

THE FOUNDATIONS OF SCRIPTURE: PART III

The Preservation of God's Word



THE FOUNDATIONS OF SCRIPTURE

- The Nature of God's Word (Scripture's Doctrine)
- The Makeup of God's Word (Scripture's Canon)
- **The Preservation of God's Word (Scripture's Text)**
- The Transmission of God's Word (Scripture's Translation, 3 Parts)
- The Interpretation of God's Word (Scripture's Meaning, 6 Parts)



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- What is Text Criticism?

It is the study of the New and Old Testament texts and their transmission, to determine the best possible readings of the text.

The main question for us is this: how sure are we that we have God's word, preserved by the Spirit, able to equip us for every good work, and accurately providing for us the plan of salvation?



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- What is Text Criticism?
 - **Can we trust the scribes with the text?**
 - What kind of errors exist in the text?
 - What kind of principles help retrieve the text?



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Can we trust the scribes with the text?

Notice: the idea of *perfection* inherent in Ehrman's understanding of inerrant has led him to this position!

If the autographs were perfect *in every way*, then they must have been perfectly preserved!

Good logic, if the premise is true. It is not.



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Can we trust the scribes with the text?

“Many mistakes in the manuscripts were made and subsequently transmitted in the churches. This suggests that these documents were not generally recognized as Scripture until the end of the second century C.E. Scribal attempts at improvements in the text occurred regularly, and apparently no attempts were made to stop this activity until the fourth century, when more stability in the text of the NT began to take place.”

Lee McDonald, *The Biblical Canon*



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Can we trust the scribes with the text?

Harmonized quotes from the Gospels by early church fathers
“demonstrate that their text was not sacrosanct and that alterations
could be expected.”

Transmission of texts was “very unstable” and full of “serious
corruption.”

Helmut Koester, “The Text of the Synoptic Gospels in the Second Century”



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Can we trust the scribes with the text?

How might we respond to these charges?



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Can we trust the scribes with the text?

“¹⁵ And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶ as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the *other* Scriptures.”

2 Peter 3:15-16



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Can we trust the scribes with the text?

“As it is written: many are invited, but few of us are found chosen”

The Epistle of Barnabas, 4:14 (c. 130 c.e.)

“For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

Matthew 22:14



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Can we trust the scribes with the text?

Don't Add/Sub:

Perverting Meaning:

Rev 22:18-19

Didache 4:13

Epistle of Barnabas 19:11

Papias

Dionysius of Corinth

Irenaeus

Polycarp

Justin Martyr

Irenaeus



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Can we trust the scribes with the text?

Many manuscripts show signs of careful editing



Gal 4:27

Spelling mistake

Added text

Sinaiticus
4th C
Africa

Vaticanus

4th C

Africa

Rom 5:1

Hearing mistake

Rom 5:2

Abbreviated text

THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Can we trust the scribes with the text?

Harmonization was a feature of scribal belief that they were dealing with Scripture:

“Most of the manuals and handbooks...will tell you these variations were fruit of careless treatment which was possible because the books of the New Testament had not yet attained a strong position as ‘Bible.’ The reverse is the case. It was because they were the religious treasure of the church that they were changed.”

E. C. Colwell, *What is the Best New Testament?*



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Can we trust the scribes with the text?

Harmonization was a feature of scribal belief that they were dealing with Scripture:

1. Early writers were so immersed in the NT, its language became theirs
2. They often cited from memory, for better or worse
3. They sometimes alter texts to fit their own theological situation

Carl Cosaert, "Clement of Alexandria's Gospel Citations"



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Can we trust the scribes with the text?
 - There is good evidence early scribes thought they were dealing with Scripture
 - The harmonization was due to the text's ***importance***, not its ***unimportance***
 - There are clear indications of the editing of errors
 - Errors, while many, are overwhelmingly insignificant
 - Errors are explainable and understandable



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- What is Text Criticism?
 - Can we trust the scribes with the text? (YES!)
 - **What kind of errors exist in the text?**



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- What kinds of errors exist in the text?

Unintentional:

95%

Intentional:

5%



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Unintentional Mistakes:

Errors of **sight**: Galatians 1:11 (Vaticanus)



Ignore!

1

2

3

THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Unintentional Mistakes:

Errors of sight: Galatians 1:11 (Vaticanus)

Errors of **hearing**: Romans 5:1 (Vaticanus)



Rom 5:1

Hearing mistake

Rom 5:2

THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Unintentional Mistakes:

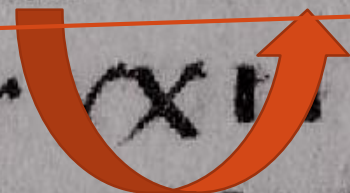
Errors of sight: Galatians 1:11 (Vaticanus)

Errors of hearing: Romans 5:1 (Vaticanus)

Errors of **writing**: John 13:37 (Alexandrinus)



ΔΥΝΑΣΑΙ ΜΟΙ ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΗΝ



Changes the question to
“why can’t you follow me now?”
instead of “why can’t I follow
you now?”

ΕΜΕΠΙΣΤΕΥΕΤΕ ΕΝΤΗ ΟΙΚΙΑ

THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Unintentional Mistakes:

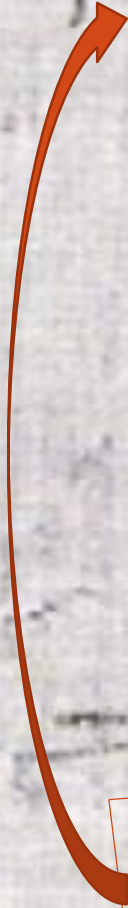
Errors of sight: Galatians 1:11 (Vaticanus)

Errors of hearing: Romans 5:1 (Vaticanus)

Errors of writing: John 13:37 (Alexandrinus)

Errors of **judgment**: Luke 17:14 (Papyrus Bodmer XIV)





Compare to Mk 1:41-42; Matt 8:3; Luke 5:13

Almost illegible writing in the margin

THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Intentional Mistakes:

Errors of **spelling and grammar** (Mark 1:21)

Some manuscripts change the spelling in Mark of Capernaum:
from Mark's somewhat odd Καφαρναούμ to the more accepted
spelling Καπερναύμ



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Intentional Mistakes:

Errors of spelling and grammar (Mark 1:21)

Errors of **harmonization** (Mark 2:16 and Luke 5:30)



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Intentional Mistakes:

Errors of **harmonization** (Mark 2:16 and Luke 5:30)

And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (Mark 2:16, ESV)

And when the scribes **and** Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth **and drinketh** with publicans and sinners? (Mark 2:16, KJV)



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Intentional Mistakes:

Errors of **harmonization** (Mark 2:16 and Luke 5:30)

And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" (Luke 5:30, ESV)

But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? (Luke 5:30, KJV)

The KJV relies on later manuscripts that have harmonized the readings of Mark 2:16 and Luke 5:30



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Intentional Mistakes:

Errors of spelling and grammar (Mark 1:21)

Errors of harmonization (Mark 2:16 and Luke 5:30)

Errors of **smoothing** (John 1:28)



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Intentional Mistakes:

Errors of **smoothing** (John 1:28)

John uses a more common town name (Βηθανία) that poses geographical problems for John's narrative. Therefore, many early documents change the name to the more geographically palatable Βηθαβαβᾶ.
But this reading is not found in any early manuscripts.



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Intentional Mistakes:

Errors of spelling and grammar (Mark 1:21)

Errors of harmonization (Mark 2:16 and Luke 5:30)

Errors of smoothing (John 1:28)

Errors of **conflation** (Acts 20:28)



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Intentional Mistakes:

Errors of **conflation** (Acts 20:28)

Some early manuscripts read “τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ” (the church of God), while others read “τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ κυρίου” (the church of the Lord). Many later documents, faced with the two readings, combined the two:

“τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ κυρίου καὶ θεοῦ”

(The church of the Lord and God)



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Intentional Mistakes:

Errors of spelling and grammar (Mark 1:21)

Errors of harmonization (Mark 2:16 and Luke 5:30)

Errors of smoothing (John 1:28)

Errors of conflation (Acts 20:28)

Errors of **theology and liturgy** (1 John 5:6-8)



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Intentional Mistakes:

Errors of **theology and liturgy** (Matthew 6:13; 1 John 5:6-8)

⁶ This is he who came by water and blood-- Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.⁷ For there are three that testify:⁸ the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. (1 John 5:6-8, ESV)

⁶ This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. ⁷ For there are three that bear record **in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.** ⁸ And there are three that bear witness **in earth**, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. (1 John 5:6-8, KJV)



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Intentional Mistakes:

Errors of **theology and liturgy** (Matthew 6:13; 1 John 5:6-8)

“This is certainly a gloss. It is found in no Greek manuscript before the fourteenth century, except for one eleventh- and one twelfth-century manuscript, where the words have been added in the margin by a much later hand”

Carson, Moo, Morris, *An Introduction to the NT*



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Intentional Mistakes:

Errors of spelling and grammar (Mark 1:21)

Errors of harmonization (Mark 2:16 and Luke 5:30)

Errors of smoothing (John 1:28)

Errors of conflation (Acts 20:28)

Errors of theology and liturgy (1 John 5:6-8)

These errors are typically inconsequential or easy to spot!



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- What is Text Criticism?
 - Can we trust the scribes with the text? (YES!)
 - What kind of errors exist in the text? (Many inconsequential or easy to spot)
 - **What kind of principles help retrieve the text?**



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- What kind of principles help retrieve the text?

Internal

External

One to rule them all:

The variant that can explain all others must be the original



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Internal
 - Hardest Reading
 - Longer vs. shorter reading
 - Conforms to authors vocab and style
 - Doesn't conform to parallel passages, liturgy, or church theology



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Internal

(Major!) problem with all this: many of these particular principles contradict themselves, or can stand in tension with one another.

Text Criticism is an art, not a science!



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- External
 - Earlier is better
 - Best quality manuscripts
 - Wide geographical witness
 - As many of the above as possible!



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Conclusion

- The early church cared about accurate transmission
- The “errors” are overwhelmingly minor
- We can determine, with high probability in most cases, best readings
- There are no (none!) major doctrines put in doubt by any NT variants
- God has indeed preserved his word for us!



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Practice? Ephesians 1:1

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful¹ in Christ Jesus (ESV)

¹Some manuscripts *saints who are also faithful* (omitting *in Ephesus*)



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Practice? Ephesians 1:1

External:

Earliest manuscripts

Including “Ephesus” : \aleph^2 (IV); A (V); B² (IV); D (V); F (IX); G (IX); Ψ^c (IX);
various late (9th C and after)

Excluding “Ephesus”: P⁴⁶ (I/II); \aleph^* (IV); B^{*} (IV); Marcion (II), Origen (III)

The superscript “2” indicates that the original was corrected in the margins. So the original text of \aleph (Siniaticus, omitting “Ephesus”) was edited.



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Practice? Ephesians 1:1

External:

Wide geographical witness

Including “Ephesus” : AFRICA (Ⲡ; A; B; Ψ) WESTERN (D, F, G)

Excluding “Ephesus”: AFRICA (Ⲡ; A; B; Ψ) BYZANTINE (Marcion)



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Practice? Ephesians 1:1

External:

Earliest manuscripts

Best quality manuscripts

Wide geographical witness

Multiple Attestation



THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Practice? Ephesians 1:1

Internal:

Hardest reading

Longer or shorter reading

Confirms to the author's style

Doesn't conform to parallel passages, liturgy, accepted theology



P46

~200

Missing Text!

PM
ΠΡΟΦΗΤΕΙΟΥ

ΠΑΥΛΟΣ ΑΠΟΤΟΛΟΣ ΧΡΥΣΤΟΥ ΔΙΑΘΕΛΗΜΑΤΟΣ
ΘΥ ΤΟΙΣ ΑΓΙΟΙΣ ΟΥΣΙΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΙΣ ΕΝ ΧΡΩ
ΙΗΣΟΥ ΧΑΡΙΣ ΥΜΕΙΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΙΡΗΝΗ ΑΠΟ ΘΥ ΠΡΟΣ
ΗΜΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΚΥ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΧΡΥ ΟΕΥΧΟΓΗ ΣΑΣ ΗΜΑΣ
ΕΝ ΠΑΣΙΝ ΕΥΛΟΓΙΑ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΗ ΕΝ ΤΟΙΣ
ΕΤΕΡΑΙΣ ΕΝ ΧΡΩ ΚΑΘΩΣ ΕΞΕΛΕΞΑΤΟ
ΗΜΑΣ ΕΝ ΑΥΤΩ ΠΡΟΚΑΤΑΒΟΛΗΣ ΚΟΙΝΟΥ ΕΙΝΑΙ
ΗΜΑΣ ΑΓΙΟΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΜΩΜΟΥΣ ΚΑΤΕΝΩΤΗ
ΟΝ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΕΝ ΑΓΑΠΗ ΠΡΟΟΡΙΣΑΣ ΗΜΑΣ ΕΙΣ
ΥΙΟ ΘΕΟΥ ΑΝ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΧΡΥ ΕΙΣ ΑΥΤΟΝ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΗΝ
ΕΥΔΟΚΙΑΝ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΛΗΜΑΤΟΣ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝ

Eph 1:1

ΠΑΥΛΟΣ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΣ
ΤΗΣ ΧΥΔΙΑΘΕΛΗΜΑ
ΤΟ ΘΥΤΟΙΣ ΑΓΙΟΙΣ
ΤΟΙΣ ΟΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΙΣ
ΕΝ ΧΩΙ ΥΧΑΡΙΣ
ΜΙΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΙΡΗΝΗ
ΑΠΟ ΘΥΤΟΥ ΤΟΥ

Eph 1:2

Sinaiticus
4th C
Africa

Eph 1:1

Π

ΑΥΛΟΣ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΣ ΧΥ
ΙΥ ΔΙΑΘΕΛΗΜΑΤΟΣ ΘΥ
ΤΟΙΣ ΑΓΙΟΙΣ ΤΟΙΣ ΟΥΣΙΝ
ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΙΣ ΕΝ ΧΩΙΥ

Eph 1:2

ΧΑΡΙΣ ΥΜΙΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΓΓΡΗΝΗ
ΑΠΟ ΘΥ ΠΑΤΡΟΣ ΗΜΩΝ
ΚΑΙ ΚΥΙΥ ΧΥ ΕΥΛΟΓΑ

Eph 1:3

ΕΝΙ
ΦΕΩ

Vaticanus
4th C

Africa

Ἰὺμῆδι ὧκωντα ἰοῦα
 γαροῖδε περὶ τετμῆς ἐν
 αὐτοῖς νόμον φυλάσσου
 σὶν ἅλλα θελοῦσιν ὑψᾶς
 περὶ τέμεσθαί ἡ ἐν τῇ
 ὑμετέρᾳ σαρκὶ καὶ ὑψῇ
 σὺν ταῖς ἐμοῖς ἐμῇ γε
 νοίτο καὶ ὑψᾶς θαιεῖ μῃ
 ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ κυ
 ἡμῶν Ἰῦ χυδαῖο ὑεμοῖ
 κόσμος ἐσταύρωται
 κατὰ κόσμῳ οὐτε γὰρ
 περὶ τομῇ τί ἐστὶν οὐ
 τε κροβυοτὶ ἅλλα καὶ
 ἡ κτίσις καὶ ὁ σοὶ τῷ
 κανονί τοῦ τῷ στοιχῇ

Π ΑΥΛΟC ΑΠΟCΤΟΛΟC ΧΥ
 ΙΥΔΙΑΘΕΛΗΜΑΤΟC ΘΥ
 ΤΟΙC ΑΓΙΟΙC ΤΟΙC ΟΥCΙΝ ^{ἐν}
 ΚΑΙ ΠΙC ΤΟΙC ΕΝ ΧΩΙΥ
 ΧΑΡΙC ΥΜΙΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΓΡΗΝΗ
 ΑΠΟ ΘΥΠΑΤΡΟC ΗΜΩΝ
 ΚΑΙ ΚΥΙΥ ΧΥ ΕΥΛΟΓΗ
 ΤΟC ΘC ΤΟΥ ΚΥ ΗΜΩΝ
 ΙΥ ΧΥ ΘΕΥΛΟΓΗCΑC ΗΜΑC
 ΕΝ ΠΑC ΗΕΥΛΟΓΙΑ ΠΝΕΥ
 ΜΑΤΙΚΗ ΕΝ ΤΟΙC ΕΠΟΥ
 ΡΑΝΙΟΙC ΕΝ ΧΩ ΚΑΘΩC
 ΕΞΕΛΕΞΑΤΟ ΗΜΑC ΕΝ ΑΥ
 ΤΩ ΠΡΟΚΑΤΑΒΟΛΗCΚΟ
 C ΜΟΥ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΗΜΑC ΑΓΙΟΥC
 ΚΑΙ ΑΜΩ ΜΟΥC ΚΑΤΕΝΩ

ΧΩΤΑ ΕΠΙ ΤΟΙΣ ΟΥΡΑΝΟΙΣ
 ΚΑΙ ΤΑ ΕΠΙ ΤΗΣ ΓΗΣ ΕΝΑΥ-
 ΤΩ ΕΝΩ ΚΑΙ ΕΚΛΗΡΩΘΗ
 ΜΕΝ ΠΡΟ ΟΡΙΣΘΕΝΤΕΣ
 ΚΑΤΑ ΠΡΟΘΕΣΙΝ ΤΟΥΤΑ
 ΠΑΝΤΑ ΕΝΕΡΓΟΥΝΤΟΣ
 ΚΑΤΑ ΤΗΝ ΒΟΥΛΗΝ ΤΟΥ
 ΘΕΛΗΜΑΤΟΣ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΕΙΣ
 ΤΟ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΗΜΑΣ ΕΙΣ ΕΠΑ-
 ΝΟΝ ΔΟΥΣΗΣ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΤΗΣ
 ΠΡΟΗΛΠΙΚΟΤΑΣ ΕΝΤΩ
 ΧΩ ΕΝΩ ΚΑΙ ΥΜΕΙΣ ΑΚΟΥ-
 ΣΑΝΤΕΣ ΤΟΝ ΛΟΓΟΝ ΤΗΣ
 ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑΣ ΤΟ ΕΥΑΓΓΕ-
 ΛΙΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΣΩΤΗΡΙΑΣ Υ-
 ΜΩΝ ΕΝΩ ΚΑΙ ΤΙΣΤΕ

ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ ΕΦΕΣΟΥ

Eph 1:1

ΠΑΥΛΟΣ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΣ
ΙΥΧΥΔΙΑΘΕΛΗΜΑ

THE PRESERVATION OF GOD'S WORD

- Practice? Ephesians 1:1
 - Contents of Ephesians point toward it being a circular letter
 - Makes sense of some manuscripts lacking “in Ephesus”
 - Yet, still correct to think that this letter was sent to Ephesus
 - So our bibles are correct to include it
 - Yet, it tells us something very interesting about the early Church!

