

EH Bible 101, part 4

Preservation

Has the Bible been miraculous preserved (ie., a re-inspired Bible in 1611)?

Psalm 119:89 (NASB95)

Forever, O Lord,
Your word is settled in heaven.

Matthew 24:35 (NASB95)

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

Has the Bible been providentially preserved?

The Biblical Doctrine of Preservation

Daniel Wallace and many others believe that there is not a biblical *doctrine* of preservation. According to this view, the preservation of Scripture is not an exegetically derived argument, except from silence. The notion of providential preservation of Scripture is based on observation of history and the science of textual criticism.

But consider the Biblical witness to a doctrine of preservation:

God's preservation of His Word:

Psalm 119:89 (NASB95)

Forever, O Lord,
Your word is settled in heaven.

Matthew 24:35 (NASB95)

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

1 Peter 1:23 (NASB95)

for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable,
that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

1 Peter 1:25 (NASB95)

But the word of the Lord endures forever."
And this is the word which was preached to you.

Human Responsibility in Preservation

Deuteronomy 4:2 (NASB95)

"You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away
from it, that you may
keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.

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Deuteronomy 12:32 (NASB95)

“Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.

Proverbs 30:5–6 (NASB95)

Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.

Jeremiah 26:2 (NASB95)

“Thus says the Lord, ‘Stand in the court of the Lord’s house, and speak to all the cities of Judah who have come to worship in the Lord’s house all the words that I have commanded you to speak to them. Do not omit a word!

Revelation 22:18–19 (NASB95)

I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

“The biblical doctrine of the preservation of Scripture consists of two parts: (1) God preserves His Word unchanged forever in heaven and (2) He gave His people the privilege and responsibility of preserving it on earth” - (William Barrick TMSJ, 9 Spring 1998, p.38).

Consider some examples of the critical roles of divine providence and human responsibility in preservation:

- Josiah 2Kings 22:8-10
- Jehoiakim, Jeremiah, and Baruch in Jer 36.
- Jerome (Latin Vulgate and Hexapla, before 240 A.D.)
- Erasmus (Greek NT, 1516)
- Today’s preacher (2Timothy 2:2; 4:2)

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Preservation of the Old Testament

Factors in preservation of the OT:

- Jewish reverence for the written Word of God
- Tedious copying of manuscripts
- Burial of worn parchments
- Oldest extant manuscripts were from 900 A.D.

The Masoretes:

- 7th-11th centuries A.D.
- Counting the numbers of letters in books
- Identifying the middle letter of a book
- Aleph occurred 42,377 times in Hebrew OT
- Hebrew vowel pointings

The Dead Sea Scrolls:

- Discovered by two Bedouin shepherds in the winter of 1946-47.
- Some manuscripts as old as 125 B.C. (1000 years older than anything previously known!)
- No significant difference between Qumran scrolls and Masoretic texts!

Other Language translations (LXX, Samaritan Pentateuch, Aramaic Targums).

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Preservation of the New Testament

We do not possess the original manuscripts.

We do have papyrus from the 3rd century (2nd century, even?).

Uncials (all capital letters) from the 4th century

Minuscules in the thousands from the 4th to 7th centuries

Some statistics:

- The NT is the best attested of all ancient books.
- We possess 5000 Greek mss from which to discern originals (some to the 1st half of 3rd century).
- The closest comparison is the Roman poet Virgil, a contemporary of NT. We possess lines from 4th century, mss from the 5th.
- No major doctrine rests on disputed texts.
- There is not a single passage in which scholars agree that the original NT text is not extant. (In the Old Testament, 1Sam 13:1 might be the only Hebrew text with no original. See Acts 13:21.)
- The expositor today must make decisions about textual variants in less than ½ of 1% of Biblical texts.

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Resources for further study:

On Inspiration:

R. Laird Harris Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible
B.B. Warfield The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible

On Canonization:

Wayne Grudem Systematic Theology, chapter 3.
F.F. Bruce The Canon of Scripture
R. Laird Harris Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible
Bruce Metzger The New Testament: It's Background, Growth, and Content
Michael Kruger The Question of Canon: Challenging the Status Quo in the New Testament Debate

On Preservation:

James White The King James Only Controversy
Jon Reherek "The Preservation of the Bible: Providential or Miraculous? The Biblical View" in The Master's Seminary Journal, Spring 2008.
Bruce Metzger The New Testament: It's Background, Growth, and Content
David Daniel The Bible in English
William Barrick "Ancient Manuscripts and Biblical Exposition" in The Master's Seminary Journal, 9, Spring 1998, pp 26-38.

On Biblical Criticism (The Bad Kind):

Thomas and Farnell The Jesus Crisis
Eta Linneman Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology? Reflections of a Bultmannian Turned Evangelical

On Biblical Criticism (The Good Kind):

Bruce Metzger The New Testament: It's Background, Growth, and Content
www.csntm.org

General:

Don Kistler, gen ed. Sola Scriptura: The Protestant Position on the Bible
Erwin Lutzer Seven Reasons Why You Can Trust the Bible

A helpful resource on the clarity of Scripture (which makes hermeneutics possible!):
Mark D. Thompson A Sure Ground on Which To Stand: The Relation of Authority and Interpretive Method in Luther's Approach to Scripture