

**Presenter: Rev. Stephen A. Gittens**

**BACK TO THE BIBLE SERIES** 2004-10-30

**PRESERVATION OF THE WORD: THE FLOCK**

The WORD of GOD has been '*preserved*' by the existence, the presence, the actions and the lifestyle of the flock / the saints. Fulfilment of prophecy; preaching, reading, memorization and recitation of Holy Scripture. Obedience to Holy Scripture and every effort to propagate it have in many ways, to a large degree, been responsible for the continuous existence and preservation of the Word of God.

In the USA there are copies of The Holy Bible, donated by 'The Gideons', placed in almost every hotel room.

There are many translators who are seeing to it that The Bible is still being translated into every known dialect across our world (In India as we speak). One only has to think of the name Wycliffe, and soon the bells of history will begin to chime with the memory of those who gave, give and are giving unceasingly and making tireless efforts, to have the Word of God placed in every social institution especially places of academia and homes (The Barbados Bible Society has implemented a programme which will see a Bible go into every Secondary school student's hands at no cost to the student in the not too distant future).

The Bible in its complete form as we know it, from Genesis to Revelation, is now available on cassette and Compact Disc besides the written text in book form that we've known of for years.

There are a number of Internet websites (Bible Classics.com; Gospelcom.net) where The Bible can be heard, read and/or downloaded.

There are a number of Bible schools and schools of ministry scattered

throughout the world, with the sole purpose of educating and equipping men and women for the proclamation of the Gospel. Had it been unknown it could not have been shared.

Furthermore, within the believers' lives there is that thirst, that desire, that yearning, that longing, that quest to search for, to find, to have, to know, to verify, to live and to obey **THE WORD OF GOD**.

Hence, they will go near and far at great expense to themselves in search of conferences, seminars (such as this), crusades, panel discussions, retreats, camps, Bible study, tours to The Holy Land. and apologetics presentations.

They will cry out for, request, argue, debate, plead and even demand of their Pastors, Bishops, Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Deacons and the like to research, study, shed light and provide the framework for and/or the impetus with which even 'the Babes in Christ' may feed upon **THE SINCERE MILK OF THE WORD OF GOD**.

Therefore it would be incumbent upon those in administrative responsibility to guarantee that **ONLY** that which is genuinely **THE WORD OF GOD** is presented in its entirety as powerfully and as accurately as is manifested in Acts chapter 17:**11-12**.

Matthew Henry recorded on these two verses,

11. The good character of the Jews in Berea (v. 11):  
**These were more noble than those in Thessalonica.** The Jews in the synagogue at Berea were better disposed to receive the gospel than the Jews in the synagogue at Thessalonica; they were not so bigoted and prejudiced against it, not so peevish and ill-natured ;they *were more noble, eugenesterei-better bred.*

1. They had a freer thought, and lay more open to conviction, were willing to hear reason, and admit the force of it, and to subscribe to that which appeared to them to be truth, though it was contrary to their former sentiments. This was more noble.

2. They had a better temper, were not so sour. and morose, and ill-conditioned towards all that were not of their mind, As they were ready to come into a unity with those that by the power of truth they were brought to concur with, so they continued in charity

with those that they saw cause to differ from. This was more noble. They neither prejudged the cause, nor were moved with envy at the managers of it, as the Jews at Thessalonica were, but very generously gave both it and them a fair hearing without passion

or partiality; for, (1.) **They received the word with all readiness of mind;** they were very willing to hear it, presently apprehended the meaning of it, and did not shut their eyes against the light. *They attended to the things that were spoken by Paul,* as Lydia did, and were very well pleased to hear them.

They did not pick quarrels with the word, nor find fault. nor seek occasion against the preachers of it; but bade it welcome, and put a candid construction upon every thing that was said. Herein *they were*

*more noble than the Jews in Thessalonica,* but walked in the same spirit, and in the same steps, with the

Gentiles there, of whom it is said ***that they received the word with joy of the Holy Ghost, and turned to God from idols,*** 1 Th. 1 : 6 - 9 . This was true nobility.

The Jews gloried much in their being

Abraham's seed, thought themselves well-born and that they could not be better born. But they are here told who among them were the most noble and the best-bred men-those that were most disposed to receive the gospel. and had the high and conceited

thoughts in them subdued, and *brought into obedience to Christ*. They were the most noble, and, if I may so say, the most gentleman-like men.

***Nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus-Virtue and piety are true nobility***, true honour; and, without these, ***Stemmata quid prosunt?- What are pedigrees and pompous titles worth? (2.)*** They searched the scriptures daily whether those things were **so**.

Their readiness of mind to receive the word was not such as that they took things upon trust, swallowed them upon an implicit faith: no; but since Paul reasoned out of the scriptures, and referred them to the Old Testament for the proof of what he said, they had recourse to their Bibles, turned to the places to which he referred them, read the context, considered the scope and drift of them, compared them with other places of scripture, examined whether Paul's inferences from them were natural and genuine and his arguments upon them coherent, and determined accordingly. Observe, [1.] The doctrine of Christ does not fear a scrutiny. We that are advocates for his cause desire no more than that people will not say, ***These things are not so***, till they have first, without prejudice and partiality, examined whether they be so or no. [2.] The New Testament is to be examined by the Old. The Jews received the Old Testament, and those that did so, if they considered things aright, could not but see cause sufficient to receive the New, because in it they see all the prophecies and promises of the Old fully and exactly accomplished. [3.] Those that read and receive the scriptures must **search them** (Jn. 5:39), must study them, and take pains in considering them, both that they may find out the truth contained in them, and may not mistake the sense of them and so run into error, or remain in  
-it; and that they may find out the whole truth contained in them, and may not rest in a superficial knowledge, in the outward court of the scriptures, but may have an intimate acquaintance with the mind of God revealed in them. [4.] Searching the scriptures must be our daily work. Those that heard ***the word in the synagogue***

***on the sabbath day*** did not think this enough, but were searching it every day in the week. that they might improve what they had heard the sabbath before, and prepare for what they were to hear the Sabbath after. [5 .] Those are truly noble. and are in a fair way to be more and more so, that make the scriptures their oracle and touchstone, and consult them accordingly. Those that rightly study the scriptures, and meditate therein day and night, have their minds filled with noble thoughts, fixed to noble ~rinci~les,

and formed for noble aims and designs. These are more ***noble***.

**John Wesley pointed on verse 1 1,**

verse 11. These were more ingenuous -Or generous. To be teachable in the things of God is true generosity of soul. The receiving the word with all readiness of mind, and the most accurate search into the truth, are well consistent.

## Jamieson, Faussett & Brown revealed

11. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica--The comparison is between *the* Jews of the two places; for the triumphs of the Gospel at Thessalonica were mostly among the Gentiles.

See on Ac 17:2-4. in that they received the word with all readiness of mind--heard it not only without prejudice, but with

eager interest, "in an honest and good heart"

(Lu 8:17), with sincere desire to be taught aright (see Joh 7: 17).

Mark the "nobility" ascribed to this state of mind. searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so--whether the *Christian* interpretation which the apostle put upon the **Old** Testament Scriptures was the true one.

12. Therefore many of them believed--convinced that Jesus of Nazareth whom Paul preached was indeed the great Promise and Burden of the Old Testament. From this it is undeniable, (1)that *the people*, no less than the ministers of the Church, *are entitled and bound to search the Scriptures;* (2) that *they are entitled and bound to judge, on their own responsibility, whether the teaching they receive from the ministers of the Church is according to the word of God;* (3) that *no faith but such as results from personal conviction ought to be demanded, or is of any avail.* of honourablewomen which were Greeks, and of men--which were Greeks. not a few--"The upper classes in these

European- Greek and Romanized towns were probably better educated than those of Asia Minor" [WEBSTER and WILKINSON].

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And of course God (THE TRUTW) declared, declares and is declaring through the prophet Isaiah,  
**"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever."** Isaiah chapter **40:7-8** and confirms in 1Peter chapter **1:24-25**, that His WORD IS IMPERISHABLE (*aphthartoa*). This is the identical word used in 1Peter chapter **1:4** to describe the inheritance of a believer, **"living and enduring"**. This ever-existing **WORD** was the content of St. Peter's preaching ( and still is the choice of every Bible-believing, God-called and Spirit-filled Minister of the Gospel today.

Some proof of God's ever-existing WORD can be found in the book of the Prophet Jeremiah. In chapter 36-22-23, there's an episode where King Jehoiakim cut the roll of God's Word with a penknife and burnt it in the fire. However, that was **not** the end. The same omnipotent God brought the word of the LORD to Jeremiah once more w 27-32 that it may be preserved.

In Exodus chapter 32:15-19, Moses broke the tablets of stoned that contained THE WORD OF GOD: The 10 Commandments. But in chapter 34, God is calling Moses to hew out two 'new' tables of stone just like the first time and to present himself to Him on the top of the mountain where THE WORD OF GOD would be presented once more just as it was originally.

Martin R. De **Haan** 11 noted

The supernatural protection of the text of the Bible is another reason for **trusting** it. This protection occurred in two forms: (a) its unity amid great diversity, and (b) the miraculous preservation of the text itself. Let's look at the two ways God has protected the text of His Word.



## Its Unity In Diversity

The writings of **man** are marked by disunity and contradiction. Books written by more than one author often contain glaring discrepancies in philosophy, facts, style, or ideas. Even those written by one author may contain contradictions in fact or logic. Those who have given their lives to a study of the Scriptures, however, are continually amazed at its unity **and** consistency of doctrine.

Josh McDowell, a well-known apologist for Christianity, was approached **by** a salesman for the Great *Books* of the Western World series. This set includes the writings of the leading thinkers throughout the history of Western **man**. McDowell challenged the representative to take 10 of the authors from the same walk of life, the same time period, the same country, and the same language and ask them about one basic subject. "Would they agree?" Josh asked. The man said, "Are you kidding? You would have a conglomeration!"

The amazing unity of the Bible, therefore, merits our trust. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible tells a single story: the rescue of mankind **from** sin through the death of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament presents Him as the hope of mankind; the New Testament shows Him to **be** the fulfillment of that hope.

Now, if the Bible had been written by one person at one time, one could understand how it would **be** unified in general thoughts and specific details. But consider these diversities in its origin:

It was written by 40 different authors.

- It was written over a period of 1,600 years.

It was written in three languages: Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic.

- Its writers came from many walks of life: prophet (Jeremiah), priest (Zechariah), shepherd (Amos), king (David), servant (Nehemiah), doctor

- (Luke), tax collector (Matthew), and Pharisee (Paul).
- . It was written on three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe.
- . A gap of more than 400 years separated the writing of the Old Testament from the New Testament-- equivalent to the timespan from the days of Sir Francis Drake to today.

In spite of this wide diversity, the Bible is one book. As branches, roots, trunk, and leaves are part of one tree, so the parts of the Bible make up a single unit. It agrees in doctrine, details of prophecy, what it says about Jesus Christ, and its offer of rescue to mankind. It is a unified book made up of many books. It is a book you can trust!

### **Its Textual Preservation**

The Bible is also a book to be trusted because its text has been miraculously preserved. None of the original manuscripts written by the biblical authors are still in existence. All of them were either lost or destroyed centuries ago. This has caused some critics of the Bible to question the purity of the texts we now have. But we can be confident that the Bibles we hold in our hands were translated from texts that for all practical purposes are the same as the originals.

**The Old Testament.** The Old Testament books were written primarily in Hebrew. They were recorded either on papyrus (a grassy reed whose inner bark was dried and glued together to form a paperlike substance) or parchment (the scraped and dried skins of animals). When a copy wore out, a new copy was made and the old one destroyed.

But that was not an easy task. They did not have copy machines like we do today, so it had to be done by hand. Stringent rules were followed by the scribes to keep errors from creeping in. The methods used by the Masoretes had been followed for centuries, from AD 500-900. These dedicated Hebrew scholars had an elaborate counting system for assuring accuracy. First, they would count all the letters on a page. Then, when they finished copying the

page, they would count the letters on the copy to see if the numbers agreed. This would keep them from copying a word twice, omitting a word, skipping a line, or copying the same line twice. If the counts did not agree, they would destroy the copy they had just worked over so laboriously and start again.

Because of this system, the Hebrew texts since AD 900 are virtually free from error. But what about the years before 900? Most of the Old Testament was written centuries earlier, and the last book, Malachi, was finished nearly 400 years before Christ was born. Couldn't a lot of errors have crept in during that time?

That question could not have been answered with certainty before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. One hot, dusty day in 1947, an Arab boy threw a stone into one of the hundreds of caves that pocket the cliffs surrounding the Dead Sea. To his surprise, he heard something shatter. When he crawled in to investigate, he found a broken pottery jar and some old manuscripts, including one of the book of Isaiah. This was the first of the collection of what came to be known as the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Word of the discovery spread, and soon archeologists were excavating caves throughout the area. They found fragments of every Old Testament book and some complete manuscripts.

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But how did these compare with the Masoretic text? The careful work of textual comparison began, and soon it was found that there was no difference between the text of the Dead Sea Scrolls and those of the Masoretes. Even though these scrolls were copied almost 1,000 years earlier, they were almost identical to the Masoretic text! On the basis of this astounding evidence, we can be assured that the Old Testament text has been accurately preserved and that we can read it as the reliable Word of God.

**The New Testament.** What has been said of the Old Testament can also be said of the New. It also has been kept from error over the centuries. Although its books were copied thousands of times and distributed widely among the early churches, it too has been

protected from error.

New Testament scholars and textual experts have studied with painstaking care the thousands of manuscripts that have been discovered. They assure us that the texts from which our Bibles were translated are virtually identical to those written by Matthew, Paul, and the other New Testament writers. There are some minor variations, but none of them change the meaning of the passage in which they are found. Most of these differences are variations in spelling, like the British "labour" and the American "labor." A huge number of manuscripts or fragments of the New Testament have been discovered and compared. It is by far the most well-attested document of its era.

### **Document Name**

Caesar's Gallic Wars Livy's *History of Rome* Thucydides' *History* Herodotus' *History*  
The New Testament

### **Number of Earliest Manuscripts Date**

8

8

14,000

Two important finds have been made in recent years that have added significant evidence for the authenticity of the New Testament text. The first, the Rylands Library Papyri, contains a fragment from John 18 that has been dated at AD 125. The second, the Chester Beatty collection of papyri, contains almost all of the New Testament and dates between AD 200 and AD 275.

The meticulous work being done in textual studies of both Testaments by

brilliant scholars, most of them non-Christians, has given us every reason to be confident that we know what the original manuscripts said--even though we do not have any of them. True, there are variants, but they are very minor in importance and affect no essential teaching. The protection of the text, both in unity and in preservation, is another reason we can trust the Bible.

## The Reliability Of Its Book

Written over a period of about 1,600 years by 40 different authors, the book on which the Christian faith rests tells one story that begins with creation and concludes on the threshold of eternity. The integrity of its historical **and** geographical record is supported by archeology. The accuracy with which it has been copied and handed down to us has been confirmed by the Dead Sea Scrolls of Qumran. Originating neither in the East nor the West, but in the Middle East--the cradle of civilization--the Bible continues to speak not only with spiritual power but with convincing prophetic accuracy.

## Its Power To Change Lives

Unbelievers often point to those who claim to believe in the Bible without being changed by it. But history is also marked by those who have been bettered by this book. The Ten Commandments

.. have been a source of moral direction to countless numbers of people. The Psalms of David have offered comfort in times of trouble and loss. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount has given millions an antidote for stubborn pride and proud legalism. Paul's description of love in 1 Corinthians 13 has softened angry hearts. The changed lives of people like the apostle Paul, Augustine, Martin Luther, John Newton, Leo Tolstoy, and C. S. Lewis illustrate the difference the Bible can make. Even entire nations or tribes, like the Celts of Ireland, the wild Vikings of Norway, or the Auca Indians of Ecuador have been transformed by the Word of God and the unprecedented

life and significance of Jesus Christ. (10 Reasons to Believe In The Bible)

### Its Survival

The books of Moses were written 500 years before the earliest Hindu Scriptures. Moses wrote Genesis 2,000 years before Muhammad penned the Koran. During that long history, no other book has been as loved or as hated as the Bible. No other book has been so consistently bought, studied, and quoted as this book. While millions of other titles come and go, the Bible is still the book by which all other books are measured. While often ignored by those who are uncomfortable with its teachings, it is still the central book of Western civilization. (10 Reasons to Believe In The Bible)

**"Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts" (Jer. 15:16).**

A delicious meal is not very appealing if you experience indigestion afterward. Slowing the intake of the Word through careful reflection is also essential.

When encountering the pages of the Bible, it is so easy to skim over a given passage without seeing its significance. But the prophet Jeremiah, with his deep love for the Word of God, made it his first priority. The Hebrew word translated "were found" means both "to acquire and secure" **and** "to encounter and meet." When looking at a passage, we should slow down and acquaint ourselves with the text until it becomes secured in our soul.

The passage then refers to one of the most enjoyable aspects of the culinary experience-actually eating the food. The word eat can mean "devouring, consuming food" as well as "burning fuel like a fire." When we begin to "chew" on a passage we begin to taste the wonderful spiritual flavors it contains.

Have you ever been hungry and found yourself sitting down to a wide range of entrees with distinctive flavors? As your stomach begins to fill with protein, fat, and carbohydrates, you actually

begin to feel a lifting of your mood emotionally. Jeremiah felt a rush of 'tjoy and rejoicing" as he ingested God's Word into his heart. The word the prophet used for "heart" means "the inner man, thinking, reflection at the seat of appetites." The Word of God nourishes our thoughts and emotions, and brings joy.

The foundation for delighting in feeding on God's Word can be seen in the concluding section of this small but meaningful verse: "I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts." To Jeremiah, meaningful time in God's Word is always tied to our relationship with Him. In our devotional time, we become aware once again that we are called by the eternally existing Lord of heaven and earth. And this realization transforms our spiritual dryness into a dynamic encounter with the One who created us for fellowship with Him. (**Keeping Our Appointments With God**)

**Sources: rbc.org -Can I Really Trust The Bible- Martin R. De Haan n; Knowing God Through**

**The Whole Bible- Martin R. De Haann; Key Word Study Bible- Spiros Zodhiates; The Bible Knowledge Commentary- New Testament Edition- Walvoord & Zuck; Matthew Henry Bible Commentary; Wesley's Notes on the Bible; Jamieson, Faussett and Brown; Bible Classics.com; Gospelcorn.net .**