

## Types of Preaching

I Timothy 4:13: Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Preaching is the primary Biblical method of publicly and powerfully declaring the truth of the word of God. It means to teach with authority, to instruct with boldness, to inform with zeal, to communicate with power. Mere teaching affects only the mind, but preaching affects also the heart (see Act 5:42; 15:35; 28:31). Preaching is not a *lecture*, but important information will be presented. Preaching is not a *play*, but, at times, dramatic and humorous material will be conveyed. Preaching is not a *legal proceeding*, but weighty and significant matters will be related. Preaching is not an *interview*, but the personality of the preacher will shine through. Preaching is not a *debate*, but strong reasons for particular points will be argued. Preaching is not a *political speech*, but the audience will be moved with excitement and fervor. Preaching is not a *motivational talk*, but the listeners will be encouraged and moved to action. It is a means of manifesting—through, among other things, showing (“reading”; see also Luke 8:1), teaching (“doctrine”; see also Matthew 11:1), and exhorting (“exhortation”; see also Luke 3:18) (see **Colossians 1:27-28**)—Biblical truth.

### Topical and Expository Preaching

The content of a sermon will be largely determined on the basis of an essentially dichotomous choice the preacher makes as to what kind of a sermon he will preach: **topical** or **expository**. Because good preaching is always Biblical preaching (see II Timothy 4:2), the difference between these two kinds of sermons is largely one of emphasis: will the preacher be focusing upon a *topic* or a *text*? A topical sermon asks, “What does the Bible say about this topic?” An expository sermon asks, “What can be said from the Bible about this text?” Both kinds of sermons leave the congregation with clear and edifying wisdom from the scripture, but they do so from different paths. In a topical sermon, the preacher determines the main point(s), whereas in an expository sermon, the scriptural text determines the main point(s). Good preachers will engage in both kinds of preaching, as there are unique benefits to each. Consider that Jesus preached both topical (Matthew 13:3) and expository (Luke 4:16-27) sermons.

### New Testament Sermon-Analysis

#### **Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount** (Matthew 5-7)

*Setting:* a mountain (Matthew 5:1)

*Main Theme:* Christian Living

*Outline:*

5:3-16: Beatitudes and virtuous living

5:17-48: Magnifying the law

6:1-23: Secret Christian duties

6:24-34: Against anxiety/covetousness

7:1-6: Biblical judgment

7:7-12: Prayer

7:13-23: Warning about false prophets/false brethren

7:24-29: Grand parable conclusion

*Scripture-Use:* Jesus has copious scriptural-quotation early on in his sermon (Matthew 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43), making statements with strong Biblical allusion (compare Matthew 5:5 with Psalm 37:11; Matthew 5:48 with Genesis 17:1; Matthew 7:23 with Psalm 6:8).

*Key Observations:* Jesus has a very strong introduction and conclusion which illumine the listeners on his main theme and make it memorable (Matthew 7:1-16; 7:24-29). He is very practical and helpful in the deeds he enjoins (e.g., Matthew 6:1-4). He gives strong reasons why we should accept his teachings (e.g., Matthew 7:15-20)

### **Jesus' Olivet Discourse** (Matthew 24/Mark 13/Luke 21)

*Setting:* The mount of Olives (Matthew 24:3)

*Main Theme:* End-Times Events

*Outline:*

- vv. 4-8: Preliminary signs
- vv. 9-25: Persecution and deception
- vv. 26-31: The Second Coming
- vv. 32-41: Didactic parables
- vv. 42-51: Exhortative parables

*Scripture-Use:* Jesus quotes/alludes to relevant prophetic literature as he preaches (compare Matthew 24:15 with Daniel 11:31; Matthew 24:29 with Isaiah 13:10 and Joel 2:10), and sometimes uses Biblical stories to illustrate his points (“the days of Noah,” Matthew 24:37-39; see also the possibly transposed “days of Lot,” Luke 17:28-29).

*Key Observations:* Though Jesus was preaching to only a few of his disciples (**Mark 13:3**), he preached a masterful sermon. He gave clear and certain wisdom concerning what to expect in the end-times, and did not merely give content, but moreover exhorted from the information delivered.

### **Peter's Pentecost-Day Sermon** (Acts 2:14-40)

*Setting:* Public area of Jerusalem (Acts 2:2, 14)

*Main Theme:* The Gifts and Resurrection of Christ

*Outline:*

- vv. 14-15: Introduction
- vv. 16-21: Quotation of Joel and (presumably) explanation
- vv. 22-24: Summary of Christ's work
- vv. 25-35: Biblical and apostolic evidence of the resurrection
- vv. 36-40: Conclusion, application, and exhortation

*Scripture-Use:* Peter uses scripture to give Biblical reasons for the activity the audience was witnessing (Joel 2:28-32), grounding their tongue-gifts and subsequent evangelism therewith in Biblical expectation. He argues for his main point from the Psalms (compare Acts 2:25-28 with Psalm 16:8-11; Acts 2:34-35 with Psalm 110:1), even quoting the Psalm 16 passage in full to (likely) give its primary context first, and proceed to apply it to the case of Christ.

*Key Observations:* Peter makes a strong case from messianic texts to convince the people of his main point. He employs logical reasoning to deduce the ramifications of the texts (see Acts 2:29-31, 34), and thereby leaves the audience with no room for disagreement. He concludes with great power (Acts 2:36), and proceeds to exhort them thereafter (v. 38-40). Peter's sermon had a profound impact, resulting in 3,000 salvations and baptisms (v. 41).

### **Peter's Solomon's-Porch Sermon (Acts 3:12-26)**

*Setting:* In "Solomon's porch" of the temple (Acts 3:11)

*Main Theme:* The Resurrection and Prophethood of Jesus

*Outline:*

- vv. 12-13a: Introduction, praise to Jesus for the miracle
- vv. 13b-18: The story of Christ
- vv. 19-26: Call to repentance, and submission to Christ

*Scripture-Use:* Peter gives the historical background of Christ, referring back to figures such as Barabbas and Pilate (v. 13). He appeals generally (vv. 18, 21, 24) and specifically (vv. 22-23) to Biblical evidence to make his argument (compare also Acts 3:25 with Genesis 12:3/22:18).

*Key Observations:* This sermon seems to have been abruptly ended by the coming of the Sadducees and their arrest of the apostles (Acts 4:1-3). The sermon was probably very long, lasting between 2-3 hours (compare Acts 3:1, "the ninth hour [3:00pm]," with 4:3, "it was now eventide"). Peter uses the lame man from birth who was healed as a kind of object lesson for his sermon (see Acts 3:12, 16). This seems to be Peter's most fruitful evangelistic preaching in terms of salvations, with 5,000 souls being won to Christ (Acts 4:4).

### **Peter's Sermon to Cornelius' Kin (Acts 10:34-44)**

*Setting:* The home of a Roman centurion, Cornelius (Acts 10:24-25)

*Main Theme:* The Gospel is For All

*Outline:*

- vv. 34-35: God's acceptance of all ethnic nationalities
- vv. 36-42: The story of Christ
- v. 43: The gospel-call to believe

*Scripture-Use:* Though Peter does not explicitly quote any scriptures in the sermon (at least, as it is presented in the Bible), his ideas are predicated upon Biblical truths (e.g., compare Acts 10:34 with Job 34:19; see also Acts 10:43), and there are allusions to Biblically-significant teachings, like those of John the Baptist (Acts 10:37).

*Key Observations:* Peter's sermon here, too, seems to have been truncated by an event; namely, the outpouring of the Spirit's special gifts to the hearers (Acts 10:44). Here he gives strong personal evidence of the resurrection (Acts 10:41), and greatly exalts Christ (vv. 36, 42).

### Stephen's Martyrdom Sermon (Acts 7)

*Setting:* Stephen's testimony to the Jerusalem council (Acts 6:12, 15)

*Main Theme:* The Jews have Always Rejected their Saviors

*Outline:*

- vv. 2-8: History of Israel from Abraham
- vv. 9-16: Joseph rejected as a savior
- vv. 17-36: Moses rejected as a savior
- vv. 37-50: God rejected as a savior
- vv. 51-53: Charge against the Jews for rejecting Jesus as the Savior

*Scripture-Use:* In the only sermon recorded of this man Stephen, there is much to be commended for its exceedingly abundant use of scripture. He traverses multiple eons of scriptural history, quoting and alluding to multiple books a stupendous number of times in so short a sermon (at least, what we have of it).

*Key Observations:* Stephen has a strong and Biblical historical introduction to his subject, and he weaves the examples and verses together of his three main points in a unique and intelligent manner (he was "full of faith and power," Acts 6:8). The conclusion of Stephen flows naturally from the premises (see **Acts 7:52**), and has a dramatic, awe-some dynamic to it. He was unhesitant in his delivery and clearly understood by his Jewish opponents—he preached so clearly, they killed him for it (Acts 7:54-60).

### Paul's Sermon in Antioch-Pisidia (Acts 13:16-42)

*Setting:* The synagogue in Antioch-Pisidia (Acts 13:14)

*Main Theme:* Jesus is the Promised Messiah

*Outline:*

- vv. 16-22: Historical Introduction of Israel unto David
- vv. 23-31: The promise, announcement, and story of Christ
- vv. 32-37: The resurrection of Christ
- vv. 38-41: The gospel-call to believe

*Scripture-Use:* Paul's allusions to Biblical passages in this sermon are many, and provide tremendous specificity with regard to timings (e.g., Acts 13:18, 20, 21), showing Paul's carefulness in exposition to detail. To assist the hearers in expressly remembering at least one of his sermon texts, he gives the very specific citation, "in the second psalm" (Acts 13:33; see also v. 35, "in another psalm," and v. 40, "in the prophets"), offering a precedent for preachers to likewise make specific scripture citations as they preach. Paul has, in his sermon, both Old and New Testament content (see vv. 24-25), though whether he is actually quoting one of the gospel writers' books is not certain.

*Key Observations:* Of special note in this sermon is the attention Paul gives to the ministry of John the Baptist, which provides strong appeal to the hearers ("for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed," Mark 11:32; compare with Acts 26:27). Paul also reasons mightily from the scriptures concerning the gospel, showing the absurdity of salvation by obedience to the law

(v. 39), and supplying cause for great caution to any who would disagree with his message (vv. 40-41).

### **Paul's Sermon in Athens (Acts 17:22-31)**

*Setting:* On Mars' Hill, in Areopagus of Athens (Acts 17:19, 22)

*Main Theme:* Jesus is the True God and Judge

*Outline:*

vv. 22-29: Against Idolatry

vv. 30-31: Command and Reason to Repent

*Scripture-Use:* Though Paul does not explicitly quote any scripture in the sermon as we have it recorded, his ideas are thoroughly Biblical (compare Acts 17:24 with II Samuel 7:5-7; Acts 17:27 with Deuteronomy 4:29). There does seem to be, however, at least one strong Biblical allusion (compare Acts 17:31 with Psalm 96:13).

*Key Observations:* Paul in this sermon truly has just one great truth he sought to manifest to the audience (he was only partially successful, Acts 17:34): "all the gods of the heathen are idols: but the LORD made the heavens" (Psalm 96:5). He shows why idolatry is absurd: God is supernatural (v. 24), independent of the physical world (vv. 25-27; compare Psalm 100:3), and the Creator of man and all other things (vv. 28-29). He also gives good reasons to accept his conclusion of trust in Christ as the true God ("he hath given assurance," v. 31).

### **Paul's Sermon to the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20:18-36)**

*Setting:* On the sea shore of Miletus (Acts 20:17, 38)

*Main Theme:* Take Heed to the Flock

*Outline:*

vv. 18-27: The Good Example of Paul

vv. 28-31: Exhortation and Warning to the Leaders

vv. 32: Final Benediction

vv. 33-35: Reiteration of the Example of Paul

*Scripture-Use:* The very personal nature of this sermon leads us to expect Paul would use less scripture. However, there are kernels of wisdom comparable to scripture (v. 23, special revelation; v. 35, non-canonical words of Christ), and some Biblical ideas do inform his words (compare Matthew 7:15 with Acts 17:29).

*Key Observations:* Paul's use of his labor and service to Christ as the backbone of his sermon teaches us that our preaching should, in a figure, pour forth from our life. We should *peach what we practice* (I Corinthians 4:17), in a manner. Paul spent long years to expound and inculcate the wisdom of scripture in the Ephesians (Acts 17:27, 31), and he sought in this sermon to stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance. It is not wrong, therefore, if in a sermon one preaches on a subject already before taught, provided they do so in a fresh way with at least a couple new insights (see Matthew 13:52).

### Practical Advice on Sermons

Your sermons should be **WELL-ORDERED**.

The preacher has a definite and clear message (they “preach the word” (Acts 8:4), “preach Christ” (Acts 8:5), “preach the kingdom of God” (Luke 4:43)). During the sermon, the congregation should not be as the Ephesian assembly, which “knew not wherefore they were come together” (Acts 19:32). Because order can only be conveyed if it is first had in the mind of the preacher, it is essential that a preacher *think through* their sermon with much cogitation before they preach it. They should ask themselves questions, such as, “How does this verse/point contribute to my overall theme?” or, “Does my conclusion/exhortation/rebuke follow from the premises which I will expound and defend?”

The most effective method for producing an orderly sermon is to **construct a helpful outline**. Outlines range in variety from the bare bones (main points with a few supporting scriptures) to extravagant and over-thorough (writing out every single sentence which will be spoken). It would seem that the best kind of outline is somewhere between these extremes. This kind of outline is called in homiletical literature the “partial manuscript.” Here are some tips which will guide you in constructing a sermon outline:

- Determine your main point, and do all the work on it; then, provide an introduction and conclusion. The strongest sermons have a well-developed and reasoned-through theme.
- Write out all your scriptures which you will read on your outline—do not force yourself to turn to almost any passage.
- Write out key statements, but not absolutely everything you will say. Think through exactly what you will say beforehand, and use the key statements on the outline to guide you as you preach.

Your sermons should be **WELL-INTENTIONED**.

When you determine to preach, you should be mindful about how the content you will present will affect the people who will hear it. Ask yourself, “How will this, among other things, educate/encourage/strengthen the people?” or, “What impact will this have on the hearers?” Your sermons should be designed “to the subverting of the hearers,” not “to no profit” (II Timothy 2:14). What is your purpose in preaching that which you will preach: is it in love to God’s people (see Philippians 1:15-17) and God’s word (II John 2)? Along these lines, don’t preach to *fill time*. Real preachers have time against them (Acts 20:9), and are more agitated than relieved by their preaching-time being ended. A good preacher views time to preach as a blessing and a privilege to help others.

Your sermons should be **WELL-ORIENTED**.

Because God’s word is the source of a preacher’s power and authority, it is the fulcrum of scripture about which one’s sermon should turn. As you prepare your sermon, ask yourself, “What does the Bible say about this?” or, “How can I prove/demonstrate this from the Bible?” Observe that the most significant and central of tasks the preacher has is to cause the people to understand the scriptures (see Nehemiah 8:8), so if there is not a strong preoccupation with the Bible as you ready your sermon, you are certainly making a mistake.