance of other New Testament authors (1 Timothy 5:18 with Luke 10:7 and Deuteronomy 25:4; 2 Peter 3:15-16).
 - b. Warnings against textual corruptions were made immediately (2 Corinthians 2:17; 2 Corinthians 4:2; 2 Timothy 4:3-4; 2 Peter 2:1-2; 2 Peter 3:16; Jude 1:3-4; Revelation 22:18-19).
 - c. The making of good copies spread rapidly (Colossians 4:16).
 - d. The rejection of corrupt copies was an early practice.



V. THE ILLUMINATION OF GOD'S WORD

A. The Definition of Illumination

1. Basic meaning
 - a. Illumination is not difficult at all to understand. The root of the word is *lumen*, which means light.
 - b. The word *illumination* basically means that which gives light.
2. Biblical meaning
 - a. Illumination is the act of God's Spirit by which He spiritually enlightens mankind as to the meaning of the scriptures (1 Corinthians 2:12-14; John 14:26).
 - b. Before we proceed, it would be wise to differentiate illumination from some other doctrinal terms.
 - (1) First of all, ***illumination is not revelation***. God revealed His word when He originally gave it.
 - (2) Second, ***illumination is not interpretation***. Interpretation deals with the translation of an incomprehensible message into an understandable message (see Daniel 5:5-29).

B. The Need for Illumination

1. The holiness of God
 - a. Holiness is God's ultimate attribute. In fact, both the Old and New Testaments declare Him thrice holy (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8). This is never done in regards to any other God's other attributes.
 - b. The attribute of God's holiness effects man in some very severe ways especially as it pertains to the reception of God's words.
 - (1) God's thoughts are far above our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9).
 - (2) God cannot be known naturally (Job 37:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14).
2. The sinfulness of man
 - a. The wickedness of man is the complete opposite of the holiness of God. Man is sinful, and holiness and sinfulness are at opposite ends of the spectrum. They repel each other.
 - b. The sinfulness of man impacts his ability to know, perceive, and receive the words of a holy God.
 - (1) Sin separates from God and causes a breach in fellowship that man cannot cross in his own power (Isaiah 59:2).
 - (2) Sin blinds or turns out the light.
 - a) Spiritually speaking, it brings darkness so that man cannot see God or His truth (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 4:18).
 - b) Blindness is often associated with the Jewish people who rejected the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 13:13-15).
 - c) This truth is explained further in the blindness of the natural man (Isaiah 29:10-12).
 - d) Satan blinds the minds of the unsaved so they cannot see the light provided through the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).



- e) God is light and God gives light. Satan is darkness and continually strives to block the light. Mankind is blinded, and because of the blindness, he cannot receive the things of God. The word of God, the Lord Himself, and Christians who spread the gospel are the only lights that can remove the darkness (1 Corinthians 2:14).
- c. This may all sound hopeless, and it is. Man cannot educate himself enough to comprehend God. In fact, most of man's attempts at education lead to devolution of understanding rather than true spiritual enlightenment. Even the greatest level of wisdom found in mankind cannot comprehend God or His truth (1 Corinthians 1:21).
- d. Here is the dilemma: man must know the truth but he cannot even comprehend truth without the Holy Spirit of God opening his eyes (Psalm 119:18) and removing the blinders (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). The process of getting the truth from God to mankind is entirely based on the workings of God.
- e. Unfortunately, mankind can reject this truth, and often does, but the Lord graciously makes sure that it is fully accessible to all.

C. The Means of Illumination

- 1. Open eyes
 - a. Man's eyes must be opened, and this can only be done by the Lord. Like David, everyone should pray for illumination (Psalm 119:18).
 - b. That light comes from God's word. All of this is a matter of the heart—the light must enter the heart (Psalm 119:130).
- 2. A sound teacher
 - a. Once the Lord opens our eyes and hearts, and the words of God bring light, the Teacher uses that light with those open eyes and hearts to help us understand the truths of God's word.
 - b. Although the Lord may use a man to instruct, the Teacher, ultimately, is the Holy Ghost.
 - (1) Man is shallow and cannot comprehend the depths and riches of God and His truth. "[T]he Spirit searche[s]" out "the deep things of God" and gives man the necessary understanding (1 Corinthians 2:9-11).
 - (2) As "the Spirit searche[s]" out "the deep things of God," He also teaches man concerning "the things that are given to us of God" (1 Corinthians 2:12).
 - (3) The Spirit of God comprehends the words of God which man is unable to comprehend in his natural state. He then declares these great truths to man so that he can understand things far beyond his natural ability to comprehend or grasp (John 14:26).
 - (4) God's indwelling Spirit is known as the Holy Ghost (John 7:39), the Comforter (John 14:26; John 15:26), and the Spirit of Truth (John 16:13). No matter the name, His purpose is to "guide" the Christian "into all truth" (John 16:13).