

PREACH AND TEACH GOD’S WORD

- A. Introduction: Since the beginning of the year we’ve been working on a series about the importance of regular Bible reading. To help us read effectively, we’ve been discussing what the Bible is, how we should read it, why we can trust it, and what it will do for us.
1. The Bible is not a self-help book or a book of hidden wisdom and mystical secrets. The Bible is God’s revelation of Himself and His plans and His purposes for mankind.
 - a. God’s purpose is to have a family of sons and daughters with whom He can have relationship. His plan is to redeem (deliver) men and women from the guilt and power of sin and transform them into His holy, righteous sons and daughters through Jesus, the Redeemer. Eph 1:4-5; II Tim 1:9-10
 1. The Bible authors weren’t trying to write a religious book. Under the inspiration of God, they recorded what He revealed to their generation about Himself and unfolding plan of redemption.
 2. The Bible is primarily a historical narrative, written by men who lived in the time of the events they recorded. Many of those events are verifiable through secular records and archaeology.
 - b. In recent lessons, we’ve followed the narrative from God’s promise to send a Redeemer, through the Old Testament record of the Jews, the people group Jesus was born into. Gen 3:15; Gen 12:1-3
 1. By the beginning of the 1st century AD the time arrived for Jesus to come into this world. The New Testament portion of the Bible is a record of His ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection.
 2. The New Testament was written by eyewitnesses of Jesus (or their close associates)—men who saw Jesus die and then saw Him alive again. What they saw transformed their lives.
 2. Before Jesus returned to Heaven, He commissioned these men to tell the world what they saw, and then explain what His death and resurrection means for all who believe on Him as Savior and Lord.
 - a. Luke 24:44-48—Because of Jesus’ sacrificial death on the Cross, the price for sin as been paid, and remission or the wiping out of sin is available to all who believe and turn to Jesus for salvation.
 1. The eyewitnesses wrote to facilitate the spread of this message. They wrote what they saw and heard so that people would believe on Jesus and be saved from sin’s penalty and power.
 2. John 20:30-31— Jesus did many other miraculous signs besides the ones written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life (NLT).
 - b. This week we’re going to look at what the written Word of God (the Bible) meant to these apostles. When we see the value the eyewitnesses placed on the Scriptures, it increases our confidence in the New Testament’s accuracy. The writers had strong motivation to get their message right.
- B. Matt 28:18-20—Jesus not only commissioned the eyewitnesses to tell the world about His resurrection, He commissioned them to teach and to make disciples or learners of all people (that’s how the original Greek reads). And, they were to baptize believers in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.
1. Before I make the point that is directly related to this lesson, I need to make a few comments about issues we will address in more detail in upcoming lessons.
 - a. Baptism (or immersion into water) does not save anyone from sin. Salvation from sin comes through faith (or trust) in Jesus and His work on the Cross. Jesus paid the price for sin through His sacrificial death. As a result, remission of sins is now available to all who believe on Him.
 1. Baptism is an outward sign of the inward commitment a person has made to Jesus. Baptism signifies burying the old, sinful life and rising to live a new life in submission to God.
 2. In the name of signifies a full consecration (or setting apart) of the new believer to the service and honor of the One in whose name it is administered—Almighty God and the revelation of Himself that He has given in and through Jesus (more about this in later lessons).
 - b. Notice that Jesus commissioned the apostles to teach believers to obey the commands He’d given

- them. For 1st century Jews, God’s commands were connected to His written Word (the Scriptures).
- c. Remember, at Mount Sinai, Almighty God wrote His Words on two tablets. Moses wrote further information from the Lord, which he recorded in a Book. God instructed Moses to teach the people the laws or commands he received and recorded in the first Bible books. Ex 24:4,7,12; Ex 31:18
2. Jesus was born into the Jewish nation, and the first Christians were Jews. Reading and teaching the Scriptures was a vital part of Jewish life.
 - a. After Israel returned from exile in Babylon, the custom of reading Scripture in a synagogue (a special meeting place) on the Sabbath day began. Scripture was read and explained by a teacher.
 1. The purpose of these meetings was instruction. A synagogue could be formed any place there were ten males. By Jesus’ time, there were 480 synagogues spread throughout Israel.
 2. Jesus began His ministry in His hometown (Nazareth) at the local synagogue. The synagogues gave Jesus and His apostles places to preach and teach. Luke 4:16; Matt 4:23; Matt 9:35
 3. To preach means to proclaim something publicly. To teach means to impart information or instruction so that others may learn.
 - b. The Book of Acts is the record of the apostles’ activities as they went out to proclaim Jesus’ resurrection. Acts informs us that when people believed what the apostles preached and became followers of Jesus, the apostles would then teach them.
 - c. For example, three thousand people responded to Peter’s first public preaching (on the Day of Pentecost) after Jesus returned to Heaven. Those people believed and were baptized and “every believer was faithfully devoted to following the teachings of the apostles” (Acts 2:42, TPT).
 3. What would the apostles have taught? They would have taught what Jesus taught them—not only during His ministry, but on resurrection day, and in the forty days before He returned to Heaven.
 - a. On resurrection day, when Jesus first began appearing to His disciples, He quoted the Scriptures to them. In addition to history, the Old Testament had many prophecies about the Messiah (the Redeemer), as well as accounts of people and events that foreshadowed Him (types and shadows).
 1. Luke 24:27—Then Jesus quoted passages from the writings of Moses and all the prophets, all the Scriptures said about himself (NLT).
 2. Luke 24:44-45—Then (Jesus) said, when I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me by Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must all come true. Then he opened their minds to understand these many Scriptures (NLT).
 - b. In other words, Jesus made it clear that the Scriptures are ultimately about Him. Jesus, the Living Word, is revealed in and through the pages of the Bible. John 5:39
 1. When John the apostle wrote the gospel that bears his name, he referred to Jesus as the Word (*logos*). *Logos* was a rich, full word in both Greek philosophy and Judaism of that day.
 2. It has the idea of self-revealing or message. Jesus is God’s message—the fullest revelation of God and His plan of redemption (more on this in later lessons).
 3. Heb 1:1-2—Long ago God spoke in many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. But now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son (NLT).
 4. The point for now is that the apostles knew that Jesus promised to make Himself known to people through the Scriptures, through the written Word of God. John 14:19-21
 - a. John 14:21-23—The night before Jesus was crucified, as He prepared His twelve apostles for the fact that He was soon going to leaving, He told them that He would continue to reveal or manifest Himself to those who keep His commandments.
 1. Remember what we noted earlier in the lesson—1st century Jews connected God’s commands with His written Word (the Scriptures). At the Last Supper Jesus promised His apostles that He would continue to make Himself and His love known to them through His written Word.
 2. The Greek word used in John 14:21-22 for manifest (reveal) means I will personally come to

- him. I will let Myself be clearly seen by him and make Myself real to him (v21, AMP).
- b. The apostles wanted people to know Jesus more fully so they taught (explained) the Scriptures. Not only do the Scriptures show that Jesus is the promised Redeemer (Messiah), Jesus promised to reveal Himself more fully to His people through the written Word.
- C. The eyewitnesses taught the Scriptures that were already completed when Jesus was here, the Old Testament. They also wrote more Scripture (what became the New Testament).
1. These men were aware that they were writing Scripture (II Pet 3:2; II Pet 3:15-16). They weren't trying to write a religious book. They were carrying out their commission to tell the world (preach and teach) what they saw and heard from Jesus.
 - a. Matt 11:28-30—Jesus said: Take my yoke upon you (join your life to mine), learn from Me, and I will give you rest. We today learn from Jesus through His Word, because the Scriptures testify of Him (John 5:39). And He reveals Himself through the Scriptures (John 14:21-22).
 - b. Believing in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus is only the beginning. We're to become disciples or learners who grow and are increasingly changed by His Spirit through His Word as the effects of sin in our behavior and character are exposed and dealt with.
 1. The Word of God is the food that produces growth and change (Matt 4:4; I Pet 2:2). Paul wrote to new believers: You accepted what we said as the very word of God—which of course it was. And this word continues to work in you who believe (I Thess 2:13, NLT).
 2. Paul wrote that: All scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. It is God's way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped for every God thing God wants us to do (II Tim 3:16-17, NLT).
 - c. The eyewitnesses wrote to help people see Jesus more clearly and to further instruct those who came to faith in Him so that they could grow into maturity and be "full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ" (Eph 4:13, NLT). Jesus is our standard. (More on this in later lessons.)
 1. Epistles (letters) were the first documents written by the apostles. Epistles explained what Christians believe, gave instruction on how Christians are supposed to live, and addressed problems and questions that arose as groups of believers (churches) were established.
 2. New Christians also needed a record of what Jesus said and did. The apostles wanted a written record of what they witnessed to insure that the accurate message would continue to spread after they died (II Pet 1:15; II Pet 3:1-2). So they wrote the gospels, the biographies of Jesus.
 2. Accuracy in these documents was important, not only so that people could get to know Jesus more fully through the Scripture, but so that they would have protection against deception.
 - a. While Jesus was on earth, He taught the apostles that the kingdom of God spreads through the preaching of the Word of God. Jesus compared God's Word to seeds that are sown. Matt 13:18-23
 1. Matt 13:19—Jesus told them that when the Word is preached (proclaimed), Satan (the wicked one) comes to try to take or steal the Word, especially from the one who doesn't understand it.
 2. Matt 24:4-5—Jesus also stated that in the period between His first and second coming, false Christs and false prophets will deceive many, especially as His return draws near.
 - b. Within the lifetime of the apostles, false teachers and false teachings arose, just as Jesus warned. Two main groups of false teachers developed almost immediately—the Judaizers and teachers of what would develop into Gnosticism (from the Greek word knowledge) in the 2nd century.
 1. The Judaizers were Jews who accepted Christ as Messiah, but taught that to be saved from sin, believers must keep the Law of Moses—including circumcision and observing the feasts and the Sabbath. Many were Pharisees, who considered non-Jewish believers second class.
 2. Gnostics said that salvation comes through knowledge and that ignorance (not sin) is mankind's

problem. They said matter is evil, which led to denying Jesus' incarnation and resurrection.

They claimed that no one rises from the dead. Because they believed the human body is temporary, they taught that you can either fulfill its every lust or deprive it of basic pleasures.

3. The New Testament documents reflect the authors' desire to combat these false teachings by making a clear presentation of who Jesus is, why He came to earth, and what He accomplished through the Cross.

a. The gospels are accounts of Jesus based on what the eyewitnesses saw and heard. The epistles address issues and questions that arose as these false teachings spread.

1. The apostles knew that the protection against deception in the form of false teachings and false Christs is the truth—the Word of God.

2. The Living Word, Jesus, is the Truth (John 14:6) and He is revealed in the written Word which is the truth (Ps 119:142). Truth means the reality lying at the basis of appearance.

b. The standard for recognizing a false gospel is what the apostles taught. Note what Paul wrote to a group of churches in Galatia when they were infected with false teachings from the Judaizers.

1. Gal 1:7-9—You are being fooled by those who twist and change the truth concerning Christ...

Even if an angel comes from heaven and preaches any other message, let him be forever cursed ...If anyone preaches any other gospel than the one you welcomed (from me), let God's curse fall upon that person (NLT).

2. This is why, as written documents about Jesus began to circulate in the 1st century, before the early Christians accepted a document, they wanted to know: Can this writing be traced to an original apostle? They wanted the genuine revelation of Jesus—from the eyewitnesses.

D. Conclusion: When we understand what the Scriptures meant to the eyewitnesses who wrote the documents, it increases our confidence in the reliability of what is written. These men wrote to communicate vital, eternal information about God and His plan to have a family through Jesus, the Redeemer

1. We asked this question at the start of our lesson: What did the Scriptures (the written Word of God) mean to the men who wrote the New Testament documents? Here's the answer:

a. The Scriptures are the primary way that Jesus promised to continue to reveal or show Himself to believers. The Bible is the only fully reliable protection against false Christs and false gospels. The Word of God is the food that causes believers to grow and mature.

b. Not only were the writers carrying out their God given commission to preach and teach Jesus and the gospel (Jesus died for sin and rose again), they were ensuring that accurate transmission of this vital message would continue after they died. Accuracy was of utmost importance to them.

2. We are living at the end of this age, and the return of Jesus will likely occur within some of our lifetimes. According to Jesus, religious deception about who He is and what He did will be rampant. If ever there was a time to know for yourself what the New Testament says about Jesus and the gospel, it's now.

a. Many of us know Bible verses, but we know them out of context. Every statement in the Bible was made by a real person to another real person to communicate information. Those three factors set context, which helps us rightly interpret specific passages. The Bible can't mean something to us that it would not have meant to the writers and first readers.

b. I urge you to read all the New Testament document as they were written to be read—from beginning to end—over and over. The purpose of this type of reading is to become familiar with the text.

Understanding comes with familiarity and familiarity comes with regular, repeated reading.

c. Getting good teaching from a Bible teacher who reads the documents from start to finish, over and over, is also vitally important (a topic for another time).

3. The best protection against deception is to become so familiar with Jesus and His gospel that you easily recognize counterfeits. Not only will regular reading make Jesus more real to you, and strengthen and change you for the good, it will keep you safe in the tumultuous years ahead. More next week!