

BASIC BIBLE PRINCIPLES

PREACHING THE GOSPEL

There are several Greek words translated 'preach' in the New Testament. Two of the most common, following Strong's transliteration, are *euaggelizō* and *kerussō*. According to Strong, *euaggelizō* is made up of the Greek word *eu*, meaning 'good', and *aggelos*, meaning 'angel' or 'messenger'. It is the verb of the Greek word *euaggelion*, which means 'gospel' or 'good news'. For this reason *euaggelizō* is sometimes translated not just as 'preach' but as 'preach the gospel'. *Kerussō* simply means to 'preach', 'proclaim' or 'publish'. An example of where the two words occur together is found when the Lord Jesus quoted a prophecy about himself from the words of Isaiah:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel [*euaggelizō*] to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach [*kerussō*] deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach [*kerussō*] the acceptable year of the Lord" (Lk. 4:18,19).

Preaching in the Old Testament

The deliverance of which the Lord Jesus was speaking in Luke 4 is the deliverance from the captivity of sin and death. The need to deliver people from this 'prison' is a theme of preaching from Genesis onwards. As Peter shows, those to whom Noah preached were spiritually in a prison:

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water" (1 Pet. 3:18-20).

Paul confirms that the idea of preaching, and the gospel itself, are to be found in Genesis:

"And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Gal. 3:8).

The Lord Jesus and the disciples preached primarily about the Kingdom: "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom . . ." (Mt. 4:23); "And [Jesus] sent [the twelve] to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick" (Lk. 9:2). After Christ's death and resurrection the content of the preaching was expanded to include things about the Lord Jesus Christ as well. The Kingdom and Jesus Christ are portrayed in Scripture as the two main themes of preaching:

"But when [the Samaritans] believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12);

". . . preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him [Paul]" (28:31).

The command to preach

Preaching is essential because it is the way in which others are able to believe in the gospel: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14).

The disciples were given a command to preach to all the world: "And [Jesus] said unto them [the eleven disciples], Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15). This command was fulfilled before the end of the Jewish commonwealth in A.D. 70: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Mt. 24:14). In fact the command had been fulfilled by the time Paul wrote the letter to the Colossians: ". . . if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister" (1:23).

When the Kingdom of God is established the gospel will once more be preached to all the world: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6).

Although the command to preach to all the world was long ago fulfilled by the apostles, brethren and sisters should still be a shining light to those around them:

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Which is in heaven" (Mt. 5:14-16);

"but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15);

"preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2).

We have a responsibility to preach to others about the coming judgements of God upon the earth:

"But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand" (Ezek. 33:6).

Christ said: "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give" (Mt. 10:8). Unlike the twelve apostles, to whom these words were addressed, we have not received the Holy Spirit to enable us to perform miracles, but we have received freely the gospel. We should therefore "freely give" to others the good news of the Kingdom.

How should we preach?

We should:

- preach to all who will listen (Acts 28:30)
- preach with confidence (v. 31)
- not preach with "wisdom of words" (1 Cor. 1:17)
- only preach the true gospel (Gal. 1:8)
- preach with sincerity and goodwill (Phil. 1:15)
- be "blameless and harmless" and "shine as lights in the world" (2:15)
- preach with warning and teaching (Col. 1:28).

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