

written account.

So in the New Testament there is an emphasis on maintaining that which is given. Paul exhorts believers to keep and exchange his letters for the joint profit of all (Col. 4:16). Writing to Corinth he cites his earlier letter, which reference would be worthless if preservation were not in order. Other New Testament writers emphasize that the words given to them were for the strengthening of God's testimony and were to be preserved. This concept is forcefully stated in Rev. 1:3. Although the passage specifically views Revelation, it summarizes the whole range of New Testament thought.

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With regard to (2), there must be a certain amount of speculation. The statement that the word is not to be altered or amended (as in Rev. 22:19) implies that those who receive it are to keep it in physical form and in its understood meaning. Ancient scribes acutely felt the need for this. Great care was put in copying manuscripts and preserving written tradition. Over the years some differences would arise, but the differences arose not over a desire to change the text but to maintain the text. The two are extremely different in purpose.

Every student should note that our doctrines on inspiration go to the original manuscripts. We do not have these today; but due to the great care of men in ancient times, our present-day manuscripts are very much like the originals. This has been the solid conclusion of textual students.

But men, as preservers, had another very important function. Many thousands of books were written in ancient times, and the vast majority of them were not of divine origin. Therefore the role of men was to mark the books of divine character and place them apart from others. This fact immediately raises certain questions: How could men know the right books?