

How God Delivered and Preserved His Word for Us New Testament, Part One

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. Heb. 1:1-3
 - 1. In the Patriarchal and Mosaic periods, God spoke through multiple men using multiple means of communication
 - a. Heads of families - Gen. 18:7-19
 - b. Moses - Num. 12:6-8
 - c. Prophets - 2Peter 1:20-21
- B. In the Christian dispensation, Christ is the authorized spokesman who commissioned inspired writers to communicate His word
 - 1. John 14:25-26, 16:13-14; 2Peter 1:12-13, 15-16, 19, 3:1-2

I. THE PROCESS OF INSPIRATION

- A. How to identify a true prophet of the Lord:
 - 1. Deut. 19:20-22 - The prophecy must come to pass.
 - 2. Deut. 13:1-5 - The prophet's teaching must be consistent with what has already been revealed - Gal. 1:6-9
- B. Inspiration means that what they received was from God and not from themselves or other men
 - 1. Num. 12:5-8 - no more and no less - Jer. 1:4-7, 9
 - 2. NT writers received it directly from the Holy Spirit sent by God.
 - a. Gal. 1:11-20 - Paul received it from the Lord, and not from the other apostles.
 - b. Matt. 10:19-20
- C. Inspiration means that they wrote and taught without error
 - 1. The Law of Moses was perfectly delivered, and was to remain unaltered until it was fulfilled - Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:5-6
 - 2. The Law of Christ is complete and perfectly delivered.
 - a. James 1:25; Rev. 22:18-19; 1Cor. 13:10; Matt. 11:25

II. THREE HISTORICAL STAGES OF THE DELIVERY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

- A. Only oral Word
 - 1. Time Parameters: Pentecost to Acts 15:23-29 or until the first epistle or Gospel account
 - a. Means of the Word's existence: in one-generation of men - 2Cor. 4:7, 16 (very short term duration)
- B. Oral into written (conversion process)
 - 1. Beginning of process with Paul's earliest epistles; demonstrates apostolic awareness of the process from the very beginning.
 - a. End of process with production of last written book
- C. Only written Word
 - 1. Time parameters: from about A.D. 80 to the second coming of the Lord

- b. Means of the Word's existence: in a multi-generation book (the New Testament; long term duration)
- D. The New Testament was in existence and well known by the end of the first century A.D.
 - 1. "In my opinion, every book of the New Testament was written between the forties and eighties of the First Century A.D." (Nelson Glueck, former president of the Jewish Theological Seminary in the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, renowned Jewish archaeologist)
 - 2. "We can already say emphatically that there is no longer any solid basis for dating any book of the New Testament after 80 A.D." (W. F. Albright, Biblical archaeologist)

III. THE POWER AND AUTHORITY OF GOD'S WORD

- A. God's Word is authoritative regardless of its form
 - 1. Affirmed in separate verses - 1Thes. 2:13; 2Thes. 3:14
 - 2. Affirmed in same verse - 2Thes. 2:15
- B. Authority of God's Word remained constant through all three historical periods
 - 1. When only oral: Authoritative - Acts 11:18
 - 2. When both oral and written: Authoritative - 2Thes. 2:15
 - 3. When only written: Authoritative - 2Peter 1:15
- C. The issue between the oral and written word is not a difference in power to direct, but a difference in ability to survive the years.
 - 1. Oral word is easy to degrade over time and difficult to disperse consistently
 - 2. Written word is easy to preserve accurately and disperse consistently

IV. THE PROCESS OF CONVERTING THE WORD FROM ORAL TO WRITTEN

- A. Overview of the process
 - 1. Process was directed by God - 2Tim. 3:16
 - a. "All scripture," oral or written, by speaking or writing prophets, by the preaching or writing of the apostles, is directed by God
 - 2. Process guided by the Holy Spirit - John 14:26, 16:13; 2Peter 1:20-21
 - 3. Process overseen by the apostles and inspired writers
 - a. Col. 4:16; 2Peter 1:16
 - 4. Time for Process: 30 to 50 years at the most
 - 5. Integrity of Process: Guaranteed by superintendence of apostles and inspired writers, and the testimony of a multitude of witnesses
 - a. 1Cor. 15:3-8

V. BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES OF NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS

A. Mathew, also known as Levi, was a publican or tax collector who was chosen by Jesus to be one of the twelve Apostles. As a tax collector Matthew would have been a literate person well suited to author one of the Gospel records.

B. Mark is the author of the Gospel account bearing his name. Mark was the Latin surname given to this young man whose Jewish name was John. John Mark was nephew to Barnabas. Mark traveled with Barnabas in ministry and later in years

ministered to the Apostles Peter and Paul. Mark is not identified as one who walked with Jesus yet his association with the Apostles makes him more than qualified to produce a gospel record.

C. Luke is the author of the third Gospel account and the book of Acts. Luke is mentioned three times in the New Testament. (Col. 4:14; Phil. 24; 2Tim. 4:11) and from these passages we learn that Luke was a physician and a fellow worker of Paul who traveled with him during his missionary journeys. Luke was an educated man whose attention to historical detail is of great value today.

D. One of the twelve apostles, John was a fisherman and brother to one of the other twelve apostles, James. The Apostle John is the author of the fourth Gospel account, three epistles, and Revelation. John was a close associate of Jesus referred to as the "disciple whom Jesus loved." John's writings account for a significant portion of the New Testament.

E. Peter was one of the most prominent of the twelve Apostles. He was also a fisherman and brother to another of the twelve whose name was Andrew. Peter was also referred to at times as Simeon (Acts 15:14) along with Cephas and Simon (John 1:43). Peter was a part of Jesus inner circle of disciples and remains an important person throughout the early church history. Peter authored the two Epistles which bear his name and was very likely present during the writing of Mark's Gospel account.

F. The apostle Paul, although not one of the original twelve Apostles, was chosen by Jesus to be an apostle and to go out to bring the gospel to the non-Jewish people of his day. Paul was a Jew of respectable heritage and a ranking member of the strict Jewish sect of the Pharisees. Paul was also a Roman citizen by birth which he used to his advantage in times of persecution. His name before his conversion was Saul, and he was well known because he fiercely persecuted the early Christians. After his conversion Paul went on to live one of the most fruitful lives of service for the kingdom of God.

G. James, the author of the epistle of James, was also a brother of Jesus. (Gal. 1:19). James was clearly a leader in the early church in Jerusalem. An important council in Jerusalem directed by James was responsible for teaching that it was no longer a requirement to keep the ceremonial aspects of the Law of Moses. (Acts 12:17, 15:13,19; Gal 2:9) Along with being a member of Jesus household, James also had the privilege of seeing Jesus after He rose from the dead (1Cor 15:5, 7).

H. Jude, the author of one epistle of only twenty five verses, was also a brother of James and Jesus. (Jude 1; Gal 1:19) His name in Greek would be Judas, not the traitor of Jesus, but the defender of the faith whose epistle speaks out boldly against the apostasy of his day.

VI. WHEN WERE THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS WRITTEN?

- 44 AD - Epistle of James
- 50-51 - Epistle to Galatians
- 52- 53 - Matthew, 1 & 2 Thessalonians
- 54 - 1Corinthians
- 55 - 2Corinthians
- 55-56 - Romans
- 58 - Luke

- 60-61 - Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, Philippians
- 64 - Acts
- 64-65 - 1Timothy, 1Peter, Titus
- 66-67 - Revelation, 2Peter
- 67-68 - 2Timothy, Mark, Hebrews
- 75 - Jude
- 80 - John, & 1,2,3 John

Conclusion:

- A. Whether spoken or written God's word is binding authority upon all hearers and readers. (2Cor. 5:18-20)
- B. Whether spoken only, both spoken and written, or written only, the revealed will of God is sufficient so that all hearers and readers can apprehend the will of God, develop faith, and fully obey God. (2Tim. 3:16-17; 2Peter 1:3-4)
- C. There has never been a time in which the will of God for man has been unrevealed or unclear.