

Lesson 4 – How We Got The Bible - Review, Revisit, and Reply

October 5, 2022

Our study tonight is going to be somewhat parenthetical. We will learn some new stuff, but I also want to hopefully provide some clarity, about some of the things we've already discussed. What I mean by the heading, (Review, Revisit, and Reply), is that I want to first, review briefly what we've learned to this point. Second, I want to go back over a point or two and look at some more examples, particularly from the material covered in the class last week dealing with textual criticism. And finally to answer a question or two that was asked last time. And then if we have time, I'll try to answer questions that you may still have tonight.

Review: Over the last few Wednesday nights we have been looking at this very important topic. And up until this point we have looked at the first three steps in bringing the Bible from God to man. The first step you may remember is called **Revelation**, and Revelation we learned means **Unveiling**, and **Revelation** as used in the Bible refers to the unveiling of God to humanity. We also learned that Revelation comes to us in two forms. The first is called **General Revelation** and that General Revelation is given to us in two ways, first by **Creation**, and second by **Conscience**. The second form of revelation, we saw, is called **Special Revelation**, and Special Revelation may be defined as, **The communication of divine truth from God to the mind of the prophet**. God supernaturally placed his truth in the mind of His prophets. The second step is **Inspiration**, which is **the transmission of that divine truth from the mind of the prophet (through his own life and experience), to the "paper"**, so that the result is precisely the written Word or words of God without error.

The third step that we looked at last time is called **Preservation**, which is **the supernatural preserving of the inspired text from loss or alteration through the time**. Now first, we talked about **The Limitation of Preservation**, meaning what is not included, and we saw first all, that God did not preserve the original manuscripts, (Autographs). I mentioned that the primary reason I believe, is that God was protecting us from errant worship. Man has a built in inclination to worship. Unfortunately, unrestrained, that leads to idolatry. And if we had in our possession, the original manuscripts, no doubt, man would make idols of them. The same is true of perfect copies, which is the second thing that is not included in preservation. God has in His providence made sure that we have copies of the biblical manuscripts and they are very good and accurate but none of them are perfect.

Reply: Now I said, that was **the primary reason**, but not the only reason that people think God didn't preserve the autographs, and last time someone asked what some of the other reasons are. And I didn't answer that question then, so I want to do that now. While I don't think these are primary reasons, they at least have some merit and so are worth consideration. If we had the original manuscripts, would have charge of them? They would be the most sought after "artifacts" in the history of the world. Who would have the right or the authority to possess them? Who would protect them? Would the church? What church? Would governments cease them? Would they be placed in a museum? You can be sure they would be counted among the so called "relics" venerated by Sacerdotal religions. There would be denominations and religions devoted to the manuscripts? Cults? Would they be considered so sacred that no translations would be permitted? And if there was, who would be allowed to translate them? Would people be allowed to inspect them, to study them, to even view them? And related to that they would be the most valuable documents in the world. People would do literally anything necessary to secure them or to get a glimpse of them. Forgeries would be made and sold on the black market? And furthermore, chances are that wars would be fought over them. Having the autographs would be a huge distraction, and the church, I'm afraid, and maybe even the world, would look far different than it does. It is impossible to estimate the effects the preservation of the autographs would have had, and God in His infinite wisdom, regardless of His purpose, saw to it that they were not preserved.

But as for the preservation of God's truth in the form of copies, we saw two ways that happened. First in the Old Testament, through the incredible care taken by two groups of Hebrew scholar-scribes, (The

Sopherim and the **Masorites**), who not only painstakingly copied the scripture but also developed a whole system of checks and balances to be sure that the copies were accurate.

Second in the New Testament, we saw that the sheer number manuscripts that were copied during the earlier years of the Church was a means of divine preservation. We are now able to compare and analyze those many copies and in doing so to come to a very accurate reconstruction of the original.

OTHER UNFINISHED BUSINESS FROM LAST WEEK.

Last week when I was introducing you to Textual Criticism, I started with a text in **Acts** chapter **8**. And we learned about variants which are not to be confused with errors, but are simply differences in the way some manuscripts read. You'll remember, I told you that the vast majority of variants are either differences in spelling, the use or the absence of "definite article", which in English is the difference between using "the", or "a", or the use of what's called, "the movable nu"- (ν), which I said last week is in English is similar to the difference between the use of "a" and "an", and that's just a statement of its lack of relevance regarding interpretation, but it's not really an accurate description. As I thought about that this week, I think it would be more accurate to say it's kind of like the difference between, tomāto and tomăto. It doesn't change the meaning, just the pronunciation. And again, most of the variants in the Bible are just that simple. But that doesn't explain variants like the one we started with last week. So let's look at that one again, and I'll tell you about another kind of variants.

Most variants are there by accident, or oversight. But there are a handful that were placed in the text intentionally. Not by the Holy Spirit, or the original author, but by copyists, and the one in **Acts 8** is one of those. Go back and look at **Acts 8:37**. "*Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.'* *The official answered, 'I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'*" Now, if you are using a New International Version (NIV) or another newer translation, you may not find that verse, in the text. Instead, you will find it in a footnote at the bottom of the page or somehow set apart or with some notification that this verse is not found in the best manuscripts.

So last time I just used that verse as a launching pad for a discussion on the existence of variants, most of which are insignificant, but I didn't have time to come back to this verse and explain why it is here. Obviously this is not just a minor variant, related to spelling or pronunciation. This is an entire verse that appears to have been added to the chapter. Why? Well, it seems to be a later scribal addition. That is, it was probably added at some point by a copyist. And again the question is why? It consists of a profession of faith on the part of the eunuch that evidently a scribe, (copyist), felt was lacking in the text and purposely inserted, or it may even have been added by accident. It could have been originally inserted as a marginal note and then copied into the text by an even later scribe... It probably reflects a tradition that was practiced in the church and time where and when this particular copyist lived, probably between 900-1200 A.D.

It was probably a baptismal formula "where the one baptizing, asked the candidate if he believed in Christ with all his heart, to which the candidate would respond by confessing Jesus Christ as the Son of God". (John B. Polhill, *The New American Commentary*, p. 226) So while this verse was not a part of the original, and so is not inspired by the Holy Spirit, and while it is important that we know that, nothing is lost, or altered. As a matter of fact, by its presence we have gained some insight into the formula and practice of another phase of the history of the church.

Now is that the only one? No. Someone asked last week how many variants there in the Bible, and that's a very difficult question to answer. First because it depends on who you ask. Obviously liberals who deny the authority of scripture are going to elevate the numbers, and the way they do that is by counting the same variant multiple times. For instance, if a thousand manuscripts contain the same, let's say, spelling variant, they count that as 1000 variants, or in their words, "errors". That's just not accurate, and it's deceptive. I'm not certain how many there are, but again, most of them are too insignificant to even mention. What I do know is that in all of the

Bible, only about 50 of them rise to the level of needing an explanation, and none of them change, alter or threaten any major doctrines of the Bible. None of them affect the salvation we have in Christ, the atonement, or the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine Christ's resurrection is not affected, nor is the virgin birth, the miracles. None of these things change at all with any of these variants.

So let me show you one more and then we'll move on. **(For the sake of time, I did not give this one in class.)**

Matthew 6:13

This of course is the conclusion of what has come to be known as "The Lord's Prayer", although it's not a prayer that the Lord prayed. It is better understood to be "The Model Prayer" because it was the outline that Christ used to instruct His disciples how to pray. That's why in verse nine, He didn't say "Pray this prayer", he said, "*Pray like this*", "*Pray after this manner*". Never the less, it has been memorized and is quoted by millions, for two thousand years and is a beloved passage from the Word of God.

The English Standard Version (ESV) says, "*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*" If you have an older translation, that verse instead, ends like this, "*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*" (Which I imagine is how most of us memorized it.) So why is that doxology not in the older translations? Because this doxology doesn't appear in the oldest and best Greek manuscripts. It was probably added by someone who thought that it made the prayer more suitable for public worship. In other words they wanted to repeat the prayer in church, which is not what Jesus was teaching us to do.

But again don't let that upset you, because even though it may have been added later to make the prayer more suitable for public worship it is not unbiblical. As a matter of fact its main ideas seem clearly to have been taken from a prayer of David recorded in **1 Chronicles 29:11**. Look at that passage with me. "*Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.*" So because it appears to have actually been "borrowed" from scripture anyway, when preaching this didactic prayer, (teaching prayer), I usually just deal with it as though it were a part of the original text.

Now you might ask, "How do I know then when I see another passage that is in questioned"? Well first of all remember that there are **not** a lot of them. And second, that is the value of using a good, more recent translation because they are going to point those out. But I think in most cases now, even the new publications of the King James, especially "Study Bibles" will alert you to the presence of a text that is in question. And I would say, on top of all that, none of those passages change or alter or threaten any major doctrine of the Bible. So don't live in fear of a handful of obscure passages that have been questioned.

Remember that God has sovereignly preserved and protected his TRUTH, in Revelation, and Inspiration. He called and equipped those who worked meticulously and tirelessly and really endlessly to make sure that the Scripture is available and readable. And we'll continue to see that through every step of this process, and later we'll see that many of those people in the process sacrificed their lives in torture and execution to see that you and I have access to God's truth.

One Last Thing

Revisit: Several times through this study so far, I have mentioned the word Inerrant or Inerrancy. And I want to touch on a question a question that people have asked, (Not anyone here, but through the last 40 years or so). Inerrancy of course refers to the absence of errors in the Bible, and it was a term that came into prominence in the last quarter of the 20th century because of the influence of theological liberalism. We used to just be able to ask someone if they believed the Bible, and if they answered in the affirmative, that was enough. But that changed in the 19th and 20th centuries with the influx of rationalism.

At that point we had to begin asking do you believe in the authority of Scripture or do you believe in the inspiration of Scripture, in order to find out where they were theologically. Because they would say yes I believe the Bible, because often they no longer believed all of the Bible. And then as liberalism progressed in the church, it became necessary to press them further. Because they would say, "Yes I believe in the inspiration of the Bible, but they didn't mean by that statement what we meant by it. They used the same word but they meant one of the rejected views of inspiration that we discussed. Only part of the Bible is inspired, or only the concepts are inspired but not the actual words. So we began to use the word inerrant. Do you believe in the inerrancy of scripture? And that has largely remained the key word to get to the truth of what someone believes about the text of scripture.

But even there we need to be careful, because when we affirm the inerrancy of scripture, for reasons that we have discussed in the last two weeks, we're talking about the autographs, the originals, not the copies. But even with all of that, there is a question that some have asked, that I want to answer. And that question is. Why does it matter? If we don't have the autographs, why is it important to believe or claim that they were inerrant?

I. It must be understood that the issue is not the nature of the writings themselves but the character and nature of God. The Scripture is God's revelation to man of Himself. If one believes that the scripture is not inerrant, then the question must be answered, why would a God who exists in infinite perfection, give to man a revelation of Himself that is less than perfect? Because to say that the autographs were not free from errors makes a sovereign God liable for those errors and so denies God's perfection. If God is in absolute control of the events of History as indeed the Scripture indicates, **Proverbs 19:21; Proverbs 16:9**, then even the use of human mediators to write down the scripture is not sufficient reason to attribute error to God's revelation.

If the Bible is not inerrant then we're left with only two choices.

Either God is less than perfect and unable to give us an infallible book, or God has intentionally chosen to deceive us. Why? Because the Bible clearly speaks of itself as being perfect. **II Samuel 22:31; Psalm 12:6; Psalm 19:7; Proverbs 30:5; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21.**

II. The second reason inerrancy is important is because what you believe about the Bible determines what you believe about every other issue.

Whether it is women in ministry, abortion, gambling, dating, homosexuality, alcohol, or any other subject, your view of Scripture will determine what you believe about that. All other doctrines are derived from the Bible and this is precisely the reason people deny the inerrancy of Scripture. They do not wish to be limited to the standards and morals of Scripture. **A man's morality dictates his theology**, and if he is not willing to submit himself to the authority of Scripture, he simply eliminates it as a source of authority. So he says that the Bible is nothing more than "*a record of man's search for God*", with a few spiritual concepts, optional though they may be. The basis for living is not the dictates of Scripture but the demands of the situation, (situation ethics). A low view of scripture always leads to the endorsement of sin. Abortion, open sexuality, homosexuality, pornography, evolution, and any other transgression the Bible very specifically condemns, because the Bible is no longer the final source of authority.