

LESSON 4

THE BIBLE AND THE SERMON

The Bible and preaching have been vitally related from Biblical times to this present day. The text of the Bible has provided the suggestion, the basis, or the primary content for the sermon, or some combination of these for the preacher's message. The reasons for this relationship lie in the very nature of the Bible as the Word of God and of preaching as the proclamation of the Word of God.

The Inspiration of the Bible and the Sermon

The Biblical text, first of all, is considered the Word of God by preachers because they believe that God inspired the writers of Scripture to record His Word to man through their experiences. Thus, the Bible has both the divine element, the inspiration of God, and the human element, the personality and experience of the writers. The ideas and the wording of the Bible are inspired by God as the Spirit of God guided those whom He had chosen to record His message to men.

The Apostle Paul believed that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16), literally God-breathed (theopneustos). The Apostle Peter wrote: "No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:20-21). Peter believed that the prophets preached the messages that the Spirit of God had motivated them to proclaim. These prophecies were recorded as "Scriptures" and were understood to be the Word of the Spirit of God.

The pattern for apostolic preaching was initiated by Peter in his message at Pentecost and recorded by Luke as Scripture (Acts 2:14-36). The Holy Spirit came in great power upon the disciples as the Lord had promised (Acts 1:8), and they spoke in other languages "as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). Peter, as their spokesman, took the occasion to begin his message. He interpreted the experience to those people present, quoting the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28-32) and explaining that these Scriptures were being fulfilled that day (Acts 2:17-21). He went on to quote Psalm 16:8-11 and explained that David being a prophet foresaw these days and

The Bible has provided the _____, the _____, or the primary _____ for the sermon, or some combination of these for the preacher's _____.

(suggestion, basis, content, message)

The Bible has both the _____ element and the _____ element.

IDENTIFY DIVINE ELEMENT AND HUMAN ELEMENT BY WRITING DIVINE OR HUMAN IN EACH BLANK.

_____ the inspiration of God

_____ the personality and experience of the writers

(divine, human, divine, human)

Second Timothy 3:16 states "all scripture is given by _____".

(inspiration of God)

spoke of the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:25-28). He concluded his message by proclaiming the ascension of Christ and His Lordship, quoting Psalm 110:1 (Acts 2:32-36).

Preaching in the decades to follow testified to the saving acts of God in Christ, focalized in His life, death, and resurrection, as fulfillment of Scripture with an appeal to repentance and faith. The Book of Acts is concluded with the record of Paul saying that the Holy Spirit speaking through the prophet Isaiah, quoting Isaiah 6:9-10, warned that the children of Israel would reject the salvation of God (Acts 28:25-28).

The Scriptures of the New Testament also indicate that the Spirit of God was at work to move men to speak and write as He directed. In his letter to the Church at Corinth, Paul stated that he believed his speech and preaching were not "with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:4). He explained to the Church that believers receive the Spirit of God in order to know the things that God had given and to speak in the words the Spirit teaches (1 Cor. 2:10-13).

Furthermore, to the Christians at Ephesus Paul stated that by revelation God had made known to him the mystery of Christ. He said to them, "I wrote afore in few words, whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3:3-4). The mystery, which was unknown previously to men, was revealed unto the apostles and prophets by the Spirit and was preached unto the Gentiles (Eph. 3:5-8). In his first letter to Timothy, Paul stated that ministers who labor faithfully in preaching and teaching are worthy of twofold honor. He wrote, "For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, the labourer is worthy of his reward" (1 Tim. 5:18), quoting an Old Testament passage, Deuteronomy 25:4, and a New Testament passage, Luke 10:7, in the same context, and acknowledging both as Scripture. The epistles of Paul were recognized early by Peter as Scripture along with other Scriptures. He said that Paul wrote according to the wisdom given unto him for the help of believers (2 Pet. 3:15-16). In the decades and centuries to follow, the texts of the New Testament were acknowledged by the churches as inspired by God along with the texts of the Old Testament and were preached throughout the world as the Word of God.

Through which Old Testament prophet did Paul say the Holy Spirit spoke, warning that the children of Israel would reject God's salvation? _____

(Isaiah)

Paul stated to the Christians at Ephesus that by revelation God had made known to him the _____.

(mystery of Christ)

The Authority of the Bible and the Sermon

Moreover, the Bible is considered the source of authority for preaching. The spokesmen for God in the Old Testament appealed to Scripture as the source of their authority, especially the written law of Moses. Joshua recorded the law of Moses at Mount Ebal and read all the words of the law to the people (Joshua 8:30-35). When Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law in the temple, Josiah the king read the words of the covenant to the people and urged them to heed God's Word (2 Chron. 34:14-33). After Nehemiah led the first group of Israelites back from Babylon to Jerusalem, Ezra read from the book of the law of Moses to the people, and the Levites helped the people to understand the law (Neh. 8:1-8). The prophets often referred to the law in their proclamation of the Word of God and in their written prophecies (Isa. 8:16; Jer. 8:8; Dan. 9:11,13; Mal. 4:4), but more often preached by new revelations given directly to them and later recorded.

The Lord Jesus Himself referred to Scripture as the source of authority for his public pronouncements. At the beginning of His ministry when He came to Nazareth, He went into the synagogue on the sabbath day as was His custom. When He was given the book of the prophet Isaiah, He turned to the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Isa. 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19). He went on to tell them that the Scripture was fulfilled that day. Thus, He quoted Scripture as the basis for His preaching, and for His goals in preaching.

Furthermore, as He preached throughout the land, He proclaimed that not the smallest letter of the law would pass away until all things were accomplished (Matt. 5:17-19) and the Scripture could not be broken or set aside (John 10:35). He charged His critics with rejection of one of the commandments of God written in the law of Moses (Exod. 20:12), saying that they were making "the word of God" of no effect through the tradition of men (Mark 7:9-13).

After His resurrection, Jesus told His disciples that all authority in heaven and in earth was given to Him (Matt. 28:18), and on this basis He was sending them to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21). Beginning at Pentecost, the Spirit-filled disciples preached the Gospel with authority and with great effectiveness. The disciples quoted

FILL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT LEADERS WHO USED THE SCRIPTURE AS SOURCE OF THEIR AUTHORITY.

1. _____ recorded the law of Moses at Mount Ebal and read it to the people.
2. _____, the king, read the covenant to the people.
3. _____ read to the people from the book of the law of Moses.
4. _____ often referred to the law in spoken and written prophecies.

(Joshua, Josiah, Ezra, the prophets)

What did Jesus refer to as the source of his authority? _____

(Scripture)

Scripture as the authority for their message (cf. Acts 2, 4, 5, 7, 13, 15).

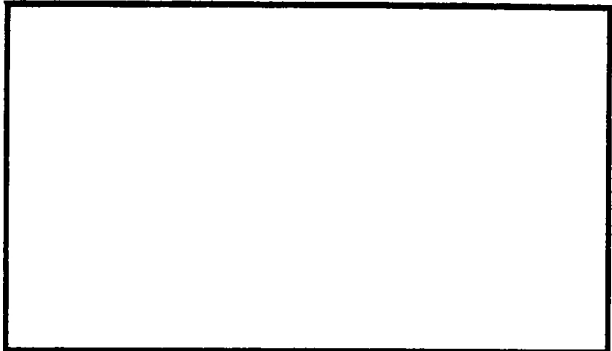
At his conversion Paul was chosen by Christ to bear His name throughout the world, and he later wrote that he was ordained a preacher (1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11). Paul charged the young preacher Timothy that since all Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Tim. 3:16), he should "preach the word" at all seasons, exhorting with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4:2).

Through the centuries that followed, many men have received the call from God to preach the Gospel and have preached Christ and the Cross on the basis of the authority of the Scriptures. When the spiritual power and influence of the Church declined, a return to the authority of the Scriptures by the ministry has been accompanied by a revival of Biblical preaching, resulting in a religious awakening. This phenomenon may be observed during such movements as the Reformation, the Great Awakening, the Wesleyan Revival, and the present Billy Graham Crusades, in which the evangelist frequently uses the expression "the Bible says" as he preaches the Word of God.

The Revelation of the Bible and the Sermon

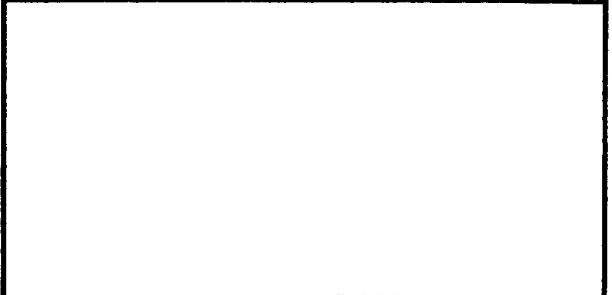
Furthermore, the Bible provides the revelation of God for the message of preaching. This message is centered in Jesus Christ, the Word of God (John 1:1; 1 John 1:1; Rev. 19:13). He is the Son of God who became human and revealed God the Father (John 1:14, 18; 14:6-9). God spoke to man during Old Testament times in many different forms and ways by the prophets, but spoke personally and directly in His Son (Heb. 1:1-2). During His ministry Jesus said that the Scriptures testified of Him (John 5:39), and after His resurrection He explained how He fulfilled all that was written about Him in the law of Moses, in the prophets, and in the Psalms (Luke 24:44-45). He gave them understanding that they might understand the Scriptures so that they might proclaim Him (Luke 24:47-48; Acts 1:8).

The Gospel of Christ is also the Word of God which is preached to men (1 Pet. 1:23-25) in that it is God's revelation of salvation through the sufferings and glory of Christ, whom the prophets sought earnestly and proclaimed (1 Pet. 1:10-12). The Gospel is the good news of salvation in Christ who died for the sins of men and was raised again for their justification according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1-4; Rom. 4:25). Jesus told His disciples that His death and resurrection were necessary, as the Scriptures indicated, in order for men to receive forgiveness of sins, and that this central message



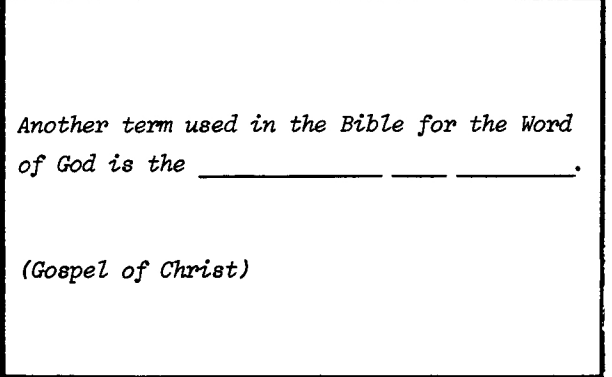
A return to the authority of the Scripture and a revival of Biblical preaching occurred in such movements as the R _____, the G _____ A _____, the W _____ R _____, and the B _____ G _____ C _____.

(Reformation, Great Awakening, Wesleyan Revival, Billy Graham Crusades)



IS THIS STATEMENT TRUE OR FALSE?
The Bible provides the revelation of God for the message of preaching. _____

(true)



Another term used in the Bible for the Word of God is the _____.

(Gospel of Christ)

should be preached among all nations (Luke 24:45-48). Paul was determined only to preach Christ and the Cross among men in the power of the Spirit in order that they might be saved (1 Cor. 2:1-5; 15:1-4).

The Scriptures themselves are also the revelation of God. Psalm 119 praises the Word of God and refers to the revelation of His will by such designations as "law", "commandments", "precepts", and "testimonies". The prophets proclaimed the Word of God and introduced their prophetic messages by such expressions as "Hear the word of the Lord" (Isa.1:10), "The word of the Lord came to me, saying" (Jer. 2:1), "Thus saith the Lord" (Amos 2:4), and "The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel" (Mal. 1:1). The Jews were privileged to be entrusted with these oracles (lit., logia, utterances) of God (Rom. 3:1-2). God revealed Himself to His people through their experiences. The things that happened were examples of God's dealings with men and were written for the instruction of others in the ages that followed (1 Cor. 10:11).

The New Testament Scriptures also reveal the will of God. Luke wrote his Gospel that the disciples might know the certainty of the things they had been taught (Luke 1:4). John wrote his Gospel that men might receive life through faith in Christ (John 20:31), and wrote a letter so that believers might know that they have eternal life (1 John 5:13). Paul in a letter to Timothy said that the Holy Scriptures are able to make a person wise unto salvation through faith in Christ and that they are profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness that the believer may be adequately equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:14-17). Therefore, he exhorted Timothy to preach the Word at all times and to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim. 4:1-5). He also urged Timothy to strive to be an approved worker in God's sight, properly presenting the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

A study of church history reveals that the Church has been the strongest spiritually and has accomplished the most in the Kingdom when the Bible has been its guide in matters of faith and practice and when preaching has been central in its ministry. The most effective preaching has been that in which the Bible has been utilized as the basis and the primary content for its message. The preachers through the ages that have been most effective have accepted the Bible as the Word of God, have comprehended its central message, have believed in the ministry of preaching, and have proclaimed the Gospel boldly. They have believed the Biblical text to be inspired by God, to be the authority for their preaching, and to be the means of God's revelation for their message.

Some expressions in the Bible which indicate that it is the revelation of God are:

"Hear _____"
"_____ came _____"
"_____ saith _____"
"_____ of the word of the Lord
to Israel"

(Hear the word of the Lord, The word of the Lord came to me, Thus saith the Lord, The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel)

The Church has been the strongest and accomplished the most when the _____ has been its guide and when _____ has been central.

(Bible, preaching)

The Interpretation of the Bible and the Sermon

An accurate interpretation of the Bible is also essential to preaching. The Lord after His resurrection had to open the understanding of the apostles that they might understand the Scriptures, particularly those pertaining to Him. This was necessary in order that they might proclaim the Gospel throughout the world (Luke 24:44-49). Peter wrote that prophecy of Scripture is not a matter of personal interpretation, since prophecy itself came by men moved or motivated by the Spirit of God (2 Pet. 1:20-21). Paul wrote that it is impossible for man to understand the things of God, and thus the Spirit of God is given to believers so that they can understand the things freely given to them. The things they speak are not in words that man's wisdom teaches, but in words that the Holy Spirit teaches, interpreting spiritual matters with spiritual language (1 Cor. 2:10-14). Thus, proper interpretation of Scripture is necessary for proclamation of the message of God.

The preacher, therefore, should be prayerful and diligent as he interprets the Word of God so that he might properly present it to men (2 Tim. 2:15). Certain principles of interpretation have been found through experience to be essential to accurate interpretation. (1) The preacher should first of all seek to comprehend the meaning of the author. He should take the simple and literal meaning of the passage unless it appears to be a figure of speech, and he should take the clearest and most obvious meaning, comparing the best translations available. If the passage is difficult, or the idiom is unfamiliar, or the language appears to be figurative, he should consult the most reputable scholars or commentaries. If the interpretation is still doubtful, he should consult other passages on the same subject or select one in which the meaning is more evident. (2) He should attempt to understand the occasion for the writing. He should consider the historical setting, (time, place, etc.), the people being addressed (Jew, Gentile, believers, etc.), the particular situation of the author and the readers (personal life and background), and the conditions of the times (religious, social, cultural, political, etc.). (3) He should attempt to comprehend the purpose of the author. Consideration should be given to the reason, the need, or the problem that motivated the author to write and that made necessary written documents. This includes an understanding of the relation between the author and the readers. (4) He should understand the nature of the literature. This includes an understanding of the style of the writer, a general knowledge of the original languages (Old Testament Hebrew, New Testament Greek), and the type of literature, whether history, poetry, prose, correspondence, prophecy,

IS THIS STATEMENT TRUE OR FALSE?

Personal interpretation of the Bible is essential to preaching. _____

(false)

LIST THE FOUR PRINCIPLES FOR ACCURATE INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE WHICH ARE DISCUSSED ON THIS PAGE.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

or apocalyptic literature. (5) He should consider the context of the passage. The authors moved logically from one thought to another, and thus each verse must be interpreted in relation to the verses around it and to the book to which it belongs. He should avoid interpreting the passage independent of the context or reading into the passage meaning not indicated by the context. Moreover, he should not "spiritualize" the passage, that is give some spiritual meaning that the author did not intend as indicated by the context. (6) He should consider the teaching of the whole Bible. A verse of Scripture should be interpreted in the light of teaching of the Bible as a whole, Jesus Christ being the central figure and the key to interpretation. A verse should also be interpreted in harmony with specific doctrines of the Bible. Neither the interpretation of Scripture nor the development of doctrine is reliable or complete without the other.

LIST THE TWO ADDITIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR ACCURATE INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE WHICH ARE DISCUSSED ON THIS PAGE.

1. _____

2. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

CAN YOU GIVE THE FOUR PRINCIPLES FOR ACCURATE INTERPRETATION WHICH YOU LEARNED ON PAGE 39? TRY IT ORALLY.

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3)

A. The Study Guide

1. The Bible and preaching are vitally related because the Bible has provided what for the sermon? _____

2. The Bible has what two important elements? _____

3. All Scripture is given by _____
4. The Book of Acts concludes with what incident in which the Spirit inspired a writer of the Bible? _____

5. Name some of the Old Testament leaders that appealed to the Bible as the source of authority for their message. _____

6. What did Jesus refer to as the source of his authority? _____

7. List some of the movements in history in which there was a return to the authority of the Scripture and a revival of Biblical preaching. _____

8. The Bible provides the revelation of God for the _____.

9. What is called the Word of God in the Bible? _____,

10. What expressions in the Bible indicate that it is the revelation of God?

11. The Church has been the strongest spiritually throughout history when what two things have been evident? _____

12. An accurate _____ of the Bible is essential to preaching.

13. List six principles which should be observed for accurate interpretation of the Bible.

B. The Bible

1. Read 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20-21.

What and who were inspired by God? _____

2. Read Ephesians 3:2-8.

What was made known to Paul be the revelation of God? _____

This was revealed to the apostles and prophets by whom? _____

3. Read Luke 4:18-19.

The Spirit of God anointed Jesus to do what? _____

4. Read Matthew 28:18-20.

Who is given all authority in heaven and earth? _____

On the basis of this authority, what was commissioned? _____

5. Read 1 Peter 1:10-12; 23-25.

What did the Spirit of Christ signify to the Prophets? _____

The Word of the Lord that was preached is called what in this chapter? _____

6. Read 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5.

The inspired Scriptures are profitable for what four things? _____

What is the man of God equipped for? _____

What was the charge given to Timothy based on the Scriptures? _____

7. Read Luke 24:44-49.

Name the three groups of Scripture that Jesus interpreted to the disciples.

These were fulfilled by _____.

What did He do to make the Scriptures understandable? _____

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3):

Read Chapter III, pages 47-65, of the textbook:

1. List the methods of interpretation of Biblical texts.
2. What are the three modern interpretations of Scripture and why are they inadequate?
3. Explain the grammatico-historical interpretation of Scripture.

4. Describe the four steps in interpretation given in the textbook.
5. Explain the twofold character of the Scriptures.
6. How does an understanding of the twofold character of Scripture relate to the preacher's interpretation of Scripture?

Advanced activity (Level 3):

1. What are the dangers of allegorical, mystical, and dogmatic interpretations of Scripture?
2. What is wrong with the four rationalistic interpretations of Scripture?
3. Explain in detail the proper analysis of the Biblical text?
4. Read Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-39). Explain the work of the Spirit. Show how Peter appealed to the authority of Scripture.

Seminar Discussion

1. Discuss the importance of believing in the inspiration of Scripture in relation to preaching.
2. Why is the Bible the primary authority of the preacher? Are there any other authorities?
3. Discuss the need of observing the principles of interpretation.
4. Develop an outline of the steps necessary for sound interpretation of a Biblical text. Apply them to the interpretation of a particular passage of Scripture. (This assignment might be given to the students the week before. Have each student give his outline of steps and his interpretation of a text.)