

**THOU SHALT PRESERVE THEM
FROM THIS GENERATION FOREVER
PSALMS 12:6-7**

Text: Psalms 12:7

Psalm 12:7

⁷Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

Introduction:

I cannot emphasize too strongly how important the doctrine of biblical preservation is to the issue of Bible texts and versions.

The doctrine of preservation has never been under attack as it is in these last days and God's people have not before seen the need to define this doctrine as clearly as it needs to be defined today.

Does God promise to preserve the Scriptures? To what extent does He promise to preserve them? Is this promise taught or is it only implied or hinted at?

Does the Bible tell us anything about how the Scriptures will be preserved?

On you sheet of definitions we will consider these terms.

Inspiration – lit., “God Breathed.” The scriptural doctrine that the Bible is a God-breathed and therefore perfect book whose writers were guided supernaturally by the Holy Spirit who kept them free from all error.

Revelation – God revealed His Word in a miraculous way to the writers of Scripture. That revelation ceased with the close of the New Testament canon. The Holy Spirit now illumines all believers but no longer gives revelation.

Preservation – The belief that God’s Word has and will continue to be preserved which means that we can trust the Scriptures because God has sovereignly overseen the process of transmission over the centuries.

When we speak of preservation we are speaking of the process by which God has supernaturally protected His Word.

Notice:

1. A SURVEY OF THE DOCTRINE OF BIBLE PRESERVATION

Let's examine the internal evidence from the Bible itself. The Bible contains several passages that affirm God's intention to preserve His inspired Word for all generations.

A. The Old Testament Promises

▪ Psalms 12:6-7

Psalm 12:6-7

⁶The words of the LORD *are* pure words: *as* silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. ⁷Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

This passage teaches that the Scriptures are both inspired by God (v. 6) and preserved by God (v. 7). Note that the inspiration is in —words— rather than in general thoughts or ideas.

The King James Bible, with its faithful translation of the Hebrew, allows for both of these applications.

The modern versions, on the other hand, have entirely shut out the doctrine of the preservation of God's Word in this passage.

KJV -- —Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

RSV -- —Do thou, O LORD, protect us, guard us ever from this generation.

NRSV -- —You O Lord, will protect us; you will guard us from this generation forever.

NIV -- —O Lord, you will keep us safe and protect us from such people forever.

▪ **Psalms 119:89, 152, 160**

Psalm 119:89

⁸⁹ For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

Psalm 119:152

¹⁵² Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.

Psalm 119:160

¹⁶⁰ Thy word *is true from* the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments *endureth* for ever.

The combined testimony of these three Scriptures in Psalm 119 is very important, teaching that God's Word is settled both in heaven and on earth.

The Word of God was settled in the eternal plan of God.

Notice these other references to the pre-existence of the Word of God.

John 8:26

²⁶ I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.

John 8:28

²⁸ Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am *he*, and *that* I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

John 17:8

⁸ For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

The Bible is an eternal, supernatural book from beginning to end.

God foreknew the languages of Scripture and worked providentially to develop the Hebrew and Greek tongues into fit vehicles for the conveyance of His saving message.

Hence in the writing of the Scriptures the Holy Spirit did not have to struggle, as modernists insist, with the limitations of human language.

God is the author of human language, having created Adam with the ability to communicate with Himself from the beginning.

- God foreknew the individual words of Scripture.
- God foreknew the times in which the Scripture was written.

Daniel 2:21

²¹ And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:

He created the times to fit the Scripture and the Scripture to fit the times.

When God gave the Scriptures, He intended to guard and preserve them; they are “founded forever” (Psalms 119:152).

- **Proverbs 30:5-6**

Proverbs 30:5-6

⁵ Every word of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him. ⁶ Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

Both the inspiration and preservation of God’s Word are in view in this passage. Verse 5 refers to the infallible verbal inspiration. Verse 6 refers to preservation in two ways:

First, it shows that God is jealous for His words and does not merely commit them upon the uncertain seas of human history.

Second, it assumes that God's words will be available. Otherwise, how would it be possible for men to tamper with them?

Verse 6 also teaches that men are allowed certain freedom to exercise their will and to attack God's Word. History holds many examples of this. It occurred widely in the 2nd to the 4th centuries after the apostles and is still occurring today.

In spite of man's wicked efforts, God has jealously guarded His Word. He judges those who tamper with it and grants wisdom to His people to reject the corruptions so that the pure Word of God always wins out over the process of time.

- **Isaiah 40:8**

Isaiah 40:8

⁸The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

Here the Word of God is contrasted with flowers.

Flowers are intricate and beautiful, but they soon fade away. Not so of the Word of God.

While it is more intricate and lovely than any flower, it does not wither or fade; it stands forever, for the reason that it is in character God's very Word and He jealously guards it.

▪ **Isaiah 59:20-21**

Isaiah 59:20-21

²⁰ And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. ²¹ As for me, this *is* my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that *is* upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.

The preservation of Scripture is a solemn covenant God has made with believers (“them that turn from transgression in Jacob” v. 20).

“This is the great and comprehensive promise of that covenant, that God will give and continue his word and Spirit to his church and people throughout all generations.” – Matthew Henry

A clearer statement of preservation could not be made.

The promise pertains to the words of God. We know that these words are found in the Scripture and nowhere else.

2 Timothy 3:16

¹⁶ All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

B. The New Testament Promises

- **Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4**

Matthew 4:4

⁴ But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Luke 4:4

⁴ And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

These verses are a powerful witness to the divine preservation of Scripture. In defeating the Devil, the Lord Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 to teach that the words of God are part of man's necessary sustenance.

Deuteronomy 8:3

³ And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every *word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

Note that it is not merely the word of God in general by which man lives; it is "by every word that he lives."

- **Matthew 5:18**

Matthew 5:18

¹⁸ For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

The Lord Jesus was emphatic about the preservation of God's Word. Even the smallest details are preserved.

- **Matthew 24:35**

Matthew 24:35

³⁵ Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

This is an amazing promise pertaining both to inspiration and preservation. The Lord Jesus promised that His words would not pass away, thus guaranteeing that His words would be preserved.

- **Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Timothy 3:15, 6:14;
2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Peter 2:9**

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ¹⁹ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

1 Timothy 3:15

¹⁵ But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

1 Timothy 6:14

¹⁴ That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Timothy 2:2

² And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

1 Peter 2:9

⁹ But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

These passages describe the PROCESS or MEANS of preservation.

1. God preserves His Word among the churches as it is being obeyed and as the Great Commission is being carried out – “teaching them to observe all things.”

2. Faithful men play an important role in Bible preservation because it is only such men who will care enough to guard the Word and who will have spiritual discernment necessary for the task.

- **Acts 20:29-30; 2 Corinthians 11:3-4;
2 Peter 2:1-2; 1 John 2:18, 4:1-2**

Acts 20:29-30

²⁹ For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

2 Corinthians 11:3-4

³ But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve

through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. ⁴ For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*.

2 Peter 2:1-2

¹ But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. ² And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

1 John 2:18

¹⁸ Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

1 John 4:1-2

¹ Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. ² Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

These passages touch on the doctrine of Bible preservation in that we are informed that false teachers will infiltrate the churches with damnable heresies.

A “damnable heresy” (2 Peter 2:1) is one that brings eternal damnation to the soul, a heresy that a saved person cannot believe. Damnable heresies pertain especially to the Person of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit,

and the Gospel (2 Cor. 11:3-4), and to the infallible inspiration of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

2 Corinthians 11:3-4

³ But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. ⁴ For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶ All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

God has not promised to preserve the Scripture by not allowing heretics to operate; He has promised to preserve the Scripture in spite of and in the midst of their deceitful activities.

- **1 Corinthians 2:12-16; 1 John 2:27**

1 Corinthians 2:12-16

¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. ¹³ Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ¹⁴ But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. ¹⁶ For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we

have the mind of Christ.

1 John 2:27

²⁷ But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

These verses teach us that the Scriptures have been preserved among and by believers that have the Spirit.

These verses also teach that it is the Spirit of God Himself who preserves the Scriptures.

▪ **Matthew 11:25; 1 Corinthians 1:26-29**

Matthew 11:25

²⁵ At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

²⁶ For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called:* ²⁷ But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; ²⁸ And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: ²⁹ That no flesh should glory in his presence.

These verses have a bearing on the doctrine of Bible preservation in that they tell us that the truth will be

found among ordinary, Spirit-regenerated believers rather than among the scholars of this world.

It's not surprising that very few scholars understand biblical truth.

- **1 Peter 1:23-25**

1 Peter 1:23-25

²³ Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. ²⁴ For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: ²⁵ But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

This passage is a clear promise of the preservation of Scripture.

In fact, a stronger statement of the divine preservation of Scripture could not be made, for we are told that the word of God is living and incorruptible and eternal; therefore, it could not possibly cease to exist or be corrupted. It abides; it endures; it lives.

- **Revelation 22:18-19**

Revelation 22:18-19

¹⁸ For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: ¹⁹ And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of

life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.

Capping off our survey of Scripture on the doctrine of biblical preservation is the testimony of Revelation 22:18-19.

God gives mankind a grim warning not to tamper with the book's contents. This applies directly to Revelation, of course, but the warning must apply equally to the entire Bible of which Revelation forms the final chapter.

Note that it is the WORDS that man is forbidden to tamper with, not merely the general doctrine or teaching.

This passage instructs us to be exceedingly fearful about handling the Scriptures.

If one tampers with other books, there can be earthly consequences but if one tampers with the Bible the consequences are eternal.

The Bible is a supernatural Book and it must be handled with fear and trembling.

God gave this warning because He knew that men would tamper with the Scripture. The promise of divine preservation is not the promise that no Old or New Testament manuscripts and translations will be

corrupted. It is the promise, rather, that in the midst of the devil's attack God will keep His Word and not allow it to be lost.

2. SUMMARY OF THE DOCTRINE OF BIBLE PRESERVATION

The doctrines of inspiration and preservation are intimately associated in Scripture. The association is not merely logical; it is biblical.

The divine preservation of Scripture is not merely implied or inferred in the Bible; it is explicitly promised and carefully defined. It is therefore a Bible doctrine, and it must and can be accepted by faith.

God promises to preserve the words and details of Scripture as well as its teaching.

As the New Testament exceeds the Old in glory (2 Cor. 3:6-11) we can expect that the God who has promised to preserve the very jots and tittles of the Old Testament will do no less with the New Testament.

The Bible is preserved in the midst of the enemy's attacks God has allowed corruptions to enter into the biblical record in general.

God gives His people wisdom by His Spirit to reject the corruptions so that the pure Word of God wins out.

The method by which God preserves the Scripture is its usage among the saints. God preserves His Word among His people as it is being obeyed. In the Old Testament it was the Jewish priests who preserved God's Word (Deut. 17:18). In the New Testament it is the churches that keep God's Word as they carry out the Great Commission (Mat. 28:19-20; 1 Tim. 3:15).

Though God preserves His Word, this does not mean that it will be found in the world at large or even among churches in general. Truth is not in the majority in this age. At times the preserved Scripture can be found in small pockets, especially as the end of the age draws near.

The end of the church age will be characterized by a great scarcity of faith and truth, we can expect to find sound Bibles and sound churches in the extreme minority as the time of Christ's return draws nearer.

It is by the Spirit of God that the pure Scripture has been preserved through the long and dark hours of this age. Men have a role in the preservation of Scripture, but only the eternal God can guarantee its preservation. Thus we must look more to God than to man in this issue.