The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 11 June 2023. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Not One Jot Nor Tittle (Part 5)

Matthew 5:18

In the autumn of 2003, a young man named **Nabeel Qureshi** was sitting in a lecture hall at Old Dominion University, next to his best friend, **David Wood**. Nabeel was a devout Muslim; and David was a one-time atheist who had placed his faith in Jesus Christ. For a couple years, Nabeel had been trying to convert David to Islam; and likewise, David had been patiently trying to lead Nabeel to the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, Nabeel, who sincerely believed in Islam, passionately rejected the idea that Jesus could be God—until one day when God began to open his mind and heart to the teaching of the Trinity!

Here's how it happened. As Nabeel and David were sitting in a chemistry class one day, their professor was explaining the "resonance structure" of molecules. ("Resonance structures" are different arrangements of the electrons in a molecule.) She explained that some molecules, such as nitrate, can have *three* completely different resonance structures. But here's what blew Nabeel's mind. She said that when a molecule has more than one resonance structure, it has *all* of those resonance structures *at the same time*! She said, "Technically, a molecule with resonance is **every one of its structures at every point in time**, yet **no single one** of its structures at any point in time!" She could tell they were confused; so she repeated it again. She said, "It's *all* the structures *all* the time, never just one of them."

To Nabeel, this was like a bombshell! How could a molecule be three completely different structures at the same time? As Nabeel himself put it, "[This] would be akin to saying that Nabeel is eating [a] steak in Texas, while simultaneously napping in a hammock in the Caribbean." Everything that his friend David had been showing him from Scripture concerning the Trinity suddenly came rushing to his mind. He began to realise that "if there are things in this world that are three in one, and incomprehensibly so, then why cannot God" be three Persons in one? Years later, as Nabeel was describing this watershed moment in his life, he said, "My eyes rested on the three separate structures of nitrate on the wall, my mind assembling the pieces. One molecule of nitrate is *all* three resonance structures *all* the time, and never just *one* of them. The three are separate, but all the same, and they are one. They are three in one."

In 1 John 5:7, God's Word says, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." This verse is, without question, the most crystal-clear verse on the Trinity in the entire Bible; and, not surprisingly, it is also the most fiercely assaulted verse in the entire Bible. Even many genuine Christians, who do believe in the Trinity, do not believe that this particular verse is Scripture. Why? Because when it comes to the preservation of Scripture, they are not listening to the voice of their Good Shepherd, but to the voice of those who hiss, "Yea, hath God said?"

This past month, we have spent much time focusing on **Matthew 5:18.** Why are we taking so much time on this verse? Because Jesus' promise that He came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it, is inseparably linked to His promise that *not one jot nor tittle* of His word will ever pass away. Brethren, do we believe this? Do we believe that even **1 John 5:7** is Scripture? If so, then we need to be prepared to guard and defend it. Perhaps you weren't even aware that there are Christians who *doubt* that this verse is Scripture! If so, you are about to learn *why* many Christians have had their faith in this verse

undermined. However, you will also learn why we can be sure that this verse, as well as *all* the words of Scripture, have been perfectly preserved by God. The title of this message is *Not One Jot Nor Tittle* (*Part 5*).

Read Matthew 5:17-18.

I. The unbelief of the textual critics

In last week's message, we examined the lives, and the beliefs, or Westcott and Hort—the men who, in 1881, printed a Greek Text which was based upon the corrupted Vaticanus and Sinaiticus manuscripts. As you will recall, these men did *not* believe that the Bible is God's Word! Well, this morning, we will be examining the beliefs of four more men who, just like Westcott and Hort, did not believe that the Bible is God's Word—and who, sadly, have had a profound impact on the production of modern Bibles. Before we do, though, we need to talk about what happened just after Westcott and Hort passed off the scene. In the early 1900's, the British and Foreign Bible Society (which had been filled with apostates ever since its inception in the early 1800's), published a Greek text which was based on the work of a man named Eberhard Nestlé. Nestlé's text was based upon Tischendorf's text (the corrupt Sinaiticus text). It was also based on Westcott and Hort's text; and upon the Weiss text of 1902. All three of these texts were corrupt, to varying degrees; thus, Nestlé's text was simply another "dicing and splicing" of already corrupted texts. Years later, a man named Kurt Aland became the co-editor of this text. Ever since then, this text has been called the Nestlé-Aland Text; and it is now on its 28th edition! The other major Greek text upon which nearly all modern Bibles are based is the **UBS** text (which was produced by the United Bible Societies in 1965). This text was based on the same corrupted texts that the Nestlé-Aland text is based.

Brethren, I cannot stress this strongly enough: the men who put these Greek texts together were apostates! Consider **Kurt Aland.** Aland was educated in the theological rationalism of pre-war Germany; and after WWII, he became one of the major editors of the UBS. This man did not believe in the divine, verbal inspiration of Scripture. He didn't even think that we should accept all the books of the canon! He said that all denominations (including Catholic) should decide on which books of the Bible to remove, so that we can all agree on a text that we like, and achieve the "unity of the faith, the unity of the church." By the way, many modern text critics are suggesting that we remove the book of **Revelation.** After all, why not? (The Vaticanus manuscript left out **Revelation** entirely!) Evidently, these people don't like **Revelation's** end-time prophecies, and its curses on those who tamper with Scripture!

The next man you need to know about is **Bruce Metzger.** This man was, by far, the most influential man in the production of modern Bibles. He was on the board of the American Bible Society, and on the committee of the Revised Standard Version; and he was the head of the translation committee of the National Council of Churches. He was also the chairman of the Reader's Digest Condensed Bible, which chopped out 40% of the Bible! Metzger considered the books of Moses to be a collection of myths and traditions. Needless to say, he denied the Flood of Noah. He believed that **Daniel** was *not* written by Daniel, but by men who lived 300 years after Daniel; and he believed that **Isaiah** was written by three different

authors. He didn't believe that **John** was written by John; that the prison epistles were written by Paul; or that **2 Peter** was written by Peter. He considered **David, Solomon, Job** and **Jonah** to be "myth," "folklore," and "legend."

Another major influencer of modern versions was a Jesuit priest named **Carlo Maria Martini.** He was a professor of the Pontifical Biblical Institute of Rome, which promotes evolution, and denies the verbal inspiration of Scripture. He was a heavy promoter of a new-age, one-world religion; and he promoted the acceptance of homosexuality. This man was also a member of the **World Economic Forum,** founded by Klaus Schwab. What does *that* tell you? The WEF is working overtime to establish a one-world government and economy! Martini literally had a part in constructing the framework for the future kingdom of Antichrist!

Now, one more man you need to know about is **Eugene Nida.** This man played a huge role in the American Bible Society and in the United Bible Societies, starting in 1946. This man popularised what is called "**dynamic equivalency.**" This means "loosely paraphrasing" the Scripture, instead of translating it word-for-word, as closely as possible. According to Nida, "God's revelation involved limitations." He said that "Biblical revelation is not absolute." As for the words of Scripture, he said that "Even if a truth is given only in words, it has no real validity until it has been translated into life." He said that "The words are, in a sense, nothing in and of themselves." Nida also said, "The word is void unless related to experience." Clearly, this man did *not* believe that the Bible is God's Word: rather, he believed that Scripture can be tinkered with by the scholars, so as to produce something "readable" and "relevant," which people can "relate" to their own experience.

Should *these* men be trusted with God's words? Not on your life! Yet, sadly, many Christians unquestioningly accept the corrupted Bibles that *these* men have manufactured! By the way, it's not just the New Testament that these people have corrupted: they have corrupted the *Old* Testament, as well. There are scarcely any "variant texts" of the Old Testament to speak of (other than the Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, which is extremely corrupt): but this doesn't stop them from changing the Old Testament. If they can plug in different vowels to create alternate readings that suit them, they do it; but oftentimes, they just go ahead and change words, without any justification at all! Let's look at some examples.

Read 2 Samuel 15:1-7.

In this passage, the Hebrew clearly says *m'qetz arbaiym shanah—"after forty years."* Yet, most modern versions change the word "forty" to "four." Why do the translators change this word? Because they don't believe either in the inspiration, or preservation, of Scripture! Since Absalom couldn't have been 40 years old, they conclude that an "error" was made either by the original author, or by copyists. However, they fail to consider that God wasn't talking about Absalom's age. He was talking about something else. Think about it. What had happened 40 years earlier? David had won the hearts of Israel by slaying Goliath. But now, 40 years later, David's son, Absalom, stole the hearts of Israel by using flattering words. That was the point God was making. However, men like Metzger and Nida do not hear the voice of the Shepherd, because they are not His sheep. Let's look at another example.

Read 2 Chronicles 36:9 and 2 Kings 24:8.

In most modern versions, the word "eight" is changed to "eighteen," even though the Hebrew clearly says sh'monah ("eight"). Why do modern translators change this word? Because they don't believe either in the inspiration, or the preservation, of Scripture. Since 2 Kings 24:8 says that Jehoiachin was "eighteen" years old, they conclude that the author of 2 Kings was right, and that the author of 2 Chronicles was wrong. However, they fail to consider that Jehoiachin's grandfather, King Josiah, had adopted him as his own son when he was eight years old, with the intention of making him king instead of his son. Officially, Jehoiachin was appointed as the next king at age eight. God was right all along; and the UBS is wrong!

Many more examples could be given. In 2 Chronicles 22:2, the NIV, NASB, NLT, ESV, RSV, ASV, Living Bible, Good News Bible, and almost every other modern version, change the number "forty-two" to "twenty-two." They fail to consider that there was a good reason why God said that wicked King Ahaziah was the "son of forty-two years." In God's eyes, Ahaziah was more spiritually related to wicked king Omri, whose dynasty had begun 42 years earlier, than he was to his righteous ancestor, King David. Yet, modern translators do not hear the voice of the Good Shepherd in this verse. In Isaiah 9:2, every modern version (including the NKJV) says, "You have increased the nation, and increased the joy"—even though the Hebrew clearly says "Thou hast increased the nation, and not increased the joy." They simply take out the word "not," because they refuse to believe that that God gave this word to Isaiah. In Zechariah 9:9, Isaiah wrote, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." Yet, many modern versions leave out the words "and having salvation"—even though the Hebrew clearly says w'nosha' ("and having salvation"). Why this denial of Jesus' mission—the mission of bringing salvation? Perhaps because they have not experienced salvation, and God is not their Father. Speaking of spiritual fathers, consider this Scripture.

Read Isaiah 14:12.

In Hebrew, the word *heylel* means "bright or shining one"; and in our King James Version, this word is legitimately rendered as "Lucifer" (which means "light bearer"). Yet, many modern versions translate *heylel* as "Day Star" or "Morning Star." These are *not* legitimate translations of *heylel* at all! In fact, this is *very* disturbing—because "day star" and "morning star" just happen to be the precious names of *the Lord Jesus Christ*, in 2 Peter 1:19, Revelation 2:28, and Revelation 22:16! Some versions, such as the NASV, even put that 2 Peter 1:19 passage (which refers to Christ) as a *cross-reference* for Isaiah 14:12—thus creating the impression that *Jesus* is the one who was cast out of Heaven!

Brethren, could it be that the *unbelief* of men such as Aland, Metzger, Martini, and Nida, had some bearing on these false renderings of Scripture? Could their apostate beliefs have influenced the Bibles they produced? Does it not matter that these men were apostates? Many modern theologians tell us that it *doesn't* matter what these men's personal beliefs were, because textual criticism is a "science." "After all," they say, "if my car needs to be fixed, it doesn't matter if the mechanic is a heretic, so long as he knows how to fix my car." But is this right thinking? We're not talking about cars, folks: we're talking about *God's holy word!* We do not have the right to tamper with it! Brethren, we must decide to whose voice we will listen! Will we listen to the voice of men who don't believe in the inspiration and preservation of God's Word? Or will we listen to the voice of our Shepherd, Jesus Christ?

II. The critics' rejection of John 8 and Mark 16

One of the most powerful examples of Jesus' mercy and forgiveness is the account of the woman who was caught in adultery. We all know this wonderful story; yet, these 12 verses are

left out of the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus manuscripts! Now, no modern translators are daring enough to leave this passage out of their Bibles. It would be too glaringly obvious, and would cause a firestorm of controversy. However, they do *cast doubt* upon this passage, by inserting footnotes which state that "This passage is *not* in the oldest and best manuscripts." *Why* do they discredit these verses? Because, just like Origen of old, they don't believe that Jesus could forgive such a terrible sin as adultery! Let's look at that passage.

Read John 7:53 - 8:11.

At the outset of this story, we find Jesus in the Temple, where He is having a "Bible study" with His flock (His church members). However, the study was interrupted by the Pharisees, who dragged in a woman who had just been caught in the act of adultery. They demanded that Jesus make a judgment about what to do with this woman. Obviously, this was a set-up, for the purpose of trapping Jesus. If Jesus said to stone her, then He would seem to be going against His own teachings about forgiveness and mercy: but if He said *not* to stone her, He would appear to be going against the Law of Moses. However, Jesus met them on their own ground. He didn't ignore the Law: He upheld it! The Law required that the *husband* of an adulteress make the charge against her: but the husband, strangely, was not present. Secondly, the Law required that *both* the adulterer and adulteress be stoned; yet, the adulterer was not there. Why? Probably because he had been hired by the Pharisees to seduce this woman! Thirdly, the Law required that the eyewitnesses cast the first stone at an adulterer. The eyewitnesses would have been present, of course; yet, for some reason, they all slunk away quietly. Why? Clearly, it was because of what Jesus was writing on the ground!

What was Jesus writing? Whatever it was, it must have been something very incriminating against this woman's accusers! Jesus, being God, knew all about these men's secret lives: and undoubtedly, He was writing these men's names in the dust, along with their hidden sins. In shock and fear, they all went away. The eyewitnesses didn't dare take Jesus up on His invitation to cast the first stone, because Jesus had just laid bare *their* wickedness.

Yet, the most amazing part of this account is what Jesus said to the woman. Looking compassionately at the woman (who was probably clutching to a bedsheet), Jesus asked, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" When she answered, "No man, Lord," Jesus responded, "Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more." Isn't it strange that Jesus didn't say anything about the need for her to believe on Him, as He had done with so many other people? Why is that? Most likely, because she had already believed on Jesus at some point! I believe that this woman was a disciple of Jesus, who should have been in her church's Bible study that day, but who, instead, had given into temptation, and had been caught in her sin. Jesus didn't need to tell her to believe on Him, because she had already done so. However, she did need to be told to "go, and sin no more."

My friends, this is the kind of Saviour that we serve—a Saviour who freely forgives and cleanses His children! Even when we fail miserably, and are in great need of cleansing, He still judicially sees us as "righteous," for Jesus' sake! Romans 8 says, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." In contrast, those who reject Jesus are like those Pharisees, whose names Jesus wrote in the dust. When you write something in the dust, it doesn't last long, does it? It is soon rubbed out, and forgotten. So it will be with those who reject Christ. Those who go off into eternity without Christ's imputed righteousness will have their names removed from the Book of Life. Jeremiah 17:13 says, "O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters."

Aren't you glad that God *preserved* the 203 words of **John 7:53 – 8:11?** I am! I'm also glad that God preserved all of **Mark 16** (of which the Critical Text omits half). Let's look at it.

Read Mark 16:9-21.

Did Jesus really rise from the grave? Yes! Did He really appear in another form to the disciples from Emmaus? Yes! Did He really say, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved"? Yes! We don't need to apologise for Mark 16:16, as many Baptist pastors who believe in the Critical Text do. We don't need to say, "Well, this verse probably isn't Scripture anyway." No, Jesus' meaning is clear. Baptism doesn't save us: but those who truly believe on Jesus will desire to obey Him, by being baptised. For 2,000 years, God has preserved this verse, and all the other verses in this passage; and no matter how many heretics have tried to remove it, it still stands, because it is the Word of God! "Believest thou this," Christian?

III. The critics' rejection of 1 John 5:7-8

Read Isaiah 34:16.

In this passage, Isaiah says, "no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate." What is He talking about? He's talking about "the book of the LORD"—the Scriptures! In the Scriptures, God often confirms a truth at least twice, if not many times. God's truths have many "mates"—other passages that say the same thing. So then, if there are plenty of "mates" to confirm a certain teaching of Scripture, is God satisfied with less than 100% preservation of His words? Does He say, "Well, nine out of ten ain't bad. I don't need to preserve all the texts that teach this truth"? No, God preserves and "gathers" them all. So it is with the Scripture's teaching of the Trinity. Are there plenty of Scripture passages that teach the Trinity? Definitely! However, that's not good enough for God. God promised to preserve every "mate" (in this case, every passage that teaches the Trinity); and He has done just that!

Read 1 John 5:7-8. (This verse is called "The Johannine Comma.")

Brethren, there is no Scripture that teaches the Trinity more clearly than **1 John 5:7-8.** Yet, the main part of these two verses is left out of the Critical Text! Particularly, the words, "in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth," are left out. *Every modern English version* except one follows the Critical Text, and leaves out those words about the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost.

Now, we shouldn't be surprised by this. We would *expect* the Devil to wage war against this verse, because it is the most crystal-clear statement about the Godhead in the entire Bible. A person's very *salvation* depends upon what he believes about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God has revealed Himself to us; and we *must believe* God's revelation of Himself! Yet, to what *extent* has this particular revelation been assailed? Well, you may be surprised to know that of the 500 ancient Greek copies of **1 John 5** which follow the Received Text readings, only 9 contain **1 John 5:7-8**; and four of these copies have the verse written in the margin, rather than in the text itself. It also is not found in many ancient translations.

So, that settles it, right? Erasmus must have been mistaken when he included this verse in his Greek New Testament. Even the overwhelming majority of Received Text manuscripts leave it out. Surely if Erasmus had known how little support there is for this verse, and how *recent* the manuscripts were (from the 900's, 1100's, 1300's, 1400's, and 1500's), he wouldn't have published this verse, right? **Wrong!** Erasmus was *very* aware of how few copies there were of this verse; but he published it, anyway. For him, it wasn't a matter of "science": he heard the voice of the *Saviour* in this verse. And so do I! This is a hill that I would be willing to "die on," folks! If enemies of the Gospel were to put a gun to my head and command me to deny that **1 John 5:7-8** is Scripture, I would say, with absolute confidence, "**First John 5:7-8** is the Word of God!" *Why* would I be so sure of this? For several reasons.

First of all, **it makes grammatical sense.** I'm not going to go into the technicalities of Greek syntax; but suffice it to say that when the Johannine Comma is removed, the grammar is incoherent. The words "For there are three that bear record," at the beginning of verse 7, do not join grammatically with the words "the spirit, the water, and the blood" at the end of verse 8. You are left with three neuter subjects in verse 8 (the words, "spirit, water, and blood"), and a masculine antecedent in verse 7. This makes no sense.

Secondly, the Johannine Comma makes **contextual sense.** When the "comma" is included, you have what is called, in Hebrew, a "chiastic poetry structure." This means that you begin with one thought, then move to the "mountain peak" thought in the middle, then return to the first thought. Being a Jew, John would have found this style natural. First, John mentions three *earthly* witnesses—the "water," the "blood," and the "Spirit." (The "water" refers to Jesus' baptism; the "blood" refers to His crucifixion; and the "Spirit" refers to the moment

when the Holy Spirit descended on Christ like a dove.) Secondly, in **verse 7**, John mentions the three *heavenly* witnesses—"the Father," "the Word," and the "Holy Ghost." (This is the "mountain peak" thought.) Finally, in **verse 8**, John returns to the three earthly witnesses—"the Spirit," "the water," and "the blood." If you leave out the middle part (the part about the three heavenly witnesses), there is no chiastic structure, and the context is awkward.

Why else do I believe that **1 John 5:7** is Scripture? Because it was quoted, or cited, by many ancient writers. It was cited by Tertullian around A.D. 215; by Cyprian around A.D. 250; by Priscillian around A.D. 385; by Vigilus around A.D. 490; by Cassiodorus in the late 400's; and by many others. It is found in an Old Latin manuscript from the 400's; and it is in Jerome's Latin Vulgate. Overall, this verse seems to have been preserved in the *Latin West*.

In light of all this, we now come to the question: "Why was this one verse almost completely omitted from the Greek manuscripts of the East, even though the Greeks preserved the rest of the New Testament so perfectly?" It could be for one of two reasons. First of all, from about A.D. 220 to 270, there was a false teaching called **Sebellianism** which was raging in the East. Sebellianism taught that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are little more than names. In other words, they saw no distinction between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They did *not* believe that God is three Persons in one God. Though they believed that "Jesus is God," what they meant by this is that Jesus is the Father, and is the Spirit. They believed that the Father suffered on the cross: thus, they were called Patripassians ("Father-sufferers"). It was probably during this time, when Sebellianism was all the rage, that copyists all over the East purposely left out this one verse. Of course, Origen and his crowd left out this verse, as well, because they were **Arians.** Arianism was a heresy which sprang up shortly after Sebellianism. Arianism taught that Jesus was *created* by God, and that he is not eternally existent. The followers of Arianism would gladly have omitted 1 John 5:7-8, as well. Yet, despite these assaults from the enemy, 1 John 5:7 survived. God orchestrated for this one powerful witness of the Triune Godhead to be reunited with its "mates." Even though the Latin Vulgate was corrupt in many ways, God used it to enshrine this verse. He can do this, because He is God!

Read Amos 9:8-9.

God promised that even though He would scatter Israel over the face of the earth, He would preserve the righteous among them. Just as a sieve sifts out all the chaff and dirt, but doesn't allow the good grain to fall to the ground, so God promised that not even *one* good "grain" would be lost. Brethren, so it is with God's words. If God protect His "grain" (those who are saved) with such care, that not even one "falls to the earth" (or perishes), why would He allow even one "grain" of His Word to perish? He wouldn't! Jesus promised that till heaven and earth pass, not one jot nor tittle of the Law will pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled.

Conclusion: Over the past five Sundays, we have looked at much historical evidence concerning the preservation of God's Word. Yet, this is not a matter of "science." If "science" determined whether 1

John 5:7 were Scripture, the case would look bleak. Yet, God's ways are not man's ways. He can preserve His Word in any way He wishes. Satan did his best to destroy this verse; but God brought it all back together. Christian, take courage! *Believe* Jesus' promise that He will preserve *all* His words! As we close, I would also ask: "Are you saved?" Perhaps you find it impossible to believe that Jesus could forgive a person for a sin like adultery, right on the spot. If so, you do not understand the grace of God! *None* of us can get to Heaven by our own righteousness. You and I need a righteousness that is not our own. You need *Jesus* 'perfect righteousness to be placed on your account. If you will repent of your sin, and trust in *Christ alone* to save you, He will give you a wonderful new life! Won't you come to Him?

¹ Nabeel Qureshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective, 2018), p. 194.

² *Ibid*.

³ *Ibid*, p. 195.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 196.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 195.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 119.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 122.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.