

Gospel Preaching In The First Century



Gospel Sermons By Preachers In The Early Church

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To God Be The Glory!

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Gospel Preaching In The First Century

Peter On The Day Of Pentecost

INTRODUCTION

1. Today we often hear people speak of “gospel preaching”...
 - a. Where sometimes the gospel is not mentioned at all
 - b. Or that preached is not the gospel preached by the apostles - cf. **Ga 1:6-9**
2. The gospel is “good news” which...
 - a. Jesus wanted His apostles to preach to everyone - **Mk 16:15**
 - b. His apostles proclaimed after Jesus ascended to heaven - **Mk 16:19-20**
3. But is this same gospel being preached today? In the book of Acts...
 - a. We have examples of gospel preaching in the first century
 - b. Gospel preaching by the apostles and preachers of Jesus Christ
4. In this series, we shall consider examples of gospel preaching...
 - a. Done by the apostles and preachers of Jesus Christ
 - b. Examining the content of their sermons and response expected of the hearers

[We begin with very first gospel sermon proclaimed by the apostle Peter...]

I. THE SETTING

A. THE DAY OF PENTECOST...

1. It was the day of Pentecost - **Ac 2:1**
2. One of three major Jewish feasts, also called the Feast of Weeks
3. Pentecost means “fifty”, observed fifty days after the Passover
4. Jesus had ascended to heaven just ten days before - **Ac 1:9-11**

B. THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT...

1. The apostles had been waiting for the promise of the Spirit - **Ac 1:4-5**
2. Matthias had just been selected to replace Judas Iscariot - **Ac 1:15-26**
3. With audible and visual signs, the Spirit came upon the apostles - **Ac 2:2-4**
4. They spoke in foreign languages, understood by visitors from other countries - **Ac 2:5-11**
5. Some thought they were drunk, but it was too early in the morning - **Ac 2:12-15**
6. Peter explained that it was the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy - **Ac 2:16-21**

[With the miraculous events explained, Peter now had the attention of the audience as he began the first gospel sermon ever preached...]

II. THE SERMON

A. JESUS ATTESTED BY GOD...

1. Peter proclaims Jesus as a Man attested by God through His miracles - **Ac 2:22**
2. Done in their midst, they could not deny the signs Jesus did while alive!

B. JESUS PUT TO DEATH...

1. By crucifixion, which they themselves did with lawless (Roman) hands - **Ac 2:23**
2. Though it part of God's predetermined purpose and foreknowledge - **ibid.**
3. Jesus' death and their involvement they could not deny!

C. JESUS RAISED FROM THE DEAD...

1. God raised Jesus, having loosed the pains of death - **Ac 2:24**
2. Peter offered three proofs that Jesus rose from the dead
 - a. David's prophecy, fulfilled in Jesus - **Ac 2:25-31**; cf. **Ps 16:8-11**
 - b. Eyewitness testimony, by the twelve apostles - **Ac 2:32**; cf. **Ac 1:21-22**
 - c. Outpouring of the Spirit, which the audience themselves saw and heard - **Ac 2:33**
3. Compelling evidence to those who were present!

D. JESUS EXALTED AS LORD AND CHRIST...

1. The outpouring of the Spirit was the result of Jesus' exaltation - **Ac 2:33**
2. Jesus' exaltation was prophesied by David - **Ac 2:34-35**; cf. **Ps 110:1**
3. Thus the crucified Jesus was now Lord and Christ! - **Ac 2:36**

E. REACTION AND RESPONSE...

1. Cut to the heart, many asked "What shall we do?" - **Ac 2:37**
2. We note that the following was required:
 - a. Believe in Jesus ("know assuredly") as Lord and Christ - **Ac 2:36**
 - b. Repent of sins - **Ac 2:38**
 - c. Baptism for remission of sins and gift of the Holy Spirit - **Ac 2:38-39**
3. The follow-up:
 - a. Peter exhorted them "Be saved from this perverse generation" - **Ac 2:40**
 - b. 3000 gladly received his word and were baptized - **Ac 2:41**
 - c. Those baptized were "added" by the Lord to His church - **Ac 2:41,47**
 - d. Thus began the Lord's church in Jerusalem - **Ac 2:42-47**

CONCLUSION

1. From Peter's sermon we learn that gospel preaching in the first century involved...
 - a. Proclaiming the death, burial, resurrection and lordship of Jesus Christ
 - b. Calling on people to respond in faith, repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins
2. If you had been there on that occasion, how would you have responded...?
 - a. Like the 3000, would you have gladly been baptized? - **Ac 2:41**
 - b. Would you have continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, etc.? - **Ac 2:42**

Or like many today have you yet to accept that gospel message preached in the first century? If so, may I like Peter plead with you: ***"Be saved from this perverse generation."***

Respond to the same gospel Peter preached, in the same way 3000 did on that occasion, by believing in Christ, repenting of your sins, and being baptized for the remission of sins. As Jesus said:

"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." - Mk 16:16

Gospel Preaching In The First Century

Peter At Solomon's Porch

INTRODUCTION

1. From Peter's first sermon we saw that gospel preaching in the first century involved...
 - a. Proclaiming the death, burial, resurrection and lordship of Jesus Christ
 - b. Calling on people to respond in faith, repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins
2. Now we turn our attention to Peter's second recorded sermon...
 - a. Found in chapter three of the book of Acts
 - b. In which Peter has the opportunity to preach at Solomon's porch

[As before, let's first review the circumstances that led to the sermon itself...]

I. THE SETTING

A. PETER AND JOHN HAD GONE TO THE TEMPLE...

1. Christians had been gathering daily in the temple - **Ac 2:46**
2. Peter and John arrived at the "hour of prayer, the ninth hour" (3 p.m.) - **Ac 3:1**

B. MAN LAME FROM BIRTH HAD BEEN HEALED...

1. Who was left daily at the gate of the temple called "Beautiful" - **Ac 3:2-3**
 - a. To ask alms from the people entering the temple
 - b. Who asked Peter and John for alms
2. Peter healed him in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth - **Ac 3:4-8**
 - a. The lame man expected alms
 - b. But Peter offered him something much better than silver or gold!
 - c. The miracle was immediate and total!

C. CROWD HAD GATHERED...

1. Drawn by the scene of the man walking, praising God - **Ac 3:9**
2. Amazed and wondering, for they knew he had been lame from birth - **Ac 3:10**
3. They gathered in the porch called Solomon's - **Ac 3:11**
 - a. A colonnaded area along the eastern wall of the temple area - **ESVSB**
 - b. With double columns 38 feet tall, spanning 49 feet, supporting cedar ceilings - **AYBD**

[The similarity to the events in **Acts 2** is apparent: a miraculous event occurs, it attracts the attention of the people. As before, Peter uses the opportunity to preach the gospel...]

II. THE SERMON

A. JESUS PROCLAIMED AS MIRACLE EXPLAINED...

1. Not by the power or godliness of Peter and John themselves - **Ac 3:12**
2. It was through faith in God's Servant, Jesus - **Ac 3:13-16**
 - a. Whom the God of their fathers had glorified!
 - b. Whom they had delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate!

- c. Whom they denied, asking for a murderer to be released in his stead!
 - d. Whom God raised from the dead, as seen by witnesses!
 - e. Whom Peter describes as the “Holy One,” the “Just”, the “Prince of Life”!
3. Through faith in His name the lame man was healed - **Ac 3:16**
- a. Peter and John’s faith in Jesus, not the lame man’s faith
 - b. For the lame man had not expected a miracle, but silver or gold - cf. **Ac 3:4-7**

B. REPENTANCE COMMANDED AS IGNORANCE ACKNOWLEDGED...

1. Peter admits they and their rulers acted in ignorance - **Ac 3:17**
2. What occurred was foretold and fulfilled by God - **Ac 3:18**; cf. **Ac 2:23**
3. Yet ignorance is no excuse, so they must “repent and be converted” - **Ac 3:19**
 - a. **Repent** - change their minds their minds regarding Jesus and their sinful ways
 - b. **Convert** - turn to God, which implies baptism - cf. **Ac 2:38**; **1Pe 3:21**
4. Reasons to repent and turn to God are given - **Ac 3:19-26**
 - a. That your sins may be blotted out (remitted) - cf. **Ac 2:38**
 - b. That times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord (possibly referring to the gift of the Spirit)- cf. **Ac 2:38**; **Jn 7:37-39**; **Ga 4:6**; **5:22-23**
 - c. That God may send Jesus Christ (a reference to His second coming)
 - 1) Who was preached to them before (via the prophets)
 - 2) Whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things (of which the prophets of God had also spoken)
 - d. They were sons of the prophets, and of the covenant God made with their fathers
 - 1) A covenant made with Abraham, to bless the world in his seed
 - 2) A promise fulfilled by God through His Servant Jesus, Whom He raised
 - a) Who was sent by God to bless them
 - b) To bless them by turning them away from their sins

C. RESPONSE...

1. A negative response by the religious leaders - **Ac 4:1-3**
2. A positive response by many who heard (2000 believed) - **Ac 4:4**

CONCLUSION

1. Again we see that gospel preaching in the first century involved...
 - a. Proclaiming the death, burial, resurrection and lordship of Jesus Christ
 - b. Calling on people to respond with repentance (faith and baptism implied)
 - c. Offering the remission of sins and refreshing gift of the Spirit
2. We also learn that it included proclaiming...
 - a. The character of Jesus (Servant, Holy, Just, Prince of life, Christ, Prophet)
 - b. The return of Jesus (i.e., His second coming)

The power of the gospel to convict the hearts of men continues to be seen (5000 after two sermons). Though with some, the effect appears to be a hardening of their hearts.

How have you responded to the gospel preaching? In faithful obedience, or have you been hardening your heart by refusing to obey in faith, repentance and baptism...?

Gospel Preaching In The First Century

Philip In The City Of Samaria

INTRODUCTION

1. From **Peter's** first two sermons, we saw that gospel preaching in the first century involved...
 - a. Proclaiming the death, burial, resurrection and lordship of Jesus Christ
 - b. Extolling the character of Jesus, and that He will one day return
2. We also learn from Peter that gospel preaching in the first century...
 - c. Called on people to respond with faith, repentance, and baptism
 - d. Offered the remission of sins, and the refreshing gift of the Spirit
2. We now turn to the preaching of **Philip**, not an apostle but one who...
 - a. Served as a “deacon”, then as an evangelist - **Ac 6:1-7; 8:5; 21:8**
 - b. Was a man of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom - cf. **Ac 6:3**

[We have two accounts of Philip preaching the gospel of Christ, the first **in the city of Samaria...**]

I. THE SETTING

A. THE GOSPEL SPREADS FROM JERUSALEM...

1. Prompted by persecution spearheaded by Saul (Paul) - **Ac 8:1-3**
2. Those forced to leave Jerusalem take the gospel with them - **Ac 8:4**

B. THE GOSPEL ARRIVES IN SAMARIA...

1. The former capital and region of the northern kingdom of Israel - **1Ki 16:23-24**
2. Populated by Samaritans, with whom Jews had little contact - **2Ki 17:24; Jn 4:9**
3. Excluded by the Limited Commission, included in the Great Commission - **Mt 10:5; 28:19**
4. Jesus preached to them; His servant Philip now does the same - **Jn 4:1-42; Ac 8:5**

C. THE GOSPEL CONFIRMED WITH SIGNS...

1. People heeded Philip because of the signs he did - **Ac 8:6-8**
2. Simon, a sorcerer, was also impressed - **Ac 8:9-11**
3. Fulfilling the purpose of the signs and wonders - cf. **Mk 16:19-20; He 2:3-4**

[In such a setting, Philip preached Christ to them (**Ac 8:5**). While we don't have an actual record of his sermon, we are given sufficient information to know what his preaching entailed...]

II. THE SERMON

A. THE KINGDOM OF GOD...

1. “he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God” - **Ac 8:12**
 - a. Proclaimed by John and Jesus in their ministries - **Mt 3:1-2; Mk 1:14-15**
 - b. Expounded upon by Jesus after His resurrection - **Ac 1:3**
 - c. Later a major theme in Paul's preaching - **Ac 19:8; 20:25; 28:23,31**
2. What preaching the kingdom of God likely entailed

- a. The need to seek first the kingship and sovereignty of God - cf. **Mt 6:33**
- b. Now being exercised through His Son, Jesus - cf. **Mt 28:18; Ac 2:36; 5:31**
- c. In which they could now participate - cf. **Col 1:13; Re 1:9**
- d. By responding to the call of the gospel - cf. **1Th 2:12; 2Th 2:14**
- e. Remaining faithful to Christ, even to death - cf. **Re 2:10,26-27; 3:21**

B. THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST...

1. "he preached...the name of Jesus Christ" - **Ac 8:12**
 - a. "Jesus" means "savior", and He saves us from our sins - cf. **Mt 1:21**
 - b. "Christ" means "anointed", and He is the Anointed One of God - cf. **Mt 3:16-17; 17:5**
2. "Note that the term *name* connotes the full revelation of the Son of God and that the double name *Jesus Christ* reveals both his earthly ministry and his divine office." - **Kistemaker**
 - a. "Jesus, therefore, is king in the kingdom of God." - **ibid.**
 - b. As Peter proclaimed, Jesus is Lord, Christ, God's Servant, The Holy One, the Just One, the Prince of life, the Prophet - **Ac 2:36; 3:12-15,22-26**

C. THE RESPONSE...

1. They "heeded the things spoken by Philip", implying obedience - **Ac 8:6; cf. He 5:9**
2. Men and women believed and were baptized - **Ac 8:12**
3. Even Simon the sorcerer believed and was baptized - **Ac 8:13**
4. Which we saw earlier was for the remission of sins - cf. **Ac 2:38**

CONCLUSION

1. From Philip's ministry in the city of Samaria, we learn that gospel preaching involved...
 - a. Proclaiming the kingdom of God and the name (character) of Jesus Christ
 - b. Calling on people to believe on Him and to be baptized in His name (by His authority)
2. In Philip's ministry to the Samaritans, we see that he obeyed the Great Commission...
 - a. Going to other "nations" to preach the gospel - **Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15**
 - b. Making disciples by baptizing them to be saved - **Mt 28:19; Mk 16:16**

Given the opportunity to respond to the good news of Jesus Christ, the Samaritans' heeded the gospel through faith and baptism, just like the Jews in Jerusalem.

How about you? Are you willing to **submit to the sovereignty of God** now being exercised through His Son Jesus, **by obeying the gospel of Christ**?

In our next study, we will examine Philip preaching the gospel in the Gaza desert...

Gospel Preaching In The First Century

Philip In The Gaza Desert

INTRODUCTION

1. From **Peter's** first two sermons, we saw that gospel preaching in the first century involved...
 - a. Proclaiming the death, burial, resurrection and lordship of Jesus Christ
 - b. Extolling the character of Jesus, and that He will one day return
 - c. Calling on people to respond with faith, repentance, and baptism
 - d. Offering the remission of sins, and the refreshing gift of the Spirit
2. From **Philip's** preaching in the city of Samaria, we saw that it included...
 - a. Proclaiming the kingdom of God and the name (character) of Jesus Christ
 - b. Calling on people to believe on Him and to be baptized in His name (by His authority)

[As we continuing our survey of gospel preaching in the first century, we have another example of Philip preaching the gospel, this time to a single individual **in the Gaza desert...**]

I. THE SETTING

A. PHILIP SENT TOWARD GAZA...

1. An angel of the Lord tells Philip to go toward Gaza - **Ac 8:26**
2. On the way there is a man sitting in his chariot - **Ac 8:27-28**
 - a. A eunuch of Ethiopia, in charge of the treasury of Queen Candace
 - b. Returning home, having gone to worship in Jerusalem, reading the prophet Isaiah
3. The Spirit tells Philip to overtake the chariot - **Ac 8:29**

B. PHILIP PREACHES JESUS...

1. Hearing the eunuch reading Isaiah, Philip asks if he understands - **Ac 8:30**
2. The eunuch asks Philip to help him - **Ac 8:31-34**
 - a. He expresses the need for someone to guide him, and invites Philip to sit with him
 - b. The scripture under consideration is Isa **53:7-8**
 - 1) Which speaks of one led as a sheep to the slaughter
 - 2) Which describes one whose life is taken from the earth
 - c. The eunuch asks if Isaiah was speaking of himself, or of someone else
3. Beginning with that Scripture, Philip preaches Jesus to him - **Ac 8:35**

[As before, with Philip in the city of Samaria, we are not give the details of the actual sermon. But from what is revealed **we can infer much** about what Philip preached...]

II. THE SERMON

A. FROM ISAIAH'S QUOTATION...

1. **Jesus died for our sins**
 - a. Isaiah reveals the reason for the Messiah's suffering - **Isa 53:4-6,10-11**
 - b. Preaching Jesus therefore proclaims His death for our sins
2. **Jesus has been exalted**

- a. Isaiah's prophecy begins and ends with the exaltation of the Messiah - **Isa 52:13; 53:12**
- b. The theme of Jesus' exaltation permeated Peter's preaching - cf. **Ac 2:36; 5:30-31**
- c. Preaching Jesus therefore pronounces that He has been exalted by God

B. FROM THE EUNUCH'S QUESTION...

1. The importance of baptism

- a. Notice the question asked by the eunuch - **Ac 8:36**
- b. "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?"
- c. Preaching Jesus clearly included preaching on baptism!

2. The immediacy of baptism

- a. The Ethiopian was anxious to obey; Philip was willing to accommodate him - **Ac 8:38**
 - 1) Why the urgency? Why not wait until they got to town, or to a church?
 - 2) Others were baptized immediately, even after midnight - e.g., **Ac 16:30-33**
- b. The reason for such urgency is clearly taught elsewhere
 - 1) Baptism is for the remission of sins - cf. **Ac 2:38; 22:16**
 - 2) We experience the working of God, and put on Christ - cf. **Col 2:12-13; Ga 3:27**

C. FROM PHILIP'S QUALIFICATION...

1. The necessity of faith

- a. Philip's response to the eunuch's question qualified who should be baptized - **Ac 8:37**
 - 1) "If you believe...you may"
 - 2) Faith is a necessary prerequisite to baptism, which precludes infant baptism
- b. Indeed faith is necessary to salvation - cf. **Jn 8:24**
 - 1) Through faith we can have life in His name - cf. **Jn 20:30-31**
 - 2) Baptism is a working of God when our faith is present - **Col 2:12**

2. The necessity of heartiness

- a. Philip required a wholehearted faith - **Ac 8:37**
 - 1) "If you believe with all your heart, you may"
 - 2) Baptism without such faith renders one simply wet!
- b. The sort of hearty sincerity God has always required
 - 1) By the children of Israel under the Law - **Mt 22:37**
 - 2) By the partakers of Christ today - **He 3:12-14**

D. THE RESPONSE...

1. The eunuch is baptized immediately - **Ac 8:38**
2. The eunuch goes on his way rejoicing - **Ac 8:39**

CONCLUSION

1. From Philip's preaching in the Gaza desert, preaching Jesus in the first century included...
 - a. Preaching about the suffering and exaltation of Christ
 - b. Preaching the necessity and immediacy of baptism by a sincere believer
2. Today, many do not preach Jesus as did Philip (and Peter)...
 - a. They ignore baptism altogether, or render it insignificant
 - b. They call upon people to pray, when apostolic preaching commanded people to be baptized

Has Jesus truly been preached to you, as Philip preached to both the Samaritans and the Eunuch...?

Gospel Preaching In The First Century

Peter In The Home Of Cornelius

INTRODUCTION

1. Thus far we have considered four examples of gospel preaching in the first century...
 - a. Peter on the day of Pentecost
 - b. Peter at Solomon's porch
 - c. Philip in the city of Samaria
 - d. Philip in the Gaza desert
2. The gospel preaching in each case followed a similar pattern...
 - a. Proclaiming the death, burial, resurrection and lordship of Jesus Christ
 - b. Calling for a response involving faith, repentance and baptism

[Till now, the gospel was shared only to Jews or those closely related (Samaritans). Jesus intended His gospel to be proclaimed to all nations (**Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15**), and now we consider the example of the first Gentile (non-Jew) who was given the gospel message...]

I. THE SETTING

A. CORNELIUS HAS A VISION...

1. Cornelius, a centurion, is introduced as very religious - **Ac 10:1-2**
2. In a vision an angel appears to him - **Ac 10:3-6**
 - a. With an announcement that his prayers and alms have been noticed by God
 - b. With instructions to send for Peter; please note:
 - 1) The angel said, "***He will tell you what you must do.***" - **Ac 10:6**
 - 2) As Peter recounts it, "***...who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.***" - **Ac 11:14**
3. Cornelius then sends two servants and a devout soldier to Peter - **Ac 10:7-8**

B. PETER HAS A VISION...

1. While the three men are traveling toward Peter, he has a vision - **Ac 10:9-16; 11:4-10**
 - a. A sheet descending from heaven, containing all sorts of creatures
 - b. A voice tells Peter to "***kill and eat***"
 - c. Peter objects, for he has never eaten anything common or unclean
 - d. He is told, "***What God has cleansed you must not call common.***"
2. Three times the vision is repeated

C. THE SPIRIT INSTRUCTS PETER...

1. The men from Cornelius arrive as Peter contemplates the vision - **Ac 10:17-18; 11:11**
2. The Spirit tells Peter to go, "***doubting nothing, for I have sent them***" - **Ac 10:19-20; 11:12**
3. Peter receives the men and takes six with him as they go to Cornelius - **Ac 10:21-23; 11:12**

D. PETER ARRIVES AT CORNELIUS' HOUSE...

1. Cornelius has gathered his family and close friends - **Ac 10:24**
2. Peter deflects attempts by Cornelius to worship him - **Ac 10:25-26**
3. Peter explains his presence a violation of Jewish custom, but now understands "***I should not call any man common or unclean***" - **Ac 10:27-28**

4. Asked by Peter to explain why he was called, Cornelius recounts the appearance and instructions of the angel - **Ac 10:29-32; 11:13-14**
5. Cornelius and his household were ready *“to hear all things commanded you by God”* - **Ac 10:33**

[Similar to Acts 2, miraculous events prepared both the preacher and his audience for *“things commanded...by God”* (Ac 10:33) and *“words by which you...will be saved”* (Ac 11:14)...]

II. THE SERMON

A. PETER PROCLAIMS GOD...

1. He begins with a full perception that God shows no partiality - **Ac 10:34-35**
2. A perception started with the vision of the sheet and unclean beasts
3. A perception continued with the Spirit’s instruction to go with the messengers
4. A perception confirmed with the Spirit falling upon the Gentiles - **Ac 10:44-47; 11:15-17**

B. PETER PROCLAIMS JESUS...

1. As Lord who was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power - **Ac 10:36-38**
2. Who was killed, raised from the dead, seen by witnesses who knew Him well - **Ac 10:39-41**
3. Who has commanded the apostles to proclaim Him as ordained by God to be the Judge of the living and dead - **Ac 10:42**
4. Through Whom remission of sins is offered to those who believe - **Ac 10:43**

C. PETER PROCLAIMS BAPTISM...

1. After the Spirit fell upon Cornelius and his household - **Ac 10:44-46**
2. The purpose of which was to show Peter and his fellow Jews that Gentiles could be recipients of the gospel and saved in the same way - cf. **Ac 10:45; 11:17-18; 15:7-11**
3. How then could anyone forbid water to those who had received the Spirit just as the apostles did? - **Ac 10:47; cf. 2:1-4**
4. So Cornelius and his household were commanded to be baptized in the name of the Lord - **Ac 10:48; cf. 2:38**

CONCLUSION

1. Once again, preaching the gospel followed the pattern seen before...
 - a. Proclaiming the death, burial, resurrection, and lordship of Jesus Christ
 - b. Calling for a response involving faith and baptism
2. Of course, other important observations can be made...
 - a. Religious people need to be saved (it is Jesus’ blood that saves, not religion per se!)
 - b. The gospel is for everyone, for God desires all men to be saved - cf. **1Ti 2:3-6; 2Pe 3:9**
 - c. The gospel requires of all the same response: faith and baptism - cf. **Mk 16:16; Ac 15:11**

How about you? You may be a good moral person, religious, even like Cornelius; but without Jesus there is no hope of salvation (cf. **Jn 8:24; 14:6**).

Have you received the remission of sins through an obedient faith in Jesus Christ? Are you ready to stand before the One ordained to be the Judge of the living and the dead (**Ac 10:42**)...?

Gospel Preaching In The First Century

Paul In The Synagogue At Antioch

INTRODUCTION

1. Thus far we have considered five examples of gospel preaching in the first century...
 - a. Three by the apostle **Peter**
 - b. Two by the evangelist **Philip**
2. From the preaching of Peter and Philip, we turn now to the preaching of **Paul**...
 - a. Formerly known as Saul, who persecuted the church - **Ac 8:1,3; 9:1-2**
 - b. Who became known as the apostle to the Gentiles - **Ac 9:15; Ro 11:13**

[We shall consider three examples of Paul' preaching, starting with an opportunity to preach to both the Jews and the Gentiles in the synagogue at Antioch...]

I. THE SETTING

A. IN ANTIOCH OF PISIDIA...

1. Paul was on his 1st missionary journey - **Ac 13:13**
2. Arriving in Antioch, he attended the synagogue on the Sabbath - **Ac 13:14**
3. This became his evangelistic method for reaching Jews - cf. **Ac 17:1-3**

B. IN THE SYNAGOGUE...

1. Invited by the rulers of the synagogue to speak to the people - **Ac 13:15**
2. His religious background may have been well-known - cf. **Ac 22:3-5; Ga 1:13-14**
3. Paul accepts the invitation to speak to both Jews and God-fearers - **Ac 13:16**

[As recorded by Luke, Paul stood, motioned with his hands, and then began to speak to both Jews and God-fearers (perhaps proselytes)...]

II. THE SERMON

A. PAUL REVIEWS THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL...

1. Their deliverance from Egypt and reception of Canaan - **Ac 13:16-19**
2. The period of the Judges and the beginning of their Kings - **Ac 13:20-21**
3. The promise to David, fulfilled with the coming of Jesus - **Ac 13:22-25**

B. PAUL PROCLAIMS THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST...

1. Addressed to both Jews and God-fearers - **Ac 13:26**
2. The death of Jesus by the rulers in Jerusalem - **Ac 13:27-29**
3. The resurrection of Jesus by God, witnessed by many - **Ac 13:30-31**
4. These are glad tidings, foretold by prophecy - **Ac 13:32-35**; cf. **Ps 2:7; Isa 55:3; Ps 16:10**
5. For David saw corruption, while He who was raised did not - **Ac 13:36-37**

C. PAUL OFFERS SALVATION WITH A WARNING...

1. Preaching forgiveness of sins through Jesus, not the Law - **Ac 13:38-39**

2. Warning them not to believe, in the words of Habakkuk - **Ac 13:40-41; Hab 1:5**

D. THE RESPONSE...

1. Begged by the Gentiles to preach the same to them the next Sabbath - **Ac 13:42**
2. Many Jews and devout proselytes encouraged to continue in the grace of God - **Ac 13:43**

E. THE FOLLOWING SABBATH...

1. Almost the whole city gathered to hear - **Ac 13:44**
2. Envious Jews contradicted and blasphemed the things spoken by Paul - **Ac 13:45**
3. Having judged themselves unworthy of eternal life, Paul turned to the Gentiles - **Ac 13:46-47**
4. Gentiles were glad and glorified the Word - **Ac 13:48**
5. “And as many as had been appointed (ordained, KJV) to eternal life believed” - **ibid.**
 - a. “There is no countenance here for the absolutum decretum of the Calvinists, since ver. 46 had already shown that the Jews had acted through their own choice...the Jews as a nation had been ordained to eternal life—they had rejected this election—but those who believed amongst the Gentiles were equally ordained by God to eternal life, and it was in accordance with His divine appointment that the Apostles had turned to them. Some take the word as if middle, not passive: “as many as had set themselves unto eternal life,” and in support of this Rendall refers to **1Co 16:15...**” - **Expositor’s Greek Testament**
 - b. “The verb $\tauαττω$ or $τασσω$ signifies to place, set, order, appoint, dispose; hence it has been considered here as implying the disposition or readiness of mind of several persons in the congregation, such as the religious proselytes mentioned **Ac 13:43**, who possessed the reverse of the disposition of those Jews who spake against those things, contradicting and blaspheming, **Ac 13:45.**” - **Adam Clarke**
 - c. “As many as were disposed to eternal life, as many as had concern about their eternal state, and aimed to make sure of eternal life, believed in Christ” - **Matthew Henry**

CONCLUSION

1. In preaching the gospel in the synagogue at Antioch...
 - a. Paul proclaimed the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ - **Ac 13:26-30**
 - b. Eyewitness testimony and OT prophecy were used to make his case - **Ac 13:31-37**
 - c. He taught faith in Jesus as the way to forgiveness of sins, not the Law - **Ac 13:38-39**
 - d. One makes themselves unworthy of eternal life by rejecting the Word - **Ac 13:46**
 - e. If you are disposed to receiving eternal life, you will believe in Christ! - **Ac 13:48**
2. In making personal application, you might well ask yourself...
 - a. Do you accept as truth the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ?
 - b. If not, have you seriously examined the eyewitness testimony and OT prophecy?
 - c. Do you believe that Jesus is the only way to forgiveness of sins?
 - d. Or have you made yourself unworthy of eternal life by rejecting the gospel?
 - e. I pray that you are disposed to receive eternal life!

If you are willing to listen to the Gospel and are disposed to receiving eternal life, you will gladly glorify the Word by obeying it, and continue in the grace of God through faithful service...

Gospel Preaching In The First Century

Paul At The Areopagus In Athens

INTRODUCTION

1. We have looked at six examples of gospel preaching in the first century...
 - a. Three by the apostle **Peter**
 - b. Two by the evangelist **Philip**
 - c. One by the apostle **Paul**
2. We now consider a sermon remarkable in that it was preached...
 - a. Not to Jews or even Gentile God-fearers (like Cornelius)
 - b. But to pagan philosophers and polytheists

[It was during Paul's second missionary journey, in the city of Athens, Greece...]

I. THE SETTING

A. PAUL HAD JUST ARRIVED IN ATHENS...

1. Known as a center of learning and artistry, but also for its idols
2. Petronius said that it was easier to find a god than a man in Athens
3. Provoked by the idolatry, Paul began preaching at every opportunity - **Ac 17:16-17**
 - a. Reasoning in the synagogues with the Jews and Gentile worshipers
 - b. Reasoning daily with any who happened to be in marketplace

B. HE ATTRACTED ATTENTION OF PHILOSOPHERS...

1. In particular, Epicurean and Stoic philosophers - **Ac 17:18**
 - a. Some of whom viewed him as a proclaimer of foreign gods
 - b. Because Paul was preaching of Jesus and the resurrection
2. They brought him to the Areopagus (Mar's Hill) and invited him to speak - **Ac 17:19-21**
 - a. A rocky hill about 370 feet high, not far from the Acropolis and the Agora (marketplace) in Athens - **Holman Bible Dictionary**
 - b. A place where Athenians and visitors spent their time discussing new ideas
 - c. Not having heard of the doctrine of Christ, they wanted to know more

[With such an invitation, you can imagine Paul's delight to accommodate them...]

II. THE SERMON

A. THEME: THE GOD THEY DID NOT KNOW...

1. Acknowledging their devotion, he makes mention of one altar in particular - **Ac 17:22-23a**
 - a. An altar with the inscription: *"To The Unknown God"*
 - b. So devout, they sought to worship a god they did not know
2. He uses the opportunity to preach concerning the True God they did not know! - **Ac 17:23b**

B. MAIN POINTS...

1. **God is the creator of the universe - Ac 17:24**

- a. He made the world, He is Lord of heaven and earth
 - b. As such, He does not dwell in temples made with hands - cf. **1Ki 8:22-30**
 - 2. **God is the sustainer of life - Ac 17:25**
 - a. He gives to all life their breath and what they need - cf. **Jm 1:17**
 - b. Therefore God is not worshipped as though He needs it
 - 3. **God is the ruler of all the nations - Ac 17:26-27**
 - a. He has created every nation and determined their rise and fall - **Dan 2:20-21; 4:17**
 - b. Everything is designed to prompt men to seek God, who is not far from any of us
 - 4. **God is the Father of mankind - Ac 17:28-29**
 - a. From God we come; and in Him we live, move, and have our very being
 - b. Therefore we should not think that God is like any idol of gold, silver or stone
 - 5. **God is the Judge of the world - Ac 17:30-31**
 - a. What ignorance He may have overlooked in the past, such is no longer the case
 - b. He now commands all men everywhere to repent
 - c. Why? Because of the coming Judgment, in which...
 - a. God will judge the world in righteousness
 - b. God will judge the world through Jesus Christ - **Jn 5:22,26-27; 12:48**
 - d. As proof such will occur, God has raised Jesus from the dead
- **These five points are from “The Spirit, The Church, And The World”, by John Stott**

C. RESPONSE...

- 1. Mentioning the resurrection provoked a response - **Ac 17:32**
 - a. Some mocked (to many at that time, the idea of a bodily resurrection was foolishness)
 - b. Others were more cordial, offering to listen again at another time
- 2. As Paul left, some joined him and believed - **Ac 17:33-34**
 - a. Specifically mentioned are Dionysius the Areopagite, and Damaris, a woman
 - b. Others also joined Paul and believed

[Having considered the setting and the sermon, allow me to make some...]

III. OBSERVATIONS

A. REGARDING THE SERMON...

- 1. **Paul used tact - Ac 17:22-23**
 - a. He acknowledges their spirituality, though misdirected
 - b. We should not hesitate to acknowledge the devotion one might have; if in error, our task is to explain “the way of God more accurately” - e.g., **Ac 18:24-26**
- 2. **Paul began with the present spiritual condition of his audience - Ac 17:23-27**
 - a. They believed in supreme beings, but didn’t know the True God
 - b. With the Jews he began with the Law, with the Gentiles he began with the nature of God; we too should take into consideration where one is spiritually
- 3. **Paul made use of an accepted authority - Ac 17:28-29**
 - a. He quotes from one of their own prophets to make his point
 - b. When appropriate, we can appeal to an uninspired authority accepted by others
- 4. **Paul led his audience to the main themes of the gospel - Ac 17:30-31**
 - a. Such as the need to repent, the coming Judgment - cf. **Ac 2:38; 3:19**
 - b. So our ultimate goal in preaching should be the gospel message
- 5. **Paul used the resurrection of Jesus as the ultimate proof - Ac 17:31**
 - a. God has given assurance of the coming Judgment by raising Jesus

- b. Indeed, if Jesus truly did rise from the dead, it is proof of:
 - 1) The existence of God
 - 2) The truthfulness of all of Jesus' claims
 - 3) The reality of sin, judgment, and the need to repent
- c. This is why we need to develop a strong apologetic for the resurrection of Jesus

B. REGARDING THE RESPONSE...

1. People responded in three different ways - **Ac 17:32-34**
 - a. **Rejection** - "some mocked"
 - b. **Reluctance** - "others said, 'we will hear you again on this matter'"
 - c. **Reception** - "some men joined him and believed"
2. Of those who responded favorably, it is only said that they "**believed**" - **Ac 17:34**
 - a. Are we to conclude from this that was all they did?
 - b. Did they not also "repent", as commanded in **Ac 17:30**?
 - c. The term "believed" encompassed more than simply an acceptance of the facts that had been proclaimed
 - 1) It involved a complete reception of the message preached
 - 2) It included an obedience to whatever conditions had been proclaimed by the apostles (such as repentance, baptism)
 - d. Just as **faith** was not explicitly mentioned in **Acts 2**, or **repentance** in **Acts 16**, but is fairly inferred from what we know in other passages, so also with **baptism** here
 - 1) "There is, indeed, much to be said for the contention, independently advocated by theologians of varied schools, that in the New Testament faith and baptism are viewed as inseparables whenever the subject of Christian initiation is under discussion, so that if one is referred to, the other is presupposed, even if not mentioned." - **G. R. Beasley-Murray, Baptism In The New Testament, p. 272**
 - 2) "Baptism and faith are but the outside and inside of the same thing" - **James Denny (as quoted by Beasley-Murray, ibid.)**
 - 3) "Where baptism is spoken of faith is presumed, and where faith is spoken of baptism is included in the thought" - **N. J. Engelsen (as quoted by Beasley-Murray, ibid.)**

CONCLUSION

1. Whether Jew or Gentile, philosopher or simpleton, the gospel of Christ is for all...
 - a. Where we begin may vary with the spiritual condition of our audience
 - b. Where we end must always be the same: Jesus is the only way to salvation!
2. When one becomes convicted of their sinful condition and their need for Jesus, the proper response should also be the same no matter who we are...
 - a. Faith in Jesus as the Son of God, who died for our sins and was raised from the dead
 - b. Repentance from sin
 - c. Baptism into Christ for the forgiveness of sins through His blood

One's reaction to the gospel will always be one of three ways: **rejection, reluctance, or reception**. In Athens, people such as Dionysius and Damaris exemplified the proper response. Are you willing to imitate their example...?

Gospel Preaching In The First Century

Paul Under House Arrest In Rome

INTRODUCTION

1. We have looked at seven examples of gospel preaching in the first century...
 - a. Three by the apostle **Peter**
 - b. Two by the evangelist **Philip**
 - c. Two by the apostle **Paul**
2. Our final example of gospel preaching is a third by the apostle Paul...
 - a. Found at the end of the book of Acts
 - b. Upon his arrival, and during his extended stay in Rome

[It was after a harrowing journey by sea involving shipwreck, as Paul is placed under house arrest awaiting his appeal to Caesar in Rome, Italy...]

I. THE SETTING(S)

A. AUDIENCE WITH JEWISH LEADERS...

1. Paul had just arrived in Rome - **Ac 28:16**
2. He called Jewish leaders to explain the reason for his arrival - **Ac 28:17-20**
3. They graciously grant him an opportunity to explain his beliefs - **Ac 28:21-23**

B. VISITORS FOR TWO YEARS...

1. Paul was allowed to live in a rented home awaiting his trial - **Ac 28:30**
2. For two years he taught those who came to visit him - **Ac 28:30-31**

[In both settings, at the beginning and during the course of his imprisonment, let's now look at...]

II. THE SERMON(S)

A. CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF GOD...

1. A major theme of Paul's preaching
 - a. "he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God" - **Ac 28:23**
 - b. "preaching the kingdom of God" - **Ac 28:31**
 - c. As mentioned previously by Luke - cf. **Ac 19:8; 20:25**
2. A major theme of others' preaching
 - a. By John the Baptist - **Mt 3:1-2**
 - b. By Jesus Christ - **Mk 1:14-15**
 - c. By Philip the evangelist - **Ac 8:12**
3. As summarized before, this theme likely entailed:
 - a. The need to seek first the kingship and sovereignty of God - cf. **Mt 6:33**
 - b. Sovereignty now exercised through His Son, Jesus - cf. **Mt 28:18; Ac 2:36; 5:31**
 - c. In which all can now participate - cf. **Col 1:13; Re 1:9**
 - d. By responding to the call of the gospel - cf. **1Th 2:12; 2Th 2:14**
 - e. Remaining faithful to Christ, even to death - cf. **Re 2:10,26-27; 3:21**

B. CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST...

1. Another major theme of Paul's preaching
 - a. "concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets" - **Ac 28:23**
 - b. "teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ" - **Ac 28:31**
 - c. As mentioned previously by Luke - cf. **Ac 17:1-3; 18:28; 26:22-23**
2. As seen from such passages, this theme proclaimed:
 - a. That Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead
 - b. That He would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles
 - c. That Jesus is the Christ foretold by the Law and the Prophets

C. CONCERNING THOSE WHO DID NOT BELIEVE...

1. Some did not believe what Paul preached - **Ac 28:24**
2. The Holy Spirit had foretold such disbelief through Isaiah - **Ac 28:25-27**
3. Rejection by the Jews would grant opportunity for the Gentiles - **Ac 28:28**
4. As Paul had proclaimed to Jewish audiences before - cf. **Ac 13:46-47**

CONCLUSION

1. Once again, we see that gospel preaching in the first century...
 - a. Proclaimed the kingdom of God and Jesus as the Christ
 - b. Warned of the danger and consequences of disbelief
2. Summarizing what we have seen in these eight cases of gospel preaching...
 - a. The gospel contains **facts to believe**
 - 1) Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures
 - 2) He now reigns as king, and will one day return to judge the world
 - b. The gospel contains **commands to obey**
 - 1) Faith, in Jesus as the Son of God who died for our sins
 - 2) Repentance, making the decision to turn from sin and live for God
 - 3) Confession, of one's faith in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God
 - 4) Baptism, immersion in water for the remission of sins
 - c. The gospel contains **promises to receive**
 - 1) The remission of sins, through the blood of Christ
 - 2) The gift of the Holy Spirit, empowerment for holy living
 - 3) The promise of the resurrection and eternal life, providing hope and comfort

Many gladly received the gospel as preached in the first century, and responded accordingly. Yet many did not, and so judged themselves unworthy of eternal life.

How about you? Have you heard and obeyed the gospel as proclaimed in the first century? Not some perverted gospel (cf. **Ga 1:6-9**), but that gospel preached by the apostles and preachers of Jesus Christ? I pray that you have, for the time is coming...

"...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 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." - 2Th 1:7-8

Only the pure and simple gospel of Christ can spare you from the judgment of that Great Day!