

Sunday, November 27, 2016—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*  
Lesson 37 Preservation: Examining the Relevant Passages, Matthew 4:4 (Part 2)

### **Introduction**

- 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 studying the relevant passages that establish the fundamental promise of preservation. This is an important first step before we consider the extant and location of preservation.
- As part of this first step we have considered the following relevant passages regarding preservation:
  - Psalm 12:6-7 (Lessons 31 & 32)
  - Psalm 119:111, 152, 160 (Lesson 33)
  - Isaiah 30:8 (Lesson 34)
  - Isaiah 40:8 & I Peter 1:23-25 (Lesson 35)
  - Matthew 4:4 (Lesson 36 & 37)
- Last week in Lesson 36 we began discussing the impact of Matthew 4:4 upon the doctrine of preservation. At the outset, I acknowledged that Matthew 4:4 is often included in lists of verses used by preservationists to establish the doctrine of preservation but that little if any exposition has ever been offered on the verse. Two exceptions to this are found in the writings of Dr. D.A. Waite and Dr. Thomas M. Strouse.
- In Lesson 36, I laid out the following four points that we would be considering with respect to Matthew 4:4 and the doctrine of preservation:
  - D.A. Waite on Matthew 4:4
  - Thomas M. Strouse on Matthew 4:4
  - Matthew 4:4 and the Challenge of “Exact Sameness”

- Impact on the Perfect Passive Tense
- The first three of these points were covered last week in Lesson 36. Our objective this morning is to consider the remaining point i.e., the Impact on the Perfect Passive Tense.

### **Matthew 4:4**

- Last week, during our survey of the commentary on Matthew 4:4 offered by Waite and Strouse, I purposely left out any of their comments on the Perfect Passive Tense. This was a conscious decision on my part because the material on this point merited its own separate point.

#### *Impact on the Perfect Passive Tense*

- Twice in his essay “Every Word: Matthew 4:4,” Strouse briefly mentions the importance of the passive tense upon the doctrine of preservation.
  - “The perfect tense, which He utilized, expresses a completed action with a resulting state of being. The result of the action continues from the past through the present and into the future.” (Strouse in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 35)
  - “The Greek word Γεραπται (*Gegraptai*) is the 3ms perfect indicative passive of γράφο (*grapho*) meaning “it was, still is and will continue to remain written. Christ declared that the Hebrew text Dt. 8:3, (“not by bread alone shall man live, but by all [words] proceeding out of the mouth of Jehovah”) was still intact, including the consonants and vowels, up to his day.” (Strouse in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 38)
- Strouse offers no further exposition regarding the significance of the perfect passive tense but rather directs his readers to consider Chapter 8 of *Thou Shalt Keep Them* which contains an entire essay devoted to the matter titled “It Is Written” by David Sutton. We will consider the Sutton essay in a few moments.
- It is a textual FACT that the verb *gegraptai* is in the perfect tense and passive voice.
  - [Click here](#) to an interlinear view of KJB and the *Textus Receptus*.
- D.A. Waite offers a fuller explanation of why the perfect tense in Matthew 4:4 is significant when considering the doctrine of preservation. Regarding the matter Waite writes,
  - “The second thing I want to show you from that verse is that the word “written,” which is recorded scores of times in the New Testament, is in the perfect tense in the Greek. Our English word “graphite,” comes from this word, as well as the word, “mimeograph.”

*Grapho* is the Greek word for “write” and *gegraptai* is the perfect tense of that verb. There are three main past tenses in Greek. (1) There is the imperfect past tense, which is the progressive past, “was writing.” (2) There is the aorist past, which is a spot or point action, “wrote.” (3) Then you have another past tense, the perfect tense which is used here.

According to *The Intermediate Grammar of the Greek New Testament* by Dana and Mantely, pages 200-205, **the perfect tense indicates that an action has begun in the past and the results of that act continue right on down to the very present.**

This is the tense that the Lord Jesus Christ used when He said, “It is written.” It means that the verse He quoted to Satan had been written down in the past in the Hebrew language by Moses and those very Hebrew words were preserved to the very day and hour when the Lord was quoting them to the Devil. Every time *gegraptai* is used or some other form of the perfect tense of that verb (and we have it scores of times in the New Testament) that is proof of the Bible’s preservation. God’s Words stand just as they were written down.” (Waite, 9)

- By far, the fullest treatment of the impact of the perfect passive tense in Matthew 4:4 upon the doctrine of preservation can be found in David Sutton’s essay “The Passive Perfect: “It is Written”. Sutton’s work comprises Chapter Eight of *Thou Shalt Keep Them: A Biblical Theology of the Perfect Preservation of Scripture* edited by Kent Brandenburg. In the Introduction Sutton states:
  - “The New Testament declares the doctrine of preservation when it employs the phrase “it is written.” When quoting passages in the Old Testament, this phrase translates the perfect passive verb *gegraptai* and succinctly states that the verse at hand was written in the past and the result continues to be written down. Believers, unbelievers, the Lord Jesus Christ, and even Satan evidence the reality of preservation by using *gegraptai*. If the nature of this perfect passive *gegraptai* means that particular verses from the Old Testament are preserved just as they were written, then one should conclude that *gegraptai* implies that all the Old Testament and all the New Testament are preserved just as they were written.” (Sutton in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 75)
- Regarding the meaning of the perfect tense Sutton writes:
  - “When God authored a perfect tense verb, He employed it over other tenses because the perfect tense expresses the unique idea that an event was accomplished in the past and the results continue in the present. . . the perfect tense shows completed past action with the results of that action continuing to the present. The perfect tense is different from the present tense, which, generally, is present, ongoing action. The perfect tense also must not be confused with the pluperfect (past perfect) tense, for the pluperfect tense views the action, along with its results, as terminating in the past.” (Sutton in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 75-76)

- Meanwhile, the passive voice indicates the relationship between the verb and subject.
  - “The passive voice shows that the action of the verb is being done to the subject by someone. In the passive, the subject is not doing the action to something (active voice) or to itself (middle voice); something or someone acts upon the subject.” (Sutton in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 76)
  
- When the passive voice is combined with the perfect tense the following meaning is conveyed, according to Sutton.
  - “Combining the perfect tense with the passive voice shows that the action of the verb completed in the past by an agent other than the subject of the verb with the results of the action continuing into the present. The perfect tense, and the perfect passive in particular, is often used in Scripture to teach doctrine and illustrate preservation of truth.” (Sutton in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 76)
  
- Consider the theological implications of both the perfect tense and the perfect passive in the following examples.
  - John 1:3—“The first two verbs in the verse (“were made” and “was made”) are the aorist tense of *genomai* (ἐγένετο, *egeneto*). Thus, Jesus Christ, in six literal days, created all things. The last “was made” is the **perfect tense** form of the same verb. In other words, the results of what Jesus Christ created have continued.” (Sutton in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 76)
  
  - John 1:18—“The verb “hath seen” is in the **perfect tense**. No one in the past had ever seen God (cf. Ex. 33:20), and that reality continued to the time of the writing of the Fourth Gospel. To this day, no man has seen God at any time.” (Sutton in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 77)
  
  - II Timothy 1:12—“When Paul wrote the verbs translated “have believed” and “am persuaded,” he used the **perfect tense**. Paul professed that in the past he began believing on the Son and was convinced that Christ was able to keep that which he had committed to Him. Both his belief and his conviction continued to persist to the point of writing the epistle. Very clearly, the perfect tense establishes actions as being completed in the past with the results continuing to the present.” (Sutton in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 77)
  
  - John 19:30—“Having hung on the cross for six hours and having suffered the brutality of crucifixion, the Lord Jesus Christ said, “It is finished.” *Tetelestai* is a **perfect passive** and can also be understood as “It has been finished.” God’s plan of offering His only begotten Son a sacrifice for man’s sins and Christ’s offering for them was complete for all time, yet the results of Christ’s offering would continue. . . The perfect passive *tetelestai* teaches the eternal sufficiency of Christ’s bloody death on the cross.” (Sutton in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 77)

- I Corinthians 15:3-4—“The perfect passive verb that Paul used for the resurrection of Christ signifies that Christ was raised at a moment in the past and results of His resurrection continue . . . The perfect passive teaches that the results of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ continue.” (Sutton in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 77)
- Ephesians 2:8-9—“This classic verse on salvation gleams its eternal security teaching from the construction of the linking verb “are” and the perfect passive participle “saved”. God is teaching believers that they are always in the state of being saved by God. In the past salvation came to the lost soul, and from that time on, he is always saved. The perfect passive clearly teaches the present results of past salvation.” (Sutton in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 77)
- After explaining the meaning and significance of both the perfect tense and passive voice and applying it to non-preservation related texts by way of explanation and illustration, Sutton explains the significance with respect to the doctrine of preservation.
  - “Sixty-three times in the NT the exact phrase “it is written” occurs. The perfect passive verb *gegraptai* underlies fifty-nine of these references, while the other four occasions represent the perfect passive participle *gegramenon*.” (Sutton in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 78)
- So every occurrence of “it is written” in the New Testament corresponds with a perfect passive verb in Greek, according to Sutton.
- Sutton discusses the difference between the aorist and perfect tenses in Greek.
  - “One must not confuse the aorist tense with the perfect passive, for the aorist verb *egrapsa* is used differently from the perfect passive *gegraptai*. In the NT the aorist is constantly used to describe the composition of a personal letter (cf. Acts 15:23; I Cor. 7:1), the OT Law (cf. Jn. 5:46), or a NT epistle (cf. Eph. 3:3; Philm. 21). Punctiliar action appropriately denotes the writing process, because the author at a point in time penned words on some medium. However, *gegraptai* does not encompass the process of writing the message alone, but affirms the continuation of the written message. God carefully distinguished among the form of *grapho*; consequently, the occurrences of the perfect passive inform the reader of a significant reference to Scripture that enables or bolsters some particular belief or practice.

Particular Words made up of distinguishable letters were deliberately written. Therefore, one should conclude that when God gave man the text of the Bible, He gave specific Words and not general thoughts. One should also conclude that if Words are preserved, then the letters forming those Words are also preserved.” (Sutton in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 78)

- The first appearance of the perfect passive in the New Testament occurs in Matthew 2:5 and stands out as an example of its usage.
  - “Herod had asked the chief priests and scribes where Christ should be born. Without hesitation these religious scholars referenced the OT and gave a confident answer, which relied on the precise prophecy of Micah the prophet. Their ability to identify the Messiah was based on the preserved prophecy of Christ’s birthplace, which Divinely narrowed the possible candidates for Messiah. Since Micah 5:2 was preserved, and testified by *gegraptai*, the pinpoint knowledge of Messiah was preserved.” (Sutton in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 78)
- After pointing out other similar usages of *gegraptai* in the New Testament, Sutton concurs with Strouse about the Adversary’s own recognition of the preservation process.
  - “It is interesting that Satan understands Scriptures’ preservation, for he too recognized that the Words of God were written in the past and continue to abide (Mt. 4:6; Lk. 4:10).” (Sutton in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 78)
- Sutton views the doctrine of preservation (Bibliology) as a necessary prerequisite for one’s doctrine of salvation (Soteriology).
  - “The doctrine of salvation is dependent upon preservation: if there were not preserved Words, then there would be no preached Word, and man could not believe on Jesus Christ; for “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” . . . Since God preserved His Word, man has sure footing on prophecy and its fulfillment. Without preservation of Scripture, prophecies of Christ would be obscure and even lost, and salvation by grace through faith would be impossible.” (Sutton in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 80)
- Sutton concludes his essay on the impact and significance of the perfect passive upon the doctrine of preservation as follows:
  - “The grammar of the perfect passive teaches that someone caused an event in the past and the results of that action continue to the present. Much doctrine that the believer holds is established in the perfect passive. Consistency demands that the perfect passive *gegraptai* means that the Scriptures were written in the past and they continue to be written down in the present. Based on their inspired use of the perfect passive *gegraptai*, the writers of Scripture believed in perfect preservation. Likewise, believers today should believe in the perfect preservation of Scripture, because “It is written.”” (Sutton in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 81)

## Conclusion

- I believe that the perfect passive is significant and does play a role in the establishment of the doctrine of preservation. To argue otherwise, would place one's theological understanding of other passages in jeopardy.
- That being said, I think that Strouse, Waite, and Sutton go too far in demanding "exact sameness" or identical wording as the standard for preservation. The standard adopted by Sutton would demand not just identical wording but identical spelling. Given the historical and textual facts that no two manuscripts are exactly the same, this standard demands more than one can prove and therefore does more to harm the pro-King James position than help it.
- As we saw in Lesson 35, one could not even apply this standard to the KJB given the FACT that the New Testament citations of Old Testament verses do not possess identical wording.

## **Works Cited**

Strouse, Thomas. "Every Word: Matthew 4:4" in *Thou Shalt Keep Them: A Biblical Theology of the Perfect Preservation of Scripture*. El Sobrante, CA: Pillar & Ground Publishing, 2003.

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Waite, D.A. *Defending the King James Bible*. Collingswood, NJ: The Bible For Today Press, 2006.