

**WHY SHOULD WE
BELIEVE THE BIBLE TO
BE TRUE AND GOD'S
WORD?**

Part 5

**THE BIBLE HAS BEEN
WELL PRESERVED**

Instructions:

- Read the entire lesson – all Bible verses are included and are from the New King James Version
- Answer the questions at the end of the lesson
- Mail the answers to the address provided
- The questions will be marked and returned to you along with the next lesson and a self-addressed envelope
- A Certificate of Completion will be mailed when the entire series is completed

Visit our website www.correspondencecourse.webs.com

E-mail us correspondencecourse@yahoo.ca

Our lesson will show how God preserved the Bible, His Word, through the centuries. Before we begin, let's take a look at rivers which may have small and insignificant beginnings but can potentially become major waterways.

Rivers

Rivers have always been important because water is essential for life. Most major cities are built along river banks because rivers provide drinking water, crop irrigation, food, a place to bathe, transportation and recreation.

- A river is a natural course of water (usually fresh water) which flows toward an ocean, a lake, a sea or another river.
- When a river is small it may be called a creek, a stream or a brook.
- Its beginning is known as the source and is always the highest point in the surrounding area.
- As the water flows downhill, it gains volume from underground springs, rainfall and other water sources. It is said to be going downstream as it continues toward another body of water.
- The estuary of a river is near the mouth where the fresh and salt water meet and mix.
- The mouth of the river is where it flows into another body of water.

Amazon River

- The Amazon River carries more volume of water than any other river in the world. It contributes about twenty percent of the fresh water that flows into the world's oceans.
- The source of the Amazon River is a trickle of water coming from a cliff high in the Peruvian Andes. This small amount of crystal clear water expands to become a very large and important waterway travelling through many countries in South America including Guyana, Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil, Columbia and Peru.
- It is the 2nd longest river in the world at 6,400 km (4,000 mi). The Nile River in Egypt is approximately 251 km (156 mi) longer than the Amazon.
- There have been 3,000 species of fish, including the Piranha, identified in this river. This small fish will attack men and large animals inflicting dangerous and even fatal wounds. A school of hungry piranhas were once seen eating an entire cow.

We have studied four reasons why we should believe the Bible is God's Word and is true:

- Jesus, God's only Son believed it to be true.
- Old Testament prophecies are detailed and accurate
- Historical accuracy of the Bible
- Unity of the Bible

Now we will study a fifth reason - the Bible has been very well preserved. Preserve means "to save from corruption, damage, or erosion so that the original state or condition is maintained to the greatest degree possible".

God promised that His Word would be preserved forever. In spite of attempts to destroy it, we still have His Word, the Bible.

- Psalm 119:160 The entirety of Your word *is* truth and every one of Your righteous judgments *endures* forever.
- Psalm 100:5 For the LORD *is* good; His mercy *is* everlasting, and His truth *endures* to all generations
- Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.
- Matthew 5:18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot (smallest letter) or one tittle (small accent or mark to differentiate one letter from another) will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled
- Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.
- I Peter 1:25 But the word of the LORD endures forever. Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

God stated that His Word would be preached to all nations

- Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

By the 4th Century, one Christian group became officially recognized by the Roman Empire. This organized Church used only the Latin translation of the Bible (Latin Vulgate) although many other translations were available. Three centuries later, this group no longer resembled the church described in the New Testament. By this time the Latin translation of God's Word was filled with untruths, but this church refused to recognize any other translation and still demanded that all non-

Latin translations be destroyed. Needless to say, they were unsuccessful because God was protecting and preserving His Word. Many Christians had not become part of this organization. Instead, they gathered together in small numbers following the teachings of Jesus and His apostles and studying the Bible that had been translated into their language from the original Greek or Hebrew.

Has Our Present Bible Been Corrupted, Altered or Edited?

The Bible has more manuscript (hand-written document) evidence than any other ancient literature. Although all of the original manuscripts have been destroyed, we can still have confidence that our Bible is the inspired Word of God and has NOT been corrupted, altered or edited. We have read that God promised to preserve His Word forever but how did God do it before printing presses and photocopiers? The books of the Old Testament were originally written by hand by Hebrew scribes (people who hand-copied documents). These men took extreme care to ensure that the Word of God was accurately copied and preserved. If an error was found, the mistake was cut out of the scroll. The part of the scroll, both before and after the error, was also removed. This guaranteed that the document was perfect. Reading about the care taken by these scribes helps us to better understand how God used them to preserve His Word for future generations.

Old Testament (written from approximately 1450-400 BC)
In 1947, some ancient manuscripts called the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in several remote Judean desert caves. These scrolls were hundreds of years older than any other manuscripts previously found. They are considered to be the greatest archaeological find of the 20th Century. God had preserved these fragile pieces of parchment and papyrus for over two thousand years in the hot, dry desert climate and in the darkness of the caves where they were protected from thieves and light. Among these scrolls were manuscript fragments of every book in the Old Testament except the book of Esther. Against all odds, the scholars were able to assemble many of these fragile fragments. When the fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls were pieced together, scholars were amazed to see how similar they were to other ancient copies of the Old Testament that had been found years earlier. This should not surprise us but rather confirm our belief in our Heavenly Father's promises.

New Testament (written from approximately 40-90 AD)

There are thousands of New Testament manuscripts in existence today – about 5,300 Greek New Testament manuscripts and 10,000 Latin manuscripts which were translated from the Greek. If all of our New Testaments were destroyed today, 98% of it could be reconstructed from New Testament quotes found in approximately 100,000 manuscripts and letters written by men in the first few centuries after Christ. This is another example of how God ensured that His Word would be preserved forever.

Here is the timeline for the English translation of the Bible:

- In 1380, John Wycliffe believed that people should be able to read the Bible in their own language so he produced the first English hand-written Bible. With the assistance of his followers, dozens of copies were written.
- In the 1450s, Johann Gutenberg invented the printing press. Now Bibles and other books could be produced much faster and in large quantities.
- In the 1490s, Thomas Linacre decided to learn the Greek language so he could compare the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), which were written in Greek, to the Latin Vulgate. It was clear to him that the Latin Vulgate had been corrupted and no longer contained the message of the Gospels. The Latin Vulgate was still being used but never by the New Testament church, which had been established after Jesus' death and resurrection.
- In 1496, John Colet started reading the New Testament in Greek and translated it into English for his students and later for the public. The people were delighted to hear God's Word in their own language.
- In 1516 Erasmus, who understood the importance of translating from the texts in the original language, published a Greek-Latin Parallel New Testament in which he translated the Greek New Testament into Latin making it easy for everyone to see the errors and untruths contained in the Latin Vulgate.
- In 1517 Martin Luther translated and published the New Testament into the commonly spoken German dialect. He used Erasmus' Greek-Latin Parallel New Testament. In 1530 he published the entire Bible in German.
- In 1525 William Tyndale translated the New Testament into English. He had to flee from England to Germany because

the organized Church wanted to stop this translation from being printed. They had continued burning all translations found, other than the Latin Vulgate. Tyndale visited Martin Luther and in 1526 printed the first English New Testament.

- In 1535, Myles Coverdale continued with Tyndale's work. He was the first to translate the entire Bible into English from German and Latin.
- In 1537 John Rogers printed a complete English Bible which was translated from the original Hebrew and Greek.
- In 1539 King Henry VIII authorized the first English Bible for public use and had it distributed to every church.
- In 1611, the King James Version of the Bible was completed and printed. This was the result of 72 years of work by about fifty scholars who used many translations including The Tyndale New Testament, The Coverdale Bible, The Matthews Bible, The Great Bible, The Geneva Bible, and The Rheims New Testament.

God's Word survived despite intense efforts to destroy it. We have read about a few of the many attempts to stop translations of the Bible into local languages, to burn all existing copies of the Bible and to attack the credibility of the Bible. Man cannot destroy God's inspired Word but some continue to try. Here are a few more examples:

- In the Bible we read that, late in the 7th Century BC, King Jehoiakim of Judah cut the scroll of Jeremiah's prophecy and threw it into the fire. The Lord told Jeremiah to have his scribe, Baruch, re-write the same words and this time He gave Jeremiah additional material for his scribe to write
 - Jeremiah 36:21-32 ... Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah, who wrote on it at the instruction of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire. And besides, there were added to them many similar words.
- Early in the 4th Century AD, the Roman emperor Diocletian wanted Christianity outlawed. He also wanted the leaders killed and their Bibles destroyed. After burning many copies of God's Word He made the announcement that he had destroyed all of the Christian writings, but he was wrong. God's inspired Words continued to be studied by the New Testament Christians.
- In the 1520s, when the William Tyndale's Bibles were printed in Germany and shipped to England, they had to be

packaged in bales of cotton and sacks of flour because the King of England had ordered that they be destroyed.

Tyndale's biggest customer was the King. He bought every copy he could find and then had them burned. Tyndale used this money to print even more Bibles!

- Robert G. Ingersoll lived from 1833-1899. He attempted to make the Word of God appear so ridiculous that it would never again influence men. He said: "In ten years the Bible will not be read" but he was wrong. Ingersoll had NO power over God's promises to preserve His Word.!
- The Bible is still under attack. As an example, today the Bible and public prayer to our Heavenly Father have been removed from our government funded school system. We must be alert to these efforts and attempts to destroy our belief in God and His Son. We must be willing to stand up and show our love for God and His Word.

Sometimes people wonder if we can trust the Bible. Absolutely, yes we can! In this lesson we have studied numerous reasons why we can believe that God's inspired Word has been preserved and protected in spite of numerous efforts to destroy it. This is one of God's promises being fulfilled. Through the centuries, there were Christians who risked their lives, by keeping copies of the Bible in their own language. You can read more about this in the lesson entitled "God Has Preserved His Church since the Day of Pentecost".

It is important that people be able to read the Bible in their own language and that each generation can understand God's Word. It is our responsibility to read and study His Word. The Bible should be our guide for living; whether in the 1st Century or the 21st Century. Although languages change, the Word of God never changes:

- God's Words are pure
- God's Words are true
- God's Words are our guide.

God inspired men, through the Holy Spirit, to write the books that today we call the Bible. God took great care in giving His Word to men who were faithful to Him and then He continued by protecting and preserving His Word through the centuries. We should be grateful and thank God that today there are many countries that have the freedom to read the Bible, the Word of God, and that they can read it in their own language.

HIDDEN WORD QUIZ (below, try to find these books of the Bible - James, Mark, Ruth, Amos, Esther, Job, Titus, Daniel, Hebrews, Acts, John, Peter, Numbers, Judges and Joel)

- A man called Joe was in a jam, especially because he could not keep his remarks to himself. The truth is that he enjoyed being with people and found them to be a most interesting topic to discuss. Yes, there are times when it is tempting to gossip. but God's Word tells us that it is wrong. Joe finds it a difficult job to remain silent and his friends admit it usually is easier to gossip. For example, Joe's neighbour Daniel says that he brews the best cup of tea. His wife acts as if she doesn't care. She and her son John prefer coffee. Consider this, when you gossip, are you trying to compete? Relax now and realize that this story could make Daniel's wife seem to not care - this is not true. Numbers indicate that gossip such as this can cause a lot of distress. There are no judges on this topic but Joe lacks good judgment.

True or False

1. The Bible has been preserved by God
2. The Bible has NOT been corrupted nor edited
3. There was no opposition to translating the Bible
4. The New Testament was written in Hebrew
5. The Old Testament was written in Greek
6. Jesus said that His Words would not pass away.
7. Dead Sea Scrolls were found in desert caves
8. Isaiah said that the Word of God stands forever
9. We can trust the Bible as being God's Word
10. There were many attempts to destroy God's Word.
11. All attempts to destroy God's Word failed.

NAME	
ADDRESS	
CITY	
PROV./STATE COUNTRY	
POSTAL / ZIP CODE	
E-ADDRESS	

Please Complete the Following Verses

14T

1. Psalm 119:160 The entirety of Your word *is* truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments *endures* _____
2. Matthew 5:18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot (smallest letter) or one tittle (small accent or mark to differentiate one letter from another) will by no means pass from the law till all is _____
3. Jeremiah 36:32 Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah, who wrote on it at the instruction of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of _____ had burned in the fire. And besides, there were added to them many similar words.
4. Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means _____
5. Psalm 12:6-7 The words of the LORD *are* pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. You shall keep them, O LORD; You shall preserve them from this generation _____
6. Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in _____ as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.
7. Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God _____
8. I Peter 1:25 But the word of the LORD _____
_____. Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.
9. Psalm 100:5 For the LORD *is* good; His mercy *is* _____, and His truth *endures* to all generations

