

Sunday, March 12, 2017—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
 Lesson 51 The Process of Preservation: The People of Preservation in the Old Testament, Part 2

Introduction

- In this lesson, I want to continue our study of preservation in the Old Testament by finishing what we began last week.
- Last week in Lesson 50 we looked at the Process of Preservation in the Old Testament. In doing so, we observed that the word of God was committed to the nation of Israel in time past. One of the purposes that God had in forming the nation Israel, in raising the nation up, and preserving her throughout time past was to have a vehicle through which He could write and preserve His word.
- In Lesson 50 last week we studied the Hebrew verbs *shamar* (“keep” in Psalm 12:7) and *Natsar* (“preserve” in Psalm 12:7) and how they relate to the fundamental promise of preservation. We observed how these Hebrew verbs are used interchangeably with various synonyms for the “law of the Lord” i.e., God’s word to Israel in Psalm 119 (“law of the Lord” (24 times); “testimonies” (22 times); “his ways” (6 times); “thy precepts” (21 times); “thy statutes” (22 times); “thy commandments” (21 times); “righteous judgements” (18 times); “thy word” (38 times)).
 - Psalm 119:2 (*natsar*), 4, 5, 8, 17, 22 (*natsar*), 33 (*natsar*), 34 (*natsar*), 55, 56 (*natsar*), 57, 60, 63, 67, 69 (*natsar*), 88, 100 (*natsar*), 101, 106, 115 (*natsar*), 129 (*natsar*), 134, 136, 145 (*natsar*), 146, 158, 167, 168 (*natsar*).
- Furthermore, we considered the following three reasons for why the verb “keep” is not a synonym for “do” or “obey.”
 - First is the meaning or usage of *natsar* and *shamar*; these words do not mean “do” or “obey.” They do mean “keep, protect, preserve, or guard.”
 - Second, there are Hebrew words for “do” and “obey.” Deuteronomy 12:1 uses “do” with reference to God’s Word when it says, (quotes verse) . . . There is more to *natsar* and *shamar* than just “doing” or “obeying.”
 - Third, there are several verses which highlight a difference between “keep” and “do” or “obey” in the same verse.
 - Leviticus 25:18—“keep” = *shamar*; “do” = *asah*
 - Deuteronomy 13:4—“keep” = *shamar*; “obey” = *shama*
 - Ezekiel 36:27—“keep” = *shamar*; do = *asah*
 - Ezekiel 37:24—“observe” = *shamar*; “do” = *asah* (Brandenburg in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 102-103)

- Since “keep” and “do/obey” are not synonymous, they are not dependent upon each other. Israel’s inability to “obey” the law does not hamper her ability to preserve it. If this were the case, there would not have been copies of the Old Testament available during the earthly ministry of Christ. Yet, throughout the Old Testament Israel demonstrated time again that she was incapable of obeying and fulfilling the righteous requirements of the law.
- Last week when we ran out of time, we had been looking at the means by which preservation would be accomplished within the nation of Israel. In doing so, we had identified the role of individuals and families and had just begun to discuss the role of the Levites and scribes.
- This morning I would like to finish our discussion of preservation in the Old Testament before beginning a study of the New Testament next week.

The Means of Preservation Within the Nation

- The “keeping” or preservation of the scriptures in time past was both a corporate and individual charge. This is observable by noting the use of both singular and plural personal pronouns with “to keep.”
 - Psalm 119:17—the individual believer is responsible for the preservation of Scripture.
 - Leviticus 26:3—the entire nation of Israel was also responsible for the preservation of Scripture.
- We see, therefore, that the job of preserving God’s word was both individual and corporate. Individual families played a role in keeping/preserving God’s word as did the God ordained religious hierarchy of the nation.

The Role of Individuals and Families

- “Part of the continuation of any aspect of Israel’s worship was dependent on the practice of individual families as led by their fathers. Worship at the temple only continued when fathers preserved it by bringing their animals to that location for sacrificial offerings. Passing down God’s Word relied upon the diligent transfer to the children. As the nation was God’s preserving institution, the family accomplished this task on the most fundamental level.” (Brandenburg in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 106)
 - Deuteronomy 6:1-9—this passage highlights both the individual and corporate aspects of preservation.
 - Verses 1-5—are corporate in that they refer to the entire nation and utilize *shamar* twice in verses 2 and 3.
 - Verses 6-9—are individual. It follows therefore, that one way the nation was to keep the statutes was at the local level of the home in verses 6 through 9.
 - Deuteronomy 11:18-22—the individual activity of verses 18 through 21 have a cumulative effect in verse 22; note the “ye.” When each family acted in accordance to verses 18 through 21 the net impact in verse 22 is that the nation kept the law.

“When parents keep God’s Words themselves, and pass them down to their children, then nations also keep and pass them on.” (Brandenburg in *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 106)

The Role of the Levites and Scribes

- Deuteronomy 31:24-26—Moses took the initial section of the word of God when it was completed there and he put it in the ark for keeping. He committed that text that he began to write to the priest (the Levites). Those Levites were charged with the responsibility of keeping the book.
- Moses did not put the word in the ark because he no longer wanted it. He was not trying to get rid of it. Neither did Moses put the word in the ark because he knew he would die, and he wanted it kept safe. If Moses was just worried about the fact that he would die, what do you think he would have done with it? Who would he have given it to? He surely would have given it to Joshua because Joshua would be his successor. But, Moses did not give it to Joshua, rather, he put it in the ark, and he committed it to the Levites to take care of. Moses put the word in the ark because God’s design was not just that Joshua had the word, but that there would be a group of people selected out and charged with the responsibility of taking care of His word. In time past the Levites were charged with the care and oversight of God’s word.
- Deuteronomy 10:1-9— God said to put the word in the ark, and then He raises up an entire group of people to take care of the ark. God sets up an entire tribe of people to do the job of preserving His word. It is important that you see that. The Old Testament is to be preserved by the tribe of Levi, especially the issue of the priesthood. One of their primary functions has to do with preserving the word of God and teaching the word of God. God never designed to preserve His word by writing it and putting it up on a library shelf somewhere, just like they did not put the word in the ark just to put it away.
- Deuteronomy 31:9-12, 19—the idea is that the word is to be copied, and it is to be taught to the people. There is a group of people, an entire tribe in Israel (the Levites), chosen by God and separated from all of their brethren and given the responsibility, among other things, of keeping that book, and copying that book, and preserving that book, and teaching that book to the nation.
- II Chronicles 15:3—the purpose of the priesthood was to teach the people. They taught them doctrine out of the word of God just as they had conducted and presided over the sacrifices. All of those things taught doctrine to the people. Eventually, the priests forgot the doctrine and kept the ritual.
- Malachi 2:4-7—do you see what the function of the priest was? That priest’s lips should keep knowledge. If you wanted knowledge from God, and if you wanted to know what the word of God says, that priest’s job was to preserve that and have it ready for you when you needed it.
- In addition to the Levites, God chose men with Israel as a whole to spearhead the stewardship of the Words of God. These unique individuals were the scribes.
- Micah 3:8-12—people do things for fame, and for money, and for position, and for reputation, and yet they are always real pious to say, “Is not the Lord among us?” That is what these guys

are doing in Micah. These priests became a part of Satan's policy of evil against the word of God. They became a part of Satan's policy of corruption – corrupting the word of God. You can see his policy of corruption in operation there when you see the judges of the people doing it for money, and the priests teaching for money, and the preachers preaching for money, not for the Lord.

- Isaiah 36:22, 37:1-2—notice that Hezekiah had faithful scribes with him.
- Proverbs 25:1—these faithful scribes copied the word of God for King Hezekiah as part of the job.
- Jeremiah 36:12, 21-22—contrast the functioning of Hezekiah's scribes with the conduct and activity of Jehoiakim's scribe Elishama.
- Jeremiah 8:4-9
 - Deuteronomy 28—they should have known what was coming based upon what God told Israel would come upon them in the law.
- These verses highlight the fact that God's promise to preserve and the adversary's attempt to corrupt/destroy the word of God are occurring at the same time.
- Ezra 7:6—Ezra was down in Babylon for seventy years, and had the word of God with him in Babylon. Recall from a previous study that Daniel had access to the book of Jeremiah while in captivity in Babylon.
- Ezra 7:10-12, 21, 27—God Almighty had scribes. He had His faithful men to preserve His word, and the job got done.
 - Nehemiah 8:5, 8-9—from these passages we observe that within the nation the scribes were charged with the responsibility of preserving/copying God's word. The scribes would, copy, read, and teach God's word.
- In other words, I am trying to get you to see that God's word was preserved through the dynamic of people handling it, not in one copy sitting on a bookshelf for 500 or 1000 years. That is not the way God preserves His word. He preserves His word by it being in the hands of a certain kind of people, and those people are charged with the responsibility to execute God's purpose.

The Fall of Israel

- When you come to the New Testament, you have a unique problem that you do not have when you are dealing with the Old Testament. Today, living during the dispensation of grace, the nation of Israel has fallen from her favored time past status. Therefore, God is no longer using that nation the same way He did in time past.

- Much of the pro-King James literature suffers from not having the correct dispensational framework from which to evaluate preservation in the New Testament.
- With the fall of Israel, did everything change? What happened with God's design? What happened to His procedure for preserving His word now that the people that He used in time past had been set aside?
- With the fall of Israel, the special group of people God uses to preserve his word changes. But, the process itself does not change. The design stays the same; however, the group of people changes.
- It is important to understand that the process remains the same even though the people God uses to preserve His word changed. Israel fell and God set them aside, yet He did not set aside His design to preserve His word through a multiplicity of copies. The people changed, but the process and design stayed the same.
- We will begin to study these matters next week.

Works Cited

Brandenburg, Kent. "Israel, the Means of Preservation in the Old Testament" in *Thou Shalt Keep Them: A Biblical Theology of the Perfect Preservation of Scripture*. El Sobrante, CA: Pillar & Ground Publishing, 2003.