

Sunday, October 30, 2016—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
Lesson 33 Preservation: Examining the Relevant Passages, Psalm 119

Introduction

- In Lessons 31 and 32 we commenced our study of whether or not the Bible teaches its own preservation by looking at Psalm 12:6-7. Recall from Lesson 30 that we laid out the following three views of preservation.
 - View 1—Denial of a Doctrine of Preservation
 - View 2—Preservation in the KJV/TR/MT Tradition
 - View 3—Preservation in the Totality of Manuscripts
- Please remember that we are in the process of looking at passages that establish the fundamental promise of preservation before we consider the extant and location of preservation.
- In summation of Lessons 31 and 32, I presented the reasons why I believe that Psalms 12:6-7 does teach the preservation of the written word.
- In this Lesson we want to continue our examination of the relevant passages regarding preservation. We will do this by considering a cluster of verses from Psalm 119.

General Comments on Psalm 119

- Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the entire Bible. Most commentators and Bible students acknowledge that the entire chapter is speaking about the Law or God's written word to the nation of Israel.
- Throughout the chapter a host of different yet synonymous words are used interchangeably to refer to the scriptures. Please note that the number in parenthesis indicates that number of times that the word or phrase occurs in Psalm 119.
 - Psalm 119:1—"law of the Lord" (24x)
 - Psalm 119:2—"testimonies" (22x)
 - Psalm 119:3—"his ways" (6x)
 - Psalm 119:4—"thy precepts" (21x)
 - Psalm 119:5—"thy statutes" (22x)
 - Psalm 119:6—"thy commandments" (21x)
 - Psalm 119:7—"righteous judgements" (18x)
 - Psalm 119:9, 11—"thy word" (38x)

- Virtually every verse in Psalm 119 contains a reference to the words of God. There are 176 verses in the Psalm and 172 of them contain one of the words identified above. Please bear these facts in mind as we look a few of the verses.

Psalm 119:89

- King James advocate D.A. Waite lists this verse as one of the texts supporting the doctrine of preservation in his book, *Defending the King James Bible*. Waite reasons:
 - “God’s words are not in doubt. It is permanent. It is unconfused and plain. God has settled, that means it has been preserved, kept pure. Nothing has been lost. . . Some people say, “Well, its settled in Heaven but not on earth.” But God needs it less than we do; He knows His Words. WE are the ones who need it. He is using this verse, Psalm 119:89, to show us that God has given us Words that are settled. . . It is true that God’s Words’ are not only preserved and settled “in heaven” but they are also preserved by Heaven’s Omnipotent God.” (Waite, 7-8).
- In short Waite is arguing that there is perfect archetypal Bible in heaven which mandates and necessitates a corollary Bible on earth. For Waite this archetypal Bible exists on earth via preservation. Please note that Waite’s definition of “perfect” in this case assumes identical wording as the standard.
- Meanwhile, Dr. Combs of Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary views the verse as containing no direct reference to “God’s written revelation” at all. Using A.A. Anderson’s work *The Psalms* to buttress his argument, Combs states:
 - “It seems more likely that “your word” in verse 89 has no direct reference to God’s written revelation. As Anderson notes, “thy word . . . is probably the expression of God’s all-embracing purpose and will (cf. Isaiah 40:8).” God’s purpose, His will, is “firmly fixed” in heaven “beyond the reach of all disturbing causes.” . . . Thus, it would appear that this verse has no direct application to the doctrine of preservation.” (Combs, 17)
- Ultimately, I agree with Combs that Psalm 119:89 is not a direct promise of preservation. That being said, the assertion that “thy word” is in no way related to God’s written revelation is a bit troubling. Why would the phrase “thy word” within the context of Psalm 119 not be referring to God’s written revelation?
- I have used the Psalm 119:89 in this class as our third presupposition, not as a verse that directly promises the preservation of God’s word on earth.
 - God exists. (Psalm 14:1)
 - God has magnified His word above His own name. (Psalms 138:2)

- **God’s word is eternally settled in heaven. (Psalm 119:89)**
- God, through the process of inspiration, has communicated His word to mankind. (I Timothy 3:16 & II Peter 1:21)
- God’s words were written down so that they could be made eternally available to men. (Isaiah 30:8, I Peter 1:23)
- God promised to preserve that which He inspired. (Psalms 12:6-7)
- King James advocates are not the only ones who view Psalm 119:89 as a statement as to the eternal existence of God’s written word in heaven. Combs quotes Wayne Grudem’s essay “Scripture’s Self-Attestation and the Problem of Formulating a Doctrine of Scripture” as follows:
 - “. . . a copy of words that God in heaven has permanently decided on and has subsequently caused to be committed to writing by men.” (quoted in Combs, 16)
- This is precisely the way I am using the verse in the above presuppositions. The verse is referring to the written word of God in heaven, but is not speaking about its preservation on earth. Other verses in Psalm 119 speak to the issue of preservation.
- Galatians 3:8—would not be possible if God’s word was not eternally settled upon in heaven.

Psalm 119:111

- We already encountered this verse back in Lesson 31 when we were discussing the issue of “gender discordance” as it related to Psalm 12:6-7. Please remember that this verse exhibits the same phenomena, yet the translators of the modern versions follow the King James in giving priority to proximity over gender agreeance.

KJB	NIV	NASB	ESV
Thy testimonies (fem. pl.) have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they (mas. pl.) are the rejoicing of my heart.	Your statutes (fem. pl.) are my heritage forever; they (mas. pl.) are the joy of my heart.	I have inherited Your testimonies (fem. pl.) forever, for they (mas. pl.) are the joy of my heart.	Your testimonies (fem. pl.) are my heritage forever, for they (mas. pl.) are the joy of my heart.

- Regarding this verse, King James advocate D.A. Waite writes:
 - “If you take God’s Testimonies as a “heritage for ever,” they must be preserved if we are to keep them.” (Waite, 8)
- R.B. Ouellette includes Psalm 119:111 in a list of preservation passages along with the following remarks:

- “The doctrine of preservation is based on the Bible itself. Since the Bible is to be our authority in matters of faith and practice, it is important to see what God has stated about its preservation for each generation. . . There are seminaries that exist today that seem to ‘explain away’ every verse that teaches preservation. I have a problem with some who feel that verses or doctrine must be ‘explained away.’ I prefer to read the Bible and understand it literally. When God says His word will last forever, that it will last for a thousand generations, I believe that means God will preserve His word forever.” (Ouellette, 32-33)
- William W. Combs, Daniel B. Wallace, John Rehurek and W. Edward Glenny do not comment on this verse in their writings on preservation.

Psalm 119:152

- As we already noted in Lesson 31, Dr. Combs believes that “verse 152 appears to be a fairly direct promise of preservation,” despite the “gender discordance” observable in the verse. (Combes, 18)

KJB	NIV	NASB	ESV
Concerning thy testimonies (fem. pl.), I have known of old that thou hast founded them (mas. pl.) for ever.	Long ago I learned from your statutes (fem. pl.) that you established them (mas. pl.) to last forever.	Of old I have known from Your testimonies (fem. pl.) that You have founded them (mas. pl.) forever.	Long have I known from your testimonies (fem. pl.) that you have founded them (mas. pl.) forever.

- In support of his conclusion that Psalm 119:152 is a “direct promise of preservation,” Combes states:
 - “This verse would seem to offer stronger support (than Psalm 119:89) for a doctrine of preservation. The context (vv. 145-52) makes clear reference to God’s written revelation in the Torah. The Psalmist says he will observe the Lord’s “statutes” (v. 145) and keep his “testimonies” (v. 146). He waits for his “words” (v. 147) and meditates in his “word” (v. 148) and asks to be revived according to the Lord’s “ordinances” (v. 149). The Psalmist observed that the wicked do not obey his “law” (v. 150). Finally, he concludes in verses 151-52 . . . These “testimonies, have been founded forever,” meaning as the NIV puts it, “you established them to last forever.” (Combs, 18)
- In contrast, W. Edward Glenny of Central Baptist Theological Seminary denies that the verse has anything to do with preservation.
 - “In Psalm 119:152 the Psalmist states “Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that Thou hast founded them forever.” In the previous verse he stated that God’s Word is truth and verse 150 teaches that the wicked are far from God’s law. In contrast to the wicked, the Psalmist is trusting in God’s Word (vv. 145-149). His confidence is that God’s law is not fickle, it is trustworthy and based on God’s unchanging moral character. That must be the meaning of verse 152 in its context.” (Glenny, 88)

- King James advocates R.B. Oullette, D.A. Waite, David Cloud, and Jack McElroy are in agreement with William W. Combs that Psalm 119:152 establishes the fundamental promise of preservation.

Psalm 119:160

- This verse is very similar to Psalm 119:152 in that it is part of the section where the Psalmist is making numerous references to the Law: “law” (v. 153), “word” (v. 154), “statutes” (v. 155), “judgments” (v. 156), “testimonies” (v. 157), “word” (v. 158), and “precepts” (v. 159).
- Because of these contextual realities, Combs concludes the following with respect to Psalm 119:160:
 - “This verse, then, like 152, would also seem to strongly imply a doctrine of preservation.” (Combs, 18-19)
- Once again, W. Edward Glenny denies that Psalm 119:160 teaches a doctrine of preservation by arguing that the verse is simply speaking about the “infallibility,” “absolute trustworthiness,” and “dependability” of God’s word. Glenny writes:
 - “The Psalmists’ hope is not based on the belief that the text of God’s word will remain intact centuries after he dies, nor is he concerned that he has lost part of God’s Word. His confidence is in the fact that God’s word is true and infallible. In contrast with those who do not keep God’s Word (v. 158), he keeps it and is depending upon it to quicken him because it is true (v. 160a). Therefore, when he says, “every one of thy righteous judgements endureth forever,” he must be expressing his confidence in the infallibility and absolute trustworthiness of God’s Word. Every statement in God’s word is dependable.” (Glenny, 89)
- Regarding Psalm 119:160, D.A. Waite simply says, ““endureth forever”—that is Bible Preservation!” (Waite, 8)

Other Passages From the Psalms

- D. A. Waite views these additional Psalms as dealing with preservation. In the interest of time and space, I have just provide the reference followed by Waite’s comments on each verse.
 - Psalm 78:1-7—“These verses certainly indicate that God intended to preserve His Words for all time.” (Waite, 7)
 - Psalm 105:8—“If a “generation” is twenty years, this would be 20,000 years. If a “generation were thirty years, it would be 30, 000 years! God wants us to clearly see His promise of Bible preservation.” (Waite, 7)

Works Cited

- Combs, William W. "[The Preservation of Scripture?](#)" in *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal*. Fall 2000.
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- Ouellette, R.B. *A More Sure Word: Which Bible Can you Trust?* Lancaster, CA: Striving Together Publications, 2008.
- Waite, D.A. *Defending the King James Bible*. Collingswood, NJ: The Bible For Today Press, 2006.