

Chapter 2 — The Holy Scriptures

Q4. How did God's people preserve God's communications among themselves?

A. The fathers transmitted it to their children (Gen. 18:19).

The Bible text in the answer reads, "He [Abraham] will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment" (Gen. 18:19). Let us first think about the word "preserve." What is the issue? In the time before Moses, nothing of the Bible is written on paper. What is preservation? It means that you want to keep intact and to keep something safe. Think for example about milk. We have different ways that we can store milk. You can preserve it in the fridge for about seven days. But what if you would like to keep milk longer? Then you can put it in the freezer. In this way, you can keep milk for about six months. Another possibility is to pasteurize it. That means to heat milk for a time at a certain temperature. With this method, you can keep milk also for about six months. Our question speaks about preserving God's Word. Or to keep it intact. How is that done?

The question asks, how did people preserve what God had told them? We could have different options. We can write things down or tell others by mouth. We call this transmitting. What is that? Literally it is to hand something down. Simply said, you try to get something from one person to the other. How can we transmit something? We have different ways to do that. We could use light (fiber) or radio waves (cellphone). Other possibilities are sound, contact or writing. Think about a ship that is wandering in the sea in a big storm. Finally, the captain sees a lighthouse. The light flashes around. The captain knows, there is a harbor. Did anyone talk? No. But the flashing light for him is enough to know where the coast is. In our catechism we speak about transmission in the time before Moses. Nothing was officially written down. How did children know what God had said? Fathers and mothers taught their children by mouth. Imagine for a moment that you would sit at the table. Father would call his children around the table. He would instruct the children in what the LORD had commanded. He would say, "This is what the LORD has said." Today, we do actually the same. Fathers and mothers teach the Bible in the home. One difference is that our parents have also a written Bible. Where do we find an example in the Bible that this method happened? Yes, Abraham taught his family. Remember, even when we do not specifically read about it, it still happened. Think about this. Abel offered by faith. How does someone get faith? That is by hearing God's Word (Rom. 10:17). This means that Abel, in one way or another, had heard about God's Word. Or think of Enoch. He walked with God. That can only if He knew that God existed. It was told him.

But the question is, do we not get problems if we try to transmit God's word by speaking? We can have challenges to remember things in our memory. We often tend to forget things. Think about telling a story that you have heard to someone else. You can leave out or add things to it. That can be unintentionally. Think of the following example. It is a game that children sometimes do. They whisper a sentence in the ear of one child. He has to tell it to the next, and that child to the next. The last one has to tell what he has heard. Often it is totally different from what the first person had said. How can God's Word then be preserved in this way? That is what we will look at our the next question.

Q5. Why could this be done better in those times?

A. In those days

- (1) men lived longer,
- (2) they are fewer in number,
- (3) God revealed Himself more frequently, and
- (4) Satan's devices were less.

The question says, is it not an issue to transmit God's Word by speaking? And the answer is, no. In the time before Moses this was possible. But why? Four different things are mentioned. The first reason is that "men lived longer." How long do people live today? That is 120 years maximum. This is the result of the flood. After that moment, the age of man declined strongly. The oldest living person is "Kane Tanaka," a Japanese woman. She is 119 year and 2 months.¹ The oldest male in the world is only 112 years old. But how long did people live before the flood of Noah? Let us think about few of them. Lamech, the father of Noah, lived 777 years. He died just before the flood. If you go back in time, you see that Adam lived 930 years (Gen. 5). But who is the oldest person in the Bible? Yes, that is Methuselah. He was 969 years old (Gen. 5:21-27). Think about that. If you were born in 2000, you would die in 2969. What would you see? Many changes in technology, many wars, and your great-great-grandchildren. Let's think about another question. Who of his descendants could Adam have known? We mean his great-great-grandson? Yes, that was Lamech, the father of Noah. Lamech was the seventh generation from Adam. When he was born, Adam lived for another 56 years.² We go further in time and think about Noah. Who could Noah have known of his descendants? Yes, Abraham. This man was the tenth generation from Noah. These two overlap each other for about 39 years. So, people indeed lived longer.

A second reason, our answer says, is that "they are fewer in number." How many people live on earth today? That is about 8 billion. But what about the time of the flood? The Bible is silent about that. No, it is not true that all people before the flood preserved God's Word. Think about the generation of Cain. But others did, for example, the line of Seth.

A third reason, our answer says, is that "God revealed Himself more frequently." In other words, God spoke more often to people directly. What is a good example? Indeed, God said to Abraham to go out of his country. What are some ways that God revealed Himself? Four types,

- 1. Spoken. Think of God to Abraham.
- 2. Visions. Other times God revealed Himself in visions to Abraham.
- 3. Dreams. A great example is Joseph.
- 4. Theophanies. A difficult word that means God appears in a physical form.

What are some examples that God appears in a theophany? First, in things. For example, God spoke to Moses in the burning bush. Second, God appeared in human form. Think of the three men that came to Abraham. Third, in the appearance of the Angel of the LORD. The occurrence to Manoah and his wife is a great example. Maybe you ask, but why does God in our days no longer reveal Himself in such ways to man? For example in dreams or with an audible voice. That is a great question. The answer is that we have the written Word of God. We can find God's will in this Book.

¹ Note, this was at the time of teaching this catechism lesson. She died at April 19, 2022.

² <https://www.dropbox.com/s/pvblbuk92v81mqd/1a%20-%20Age%20Chart.pdf?dl=0>

That means that we have to read and study it. Otherwise, we cannot get to know God and His will. But at exceptional occasions God still reveals Himself in dreams. This sometimes happens in Muslim countries. But do you know what God then always says? You can get a Bible at this address or from that person. He points back to His own Word.

The last reason is that “Satan’s devices were less.” In other words, the devil did less attacks than he does today. How do we know that Satan’s attacks more today? This is said in Revelation. There we read, “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time” (Rev. 12:12). What are some attacks of the devil? False preaching, keeping people busy, and persecution. Let us now look at the next question.

Q6. Who caused the Holy Scriptures to be written?

A. God. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16).

This question and answer speaks of the ultimate author of the Bible. Who is it? The answer says, “God.” We know that God exists of three persons, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Which of the three do we mean? The Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:22). What is the result of one ultimate author? That the Bible is one unified Book. That means there are no contradictions. Yes, it is true that it can be a challenge with difficult passages. But if we study more in depth, we see that the Bible does not contradict itself. But what part of the Bible do we exactly speak about? The answer speaks of “all Scripture.” That is from the first chapter of Genesis until the last chapter of Revelation. It shows that every single word, sentence, and chapter is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Why is it important to mention that? Today we hear so often that only some parts of the Bible are from God and other parts from the Bible writers. Others argue that the Bible is a fiction book. It contains myths and stories. But no more than that. Again others say that parts of the Bible contain errors. But what is the issue then? It is up to the reader to decide what comes from God and what not. On the other hand, we believe that all of the Bible is given by God. It has no errors. How is it then given? The catechism says by “inspiration.” Inspiration means that the Holy Spirit influenced the Bible writers in such a way that they wrote all what He wanted them to write. And this happened without mistakes. Moses, Isaiah, Mark, and John have all written a part of the Bible. We see that in the styles of the different books. And at the same time, the Holy Spirit guided them in that work. Therefore, we have a perfect Bible.