

“How shall they preach?”—

Preaching in the modern world

Introduction

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PAUL WROTE, “and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom. 10:15). The answer to the question in this context relates to the command given to the apostles, those who were “sent”, to preach the gospel. However, at a more general level the question is still relevant today. When ecclesias set out to be a light in their town, when brethren stand up to give a lecture, when brethren and sisters speak to those around them about the Truth, how shall they preach? This Special Issue sets out to provide some answers to this question.

The everlasting gospel

As we walk towards the Kingdom, our journey is like that of the children of Israel as they walked towards the Promised Land. The modern world in which we preach is like the wilderness. Of the journey through the wilderness, Moses wrote: “And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot” (Deut. 29:5). We too have a special shoe which will never wax old. This shoe is the gospel. As Paul wrote: “. . . and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace”. We tend to take the relevance of the gospel for granted. But, whereas intellectual trends and historical cycles come and go, the gospel is always prepared and ready for use. The children of Israel had shoes that did not wax old; we are shod with the “everlasting gospel” (Rev. 14:6).

In Deuteronomy 29, after talking about the shoes in the wilderness, Moses speaks about the defeat of Sihon: “And when ye came unto this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, came out against us unto battle, and we smote them” (v. 7). More detail is given in Deuteronomy 2: “Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to fight at Jahaz. And the LORD our God delivered him before us; and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people.

And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain” (vv. 32-34). Paul said our shoes should be “the gospel of peace” (Eph. 6:15). It does not seem at first that the children of Israel had “the gospel of peace”, for they “utterly destroyed” their enemies. Did Israel have a gospel of peace?

Israel truly preached the gospel of peace first: “And I sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemoth unto Sihon king of Heshbon with *words of peace*, saying, Let me pass through thy land: I will go along by the high way, I will neither turn unto the right hand nor to the left. Thou shalt sell me meat for money, that I may eat; and give me water for money, that I may drink: only I will pass through on my feet” (Deut. 2:26-28). So Israel came with “words of peace”. Their feet were shod with the “gospel of peace”. Sihon and his people ignored this message of peace. It was only then that they were destroyed. As we approach the Promised Land, our “words of peace” may well be likewise rejected. We know from prophecy that, like Sihon, the wicked will need to be punished at the time of the end for ignoring the words of peace which God has spoken to them.

As we continue our walk through the wilderness, shod with amazing shoes that never wax old, may we never cease to marvel at the prescience and unceasing relevance of the gospel we preach, the everlasting gospel of peace.

1. Definitions

The first group of articles address the basic principles that underlie preaching. In the first article in this section the various words for preaching in the Bible are defined. The modern world, with all its wickedness and suffering, is then considered. The final article shows how we all have a duty to preach the gospel to those around us.

2. Preaching in the Old Testament

One of the aims of this Special Issue has been to go to Scripture first, allowing the Word of God to

inform us how we should preach. It is appropriate, therefore, that we take into account preaching in the Old Testament. Men such as David, Noah, Jeremiah and Jonah all provide us with examples from which we can learn.

3. Preaching in the New Testament

The more familiar territory of preaching in the New Testament is then discussed. This section begins by considering John the Baptist, who, as the article states, “links the Old and New Testaments”. This article was written by the late Brother Tony Benson and is typical of the many wise and thoughtful articles which he wrote over the years.

Four articles are devoted to different aspects of the preaching of the Lord Jesus. What do his parables tell us about preaching? How did he use questions? What can the “woe” speeches teach us about preaching? What can we learn from meditating upon the various locations where Christ preached? These are the questions these articles about our Lord are intended to answer.

Finally in this section, the Apostles Peter and Paul are discussed. The Scriptures reveal much about these men for our learning. Peter was a ‘fisher of men’ but he also had to feed the sheep. The different ways Paul preached and the way he endured great suffering provide much useful instruction.

4. Other topics

Should we shake off the dust of our feet? What is the role of the home as a location for preaching? How do the laws of the land impact on our preaching? These are just some of the questions this section of the Special Issue attempts to answer. The role of the internet in preaching is also discussed. A long-standing method of preaching within the Brotherhood has been the public address. This form of preaching is considered, as is the more recent use of Bible seminars.

The preaching of our pioneering brethren in the nineteenth century, together with other aspects of their labours for the Truth, laid a solid foundation upon which our ecclesial life has been built. It is fitting, then, that an article considers the work of men such as Brother Thomas and Brother Roberts.

The final article in this section looks to the future, when Christ will return and the gospel will truly be preached to all the world.

5. Preaching to . . .

There are many different religions, philosophies and movements in the modern world. In this

section we provide summaries of some of these different groups. Each summary is divided into four parts. First we describe the origins of the religion or movement. Secondly we discuss the current trends and priorities of the group. Thirdly we list the mainstream beliefs. Finally we provide a few thoughts as to how an initial Scriptural approach could be taken when discussing the Truth with these people.

In order to cover this subject we have had to simplify the distinctions; quite possibly, people will fall into more than one of these groups. Also, within each group there are a variety of convictions and degrees of conviction in which these are held. But the aim is to understand the perspective of those to whom we preach, and so help to provide guidance in talking to them about the Truth. A variety of sources were used to research these groups. With regard to the beliefs, a specific source was used in each case, and this is indicated in the text.

Clearly, there is much more that could be said about each of the groups, not least with regard to the Scriptural approach that could be used. For a more detailed consideration, readers are recommended to consult other writings within the Brotherhood. For example, with regard to Islam, the book *The Bible and Islam* by Brother John Thorpe, and his series of articles on Islam in the *Bible Missionary*, provide an in-depth analysis. And, of course, *Wrested Scriptures* by Brother Ron Abel remains an invaluable source of information.

6. Resource information

The final section includes a list of useful Christadelphian websites. There is also a page on some of the exhibitions used within the Brotherhood. Finally, some advantages and disadvantages of using PowerPoint slides are listed.

Conclusion

In writing of Christ’s response to the high priest during his trial, John recorded: “Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing” (18:20). It is hoped that this Special Issue can help us to speak “openly to the world”. As the modern world becomes increasingly wicked and perilous, may we openly preach the gospel to those around us, so that, when we stand before our Master, we might likewise say, “in secret have I said nothing”.