

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PREACH CHRIST?

Acts 8:1-12

I. INTRODUCTION: I

- I. 2 Many messages are preached from the pulpit in “churches” today:
 - A. Social reform and active involvement in politics (e.g., “mainline denominations” and “evangelicals”).
 - B. On the Pope’s recent visit to the U.S. he talked a good deal about the income equality produced by capitalism and the “danger” posed by global warming.
 - C. Some preach the health, wealth, and prosperity gospel (e.g., Pentecostals),
 - D. Those espousing the social gospel claim to “minister to the whole man.”
 - (1) In response they build, maintain and rent “fellowship halls” (for dining and renting to Boy Scout troop, Weight Watchers groups, etc. Example of Wesleyan Church in Sanilac County).
 - (2) They build and maintain recreational facilities (gymnasiums, softball diamonds, etc.) day-care centers, softball teams, basketball leagues, etc.
 - (3) They promote and stage lavish Christmas and Easter programs, concerts, drama productions.
 - (4) They build secular schools which teach the three R’s and make these schools an arm of the church (preschool, elementary, secondary and colleges).
 - (5) They sponsor meals on wheels, homeless shelters, etc.
 - (6) These various manifestations of the “social gospel are not limited to denominational churches as these things are built, maintained and practiced by many “liberal” churches of Christ.
2. Are the denominations and digressive churches of Christ right?
 - A. Are they preaching the correct message?
 - B. So: “What message needs to be preached from the pulpit?”
3. There is no greater need in our pulpits today than a reminder to preach only Christ (denominations and liberals would agree with that!).
4. 3 What does it mean to preach only Christ? What saith the Scriptures?

II. DISCUSSION:

To preach Christ means to:

- I. 4 Preach the word:
 - A. In Acts 8:4 when the early church in Jerusalem was being persecuted, especially by Saul, Luke said, “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere *preaching the word*.”
 - (1) In that same chapter (8:25) Luke describes the work of Peter and John, “So when they had testified and preached the **word of the Lord**, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.” (Note equivalence of “preached the word of the Lord” with “preaching the gospel”; Rom. 1:16-17).
 - (2) Paul instructed the young evangelist Timothy: “Preach the word!” (2 Tim. 4:1-2: “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: 2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”).
 - B. Why is it so essential to “Preach the word!”?
 - (1) Because Jesus is the “Word”:

Jn. 1:1-2: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”*

Jn. 1:14: *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”* (1 Cor. 2—God reveals Himself only through the “Word”!).

☛ So if we imitate the church found in the Bible we will “*preach the word*” because to “*preach the word*” means we are preaching “*Christ*”; it means we are “*preaching the gospel*”!

(2) It is so important to “*preach the word*” because we will be judged by the word:

Jn. 12:48-50: *“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him; the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. “For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. 50 “And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.”*

☛ If we are going to be judged by the “word” (i.e., Jesus) then we are foolish to the extreme to preach any other message. To preach any other message than Jesus is to do ourselves a grave injustice and we do a grave injustice to those we seek to persuade.

(3) It is also important to “*preach the word*” because “*the word*” saves us! Rom. 1:16-17; 10:17

Acts 2:40: *“And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation.’”*

Acts 11:12-14: *“Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house. 13 And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, ‘Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, 14 who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.’”*

Acts 20:32: *“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”*

C. **5** In Acts chapter 20, as we just read, Luke reveals the nature of Paul’s preaching:

(1) Paul preached the “*whole counsel of God*,” and was thus, “*innocent of the blood of all men*” (Acts 20:26-27; cf. Ezek. 3 & 33).

(2) This was in perfect harmony with Paul’s instructions to evangelists Timothy and Titus.

(a) In 2 Timothy 4:2 Paul instructed Timothy to, “*Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.*”

(b) He gave similar instructions to Titus (Titus 2:1: “*But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine.*”).

(c) Why was Paul so urgent in his instructions? (Reiterate previous points just covered; **1 Tim. 4:16:** “*Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.*”). We must always remember what’s at stake!

(d) Plus, Paul knew the time would come (like today!) when those claiming to God’s people would not preach Christ. Notice that Paul’s admonition to Timothy to “*preach the Word*” is really a preface to his remarks in verses 3 and 4 of 2 Timothy: “*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.*”

D. Just think how sad it was when the Pope visited the U.S.

- (1) He had the opportunity to speak in front of millions of people (live and on TV).
- (2) What a wonderful opportunity! Rom. 1:16-17 The folks he spoke to needed the same thing Cornelius and his household needed: **Acts 11:14**: “words by which you and all your household will be saved.”
- (3) But, instead he spoke to them about the things of this world (economics, climate, etc.).
- (4) ** Truly the day has come when “they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” (2 Tim. 4:3-4)

To preach Christ means to:

2. 6 Preach the things concerning the kingdom of God:

- A. Again in the 8th chapter of Acts verse 12 notice how Luke describes the preaching of the first century Christians, “...they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.” Thus, to preach Christ means to preach about His kingdom.
- B. In **Matthew 16:18-19** we find that the kingdom is synonymous with the church, Jesus said, ““And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 “And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”“
- C. Some say the kingdom has not yet come, but this is not what Jesus said.
 - (1) In Mark 9:1 Jesus said, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.”
 - (2) So Jesus said the kingdom or church would be established during the lifetime of some of those living in His day.
 - (3) He also said the establishment of the kingdom or the church would be evidenced by “power.”
- D. We find the fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy of Matthew 16 and Mark 9 being fulfilled in the first two chapters of the book of Acts.
 - (1) In Luke 24:49 after His resurrection Jesus told the apostles they would be endued with power from on high very soon in the city of Jerusalem. Jesus said, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with **power** from on high.”
 - (2) In Acts 1:8 Jesus tells them what this power is, “But you shall receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
 - (3) Then in Acts 2:1-4 we find Jesus fulfilling His prophecy concerning the “power” or the “coming of the Holy Spirit.” Luke records that “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”
 - (4) The coming of the Holy Spirit is then directly followed by Peter delivering the very first gospel sermon and using the “keys of the kingdom” Jesus promised him in Matthew 16.
Acts 2:21: “And it shall come to pass That **whoever calls on the name of the LORD** Shall be saved.’

Acts 2: 36: *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”*

- (5) In Acts 2:37 those whose hearts were reached by Peter’s sermon cried out: *“Men and brethren what must we do to be saved?”* Peter promptly answered them in verse 38: *“Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins...”* (Acts 2:41)
 - (6) Upon their obedience to God’s call notice what the Lord did for those being saved, (2:47): *“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”*
 - (7) Thus the church or the kingdom which heretofore was described as *“being at hand”* or *“being near”* is now in existence and the saved are being added to it.
- E. The fact that the saved are in the church is reiterated by Paul in the book of Ephesians and Colossians. In **Ephesians 1:22-23** Paul says, *“And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”*
- (1) So Jesus is the head of the church/kingdom and the church/kingdom is His body.
 - (2) Now in **Ephesians 5:23** Paul said, *“...Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.”* So not only is the church/kingdom Christ’s body over which He is head, the church/kingdom contains the saved, just as Luke told us in Acts 2:47.
 - (3) But the saved are also in the kingdom: **Colossians 1:13** Paul said, *“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,”* So when our sins are remitted through baptism God delivers us from the *“power of darkness”* by *“conveying us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,”* or in Luke’s words by, *“Adding us to the church.”*
 - (4) Thus, if we are going to *“preach Christ”* we must preach about His church, about His kingdom, because that is the only place where the saved abide. If we don’t preach about the church we are not *“preaching Christ”* and we cannot tell folks how to be saved!!

To preach Christ means to:

3. 7 Preach “in the name of Jesus Christ”:

- A. Remember that we pointed out in Acts 8:12 that Philip preached things concerning the kingdom of God, but also notice what else Philip preached, *“...they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.”*
- B. One aspect of doing something in the name of Jesus means doing it by Jesus’ authority. So what Philip preached was by the authority of Jesus, meaning it was “sanctioned or approved” by Jesus.
- C. In **Matthew 28:18** Jesus said, *“all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”*
- D. To preach by Jesus’ authority means we preach and do everything he said, nothing more and nothing less.
 - (1) Notice what Paul says in **Colossians 3:17**: *“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”*
 - (2) Why is it so important to preach only what Jesus authorized?
 - (a) Remember **Jn. 12:48**: *“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him; the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.”*
 - (b) If we do not abide in the teaching authorized by Christ we are lost (**2 Jn. 9**: *“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.”*).
 - (c) Thus, to practice or preach anything else other than what Christ authorized as revealed in the New Testament is to practice and preach a doctrine that separates us from God!!

- (d) Don't be deceived, on the surface such unauthorized doctrine and practice may appear harmless, but notice what Jesus has to say about it:

Matt. 7:21-23: *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"*

E. Did the church in the New Testament involve itself in a "social mission" like "churches" today?

- (1) Did the church at Jerusalem, Ephesus, or Philippi have soup kitchens to feed the poor?
- (2) Did the churches in the NT have a fellowship hall to provide for the social needs of the brethren?
- (3) Did the churches in the NT have gymnasiums and softball diamonds to provide for the recreational needs of the saints?
- (4) Obviously the answer is NO, because those things are not part of the threefold mission of the church as revealed in the NT which is to preach the gospel, to provide for the spiritual edification of the saints, and to provide for needy saints. Is it wrong for a Christian to provide for the poor, to provide for non-Christians in need? No! I Tim. 3:15: pillar and ground of the truth

Gal. 6:10: *"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."*; Matt. 25:31-46

- (5) But the point is this—it is not a work of the church because it is not part of the God-given mission of the church.
- (6) Is it wrong for a Christian to play basketball or softball? No! But again the point is this—it is not a work of the church, because it is not a part of the God-given mission of the church.

To preach Christ means to:

4. 8 Preach baptism:

- A. In Acts 8 we have the record of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch by Philip.
 - (1) As the eunuch struggled to understand Isaiah chapter 53 Philip joined him in the chariot and *"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him."* (Acts 8:35)
 - (2) What does it mean to preach Jesus? We find out in the very next verse (Acts 8:36): *"Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, 'See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?'"*
 - (a) There is nothing in Isaiah 53 about baptism, so why in the world did the eunuch ask Philip if he could be baptized?
 - (b) Because preaching Jesus means preaching baptism! Jesus shed His blood for the remission of our sins! Baptism is where we come into contact with that blood! (Rom. 6)
- B. Why does preaching Jesus mean preaching baptism? Because of what Jesus said in **Mark 16:15-16:** *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."*
- C. The world, including so-called followers of Jesus, come up with many reasons why baptism is not essential for salvation.
 - (1) But at sunset and sunrise every day, Jesus still said *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved."*

- (2) Who will be saved? *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved"*?
- (3) When the world is on fire, Mark 16:16 will still say, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved."*
- (4) So, if we preach Christ we will preach the necessity of baptism!!
- (5) To do otherwise is not following the authority of Christ and as John pointed out in 2 Jn. 9 we are no longer abiding in the doctrine of Christ, and we no longer have God! Gal. 1:6-9

To preach Christ means to:

5. 9 Preach the gospel of Christ:

- A. In Acts 8:25 we pointed out the preaching of Peter and John, notice once again the text, *"So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans."*
- B. Why is preaching the good news of Jesus so important? Very simply because the gospel saves us!!
1 Corinthians 15:1-2: *"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you; unless you believed in vain."*
Rom. 1:16: *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."*
Col. 1:21-23: *"And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight; 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister."*
2 Tim. 1:8-10: *"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, 10 but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,"*
- C. We are saved by the gospel because as Paul states, **(Rom. 1:17):** *"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'"*
 - (1) We learn about God's righteousness and thus about what we must do in order to be righteous in His sight through the gospel.
 - (2) We must ever be on guard that we preach the true, pure gospel of Christ, and the true gospel of Christ is revealed ONLY in the New Testament.
 - (3) Notice Paul's admonition about preaching the true gospel, **(Gal. 1:6-9):** *"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed."*
 - (4) Whenever what we or others preach cannot be supported by book, chapter, and verse as found in the Bible; then we are accursed because we have moved on to another gospel which cannot save us or save those to whom we preach!

III. CONCLUSION: 10

1. Brethren our mission and goal is very simple: We must continue to preach Christ and only Christ! If we preach any other message we might as well lock the doors of this building and throw away the keys, because we are not preaching a message that can save men and women's souls!
2. If we try to draw people to God's salvation by ministering to their physical needs or their social needs we are doomed to failure (Whatever you draw people with that's what it takes to keep them!!).
3. Folks in the first century were not drawn to God by a chicken dinner in the church fellowship hall or by being invited to play shortstop on the church softball team.
 - A. They were not drawn by speeches about social and economic justice or climate change.
 - B. They were drawn to God by the gospel of Jesus Christ:

2 Thess. 2:13-14: *"But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, 14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Rom. 2:16: *"in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."*

1 Cor. 15:1-2: *"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you; unless you believed in vain."*

2 Thess. 1:7-9: *"and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,"*

4. Preaching Christ only and His gospel is the only thing that can save us.
5. If we preach Christ only we will only be Christians we won't be "hyphenated" Christians! We won't be Catholic-Christians, or Lutheran-Christians, or Presbyterian-Christians, or Methodist-Christians, or Baptist-Christians, or members of any other denomination: we will **ONLY** be Christians!
6. In **Acts 4:10-12** Peter said, *"let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. 11 This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone. 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*
 - A. Are you looking for salvation in the right place? Salvation can only be found in Christ.
 - B. Salvation is only revealed in His gospel. To be added to Jesus' church, the body of the saved, He requires that you only obey His gospel as revealed in the New Testament.
 - C. He doesn't ask you to obey the Catholic or Lutheran catechisms, or to obey the *Methodist Discipline* or *The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches*. Jesus only wants you to obey His gospel.
 - D. Obeying the gospel of Christ will make you only two things:
 - (1) A Christian, nothing more, nothing less.
 - (2) A member of Christ's body—the saved.
 - E. If you are subject to Christ's invitation won't you come forward while we sing?