

Sunday, February 12, 2017—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*  
 Lesson 48 The Process of Preservation: The Multiplicity of Copies

### **Introduction**

- Last week in Lesson 47 we began a consideration of the *method* of preservation by looking at the question of whether “providential” was an adequate descriptor to describe how preservation occurred.
- We determined that it was better to not use the term for the following reasons: 1) the scriptures themselves never use the term “providential” to describe how preservation occurred, and 2) the meaning and usage of the term is widely varied and therefore has been the source of much confusion.
- That being said, we know that God was/is active in the preservation of His word on account of the fact that He promised He would preserve it. Our inability to describe everything about it does not negate God’s promise or His trustworthiness to see that it was accomplished.
- While we cannot know everything about the process, the scriptures do provide more information about the process of preservation than one might have heretofore realized.
- God’s design was to preserve His word in multiplicity of accurate reliable copies that are just as authoritative as the original autographs. The goal of this lesson is to begin laying out the Biblical case for how preservation was accomplished.

### **Review of Lessons Learned From the Book of Jeremiah**

- In Lesson 29 we used the book of Jeremiah as a means of framing the discussion of preservation as our study of the topic was commencing. To begin our discussion of the method of preservation, I would like to review that information.
- We need to not ascribe more importance to the original autographs than God does. Nor should we demand more from the doctrine of preservation than God does in His word. I want to use the book of Jeremiah to illustrate both of these points.
- Jeremiah 36:1-4—Baruch writes from the mouth of Jeremiah the original manuscript of Jeremiah 1-36 (Original #1).
  - Jeremiah 36:20-24—Jehoiakim and Jehudi destroy the original manuscript of Jeremiah. Note that the text explicitly states in verse 24 that “they were not afraid.” Do they not know that they just destroyed an original autograph?
- Jeremiah 36:27-32—God re-inspires Jeremiah in chapters 1 through 36 and adds “many like words” to what was destroyed in the fire by Jehoiakim (Original #2).

- Jeremiah 45:1—these additional words comprise chapters 45 through 52 at a minimum and possibly chapters 37 through 41 as well.
- Jeremiah 51:61-63—Jeremiah writing at the bidding of God the Holy Spirit tells Seraiah to destroy Original #2 by tying a stone to it and throwing it into the Euphrates River after it is read in Babylon. God almighty orders the destruction of Original #2. Why would God do this? Did God not know that a bunch of Fundamentalists in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century would be looking for the originals?
- Daniel 9:2—over 70 years later Daniel comes to understand, by reading the book of Jeremiah, that the captivity was supposed to last 70 years. How is that possible if Original #2 was destroyed? Copies were made prior to the captivity. Once the copies were made, God did not care what happened to the original. The original contents of Original #2 were preserved via the copying process. Daniel had access to the inspired word of God through the copy he had in front of him.
- Matthew 2:17-18—contains a quotation from Jeremiah 31:15. First, how did Matthew have access to what Jeremiah said over 470 years (70 year captivity + 400 years of silence) later if God had not preserved His word. So God secured the contents of the book of Jeremiah despite directing Jeremiah to have Original #2 thrown in the Euphrates River.
  - This seems to suggest that modern attempts to search for, find, and/or reconstruct the originals are out of step with how the Bible would teach you to think about things.
    - *Searching for the Original Bible* by James Price
    - *The Quest for the Original New Testament* by Comfort
- Second, notice that Jeremiah 31:15 and Matthew 2:18 do not possess identical or verbatim wording i.e., they are not exactly the same even within the KJB. Before reading Matthew 2:18 it is important to note the wording of verse 17:
  - Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, **saying**,
- Verse 18 is not a free quotation of the book of Jeremiah but a precise quotation of Jeremiah 31:15

<b>Jeremiah 31:15</b>	<b>Matthew 2:18</b>
Thus saith the LORD;  A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, <i>and</i> bitter weeping;  Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they <i>were</i> not.	In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning,  Rachel weeping <i>for</i> her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

- These facts demonstrate that demanding “verbatim identicality” as the standard for preservation is excessive and reaches beyond how the Bible would teach you to think about the matter. Necessitating “plenary verbal preservation” or “identical preservation” demands that the words be preserved exactly as they were given under inspiration without any wording differences of any kind. This standard cannot even be sustained within the text of the KJB itself—the very text that King James Only advocates claim is perfect.
- While these two verses (Jeremiah 31:15 and Matthew 2:18) do not exhibit identical wording, they are “substantively equivalent” with each other i.e., they possess a “doctrinal equivalence.” They say/teach/communicate the exact same doctrinal content without using the exact same individual words. Put a different way, they constitute a different way of saying the same thing, NOT a substantive difference in meaning.
- So, from the example of Jeremiah outlined above, we can conclude the following:
  - The promise of preservation does not require the perpetual existence of the original autographs. According to God the Holy Spirit, faithful copies are a sufficient means of fulfilling the promise of preservation.
  - God the Holy Spirit does not require “verbatim identicality” as the standard for preservation.

### **The Apostle Paul on Inspired Copies**

- I want to show you some things about II Timothy 3 that we did not consider during the first term when we were studying the doctrine of inspiration.
- II Timothy 3:16—all scripture is given by inspiration of God. It is God-breathed. The words literally came out of the mouth of God. Jesus said, “The words proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4) God dictated the words out. This verse says, “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God.”
- II Timothy 3:15—how is it that Timothy knew the “holy scriptures” from his childhood? Did Timothy possess the original autographs for the entire Old Testament? No. What did Timothy and his family possess? Copies. If Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures from his childhood, as the text plainly asserts, then his mother and his grandmother possessed copies of the word of God and taught it to him.
- First, note that God the Holy Spirit calls the copies that Timothy possessed “holy scripture.” This is not my opinion or the opinion of some other man.
- Second, notice that verse 15 comes before verse 16. Verse 16 says that the copies that Timothy was taught from were inspired. Inspiration and preservation go hand in hand in the primary text used to teach inspiration. The scriptures in verse 16 are clearly qualified by the scriptures of verse 15, and it is a reference to copies of the Old Testament. They did not have the original manuscripts, but they had copies. The point here is not that the copies were themselves inspired

directly by God as were the original autographs but that the contents of the inspired originals were carried forward to the copies i.e., the copies were of equal weight and authority as the original autographs themselves, according to God the Holy Spirit.

- In other words God the Holy Spirit makes no distinction between what was originally breathed out by God and the copies Timothy's family possessed. They are both called scripture by God the Holy Spirit.
- In the context, when Paul said, "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God," that is a reference to a real tangible thing that Timothy could hold in his hands. It was not a reference to some nebulous thing in the past that nobody ever saw at one time. Verse 16 is not a reference to something that Timothy could not find, but it is a reference to copies of the scriptures.
- Always remember that the original autographs were never at any point in history gathered and compiled together into a completed Bible like you have in front of you.
- I have critical commentaries on my bookshelf at home which maintain that II Timothy 3:15 is referring to the Septuagint (LXX), a Greek translation of the Old Testament allegedly made in 250 B.C. If Paul is referring to the Septuagint in verse 15, then that means he calls a translation of the Old Testament the inspired word of God in verse 16. If this is the position of the scholars, why then do they get so upset when someone holding an English translation says, "This is the inspired word of God?" Do you see what a double standard that is?
- II Timothy 3 is a fantastic passage. One cannot separate the promise of preservation via the copying process from the primary text used to teach inspiration. Inspiration and preservation are inextricably linked. It is unfortunate that the two have been confounded by some and the corollary overstated. Likewise, it has been equally detrimental to the body of Christ to limit inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy to the original autographs alone on account of the presence of variant readings in the manuscript copies.
- The issue of preservation is not merely a philosophical necessity; it is a Biblical fact. It is not a philosophical necessity for me to say that God had to have done it because logic tells me. I believe in preservation because God says that He is going to preserve His word. You need to be aware of a proper estimation of what God's word is – it is the issue of inspiration plus preservation.

#### **Authoritative Copies: The Process of Preservation**

- John 10:34-35— Jesus Christ is referring to the word of God that these people possessed. My point is that they do not have the original autographs. They have copies of the word of God just like you and I have a copy of the word of God today. Jesus Christ says to them, "The copy is what God says to you, and it is what was written down, and it cannot be broken. It is the word of God, and it cannot be destroyed."

- Matthew 22:31— they did not have original manuscripts. They had copies of the word of God. They had copies that they were reading; and Jesus said, “You can pick that copy up, and when you read that thing, you are reading what God said to you.” That tells me that God’s design is to preserve His word in copies. Do not forget that! The process of preservation is going to be preserving the word in a multiplicity of copies – the multiplying of copies of the bible.
- The original manuscripts are not the only issue with God. Do not misunderstand me; they are an issue because God has to write it down to start with. Inspiration has to do with the original manuscripts, and they wrote them down. But, that is not the only issue either in inspiration or in preservation. It is certainly not the only issue with God. God designed to preserve what was written down in the original manuscripts in copies of those original manuscripts, and the copies are the issue with God.
- The original manuscripts are not the only issue. They are lost, and we do not have any of them. In fact, there has never been a time in human history where there was one bible collected together at one time made up of nothing but original manuscripts. So, if you must have original manuscripts, then you are in trouble. God has a more important plan than just trying to preserve one copy of the bible with that one copy being the original manuscript.
- In Grace School of the Bible, Pastor Richard Jordan said the following about the “original manuscripts” and textual criticism’s quest to reconstruct the original text.

- “The original manuscripts are not the issue with God. In fact, the term “original manuscripts” is just a catch phrase developed by scholars to discredit the word of God.

There is a system, an epistemology of thought and teaching, called “textual criticism.” You need to be familiar with that term. Textual criticism is simply a bunch of fellows trying to reconstruct the original text. They are trying to reconstruct and recreate and decide what the original manuscripts looked like. . .

When men try to reconstruct the original text, it results in having no absolute and final authority except for the scholars.

. . . When you hear about the older manuscripts and the original manuscripts, there is really a lot of phoniness about that. The older manuscript issue is a hoax. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia on page 2955 has a very interesting admission. They say that the older manuscripts are not in every case the better reading. That is an interesting admission for the scholars to make because it is exactly true. Just because a manuscript is older that does not mean that it is best. It might just be an old corruption.

In this class, you want to learn that the original manuscripts are not the only issue with God, but rather, he has a plan and a purpose to preserve his word in copies. His plan has never been to preserve the original manuscripts down through history, because that has not happened. In his word, it is very clear that the way he has designed to preserve his word is in a multiplicity of copies.” (Jordan, *MSS 101*—Lesson 10)

- Exodus 32:15-16— God did not even use a man to write these. These are the “original” originals. They were not even written by Moses, but they were written by God Himself. You cannot get much more original than that.

- Exodus 32:17-19—Moses had the “original” originals and destroyed them before anyone even had a chance to read them.
- Exodus 34:1-2, 27-28—God re-inspires original number 2.
- Deuteronomy 10:1-5—Moses brings original number 2 down from the mountain and places it in the ark. Do we still have access to the contents of these tablets of stone? Yes. How? Because we have access to the original tablets? No. Because the contents of those tablets were copied.
- The scenario here with Moses and the giving of the Law is very similar to our example from the book of Jeremiah. In both cases the original was destroyed. In both cases God re-inspired a second original. In both cases original number 2 was either lost or destroyed. Yet, we have access to what God told Moses in the Mount and what God said through the pen of Jeremiah in the absence of the original autographs. How are we granted this access? Through the process of the scriptures being copied.
- You need to understand that God’s design is not to preserve the originals. God’s design is to preserve His word through copies of the originals. It is not that the original has to be preserved in itself, but rather that copies of the original autographs are made that are just as authoritative as the originals.
- We will see that process in the next few lessons in great detail. The issue is not just the original manuscripts, but God has preserved His word in the form that He intends you and me to have it in, and He will do that no matter what – original manuscripts or no original manuscripts. The originals can be destroyed, and it does not affect the effectiveness of the preservation of the word of God for us today.