

PREACHERS, TEACHERS or BOTH

We have all heard of, read from, and/or actually listened to many pastors, apostles, evangelists and many other wonderful men and women of God who have brought forth the Word of God over the past 2000 years. It is good that we do this. However, could it be that we may be missing out on what the actual writers of the scriptures are actually saying.

When we read the scriptures today, we many times seem to try to get them to line up with our ways of thinking today. We can sometimes loose sight of what the actual **original** Word of God was saying and what those who presented the Word of God were actually telling us. We read what others say about them rather than reading and meditating on them for ourselves.

This might seem difficult for us to truly understand. After all, we have been made to think by many of today's church leaders, that they are actually more intelligent and actually more "spiritual" than even the writers of the Bible – especially, some of those writers of the New Testament such as the Apostle John, James, Jude and even some of Paul's writings.

I know that many of you are probably saying to yourself, "What is this guy writing about?" Well, let me say right off, I believe that **every word** of the entire Bible, Old and New Testament, is still and always will be, very much relevant to every born again child of God and to the entire world we live in – now and forever!!!

To begin, we need to start at the beginning – the beginning of the Bible. Yes, we must start with Genesis to Malachi and then continue on with Matthew through to the book of Revelation – the whole Bible. We must read the scriptures as they were meant to be read and to grasp and understand to whom and why they were written.

For example, we have the entire Old Testament which tells us about the creation of all things. It tells us about God's love for all people and how that love was expressed to the Hebrews so that all the world would see God's love for everyone through them. We have all the prophesies of the coming Savior of the world – and much, much more. This was all in preparation for the coming of Messiah, the Son of God – Jesus.

The New Testament, in the four Gospel accounts, tells us about the actual coming of that Messiah, the Son of God, Jesus. The New Testament tells us how the Body of Christ, the church, was actually established here on this earth. We have letters written by wonderful, inspired men of God to help teach new believers in Jesus and to train them on how they can stay on track with all of God's truths and ways. Then we have the book of Revelation which foretells the end times and tells all believers what will happen and what every true believer's destiny will be – the New Jerusalem with God, the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

This is where, I believe, we must understand the difference between what the original text was telling us concerning the areas of “preaching” and “teaching” of the Word of God. A good example of this is the apostle Paul. Paul acted in both capacities – at times he was a preacher and at other times, Paul was a teacher.

Paul acted in many of the “positions” that he spoke of in Ephesians 4:11 when he discussed the roles of the apostle, the prophet, the evangelist and the pastor/teacher. These were not titles, as many people have turned them into over these past 2000 years, but rather they were functions that God would give to certain people to help benefit the Body of Christ.

We know that Paul was an apostle, a “special messenger,” sent forth by God to tell the world about salvation in and through Jesus. He was sent to the unsaved, **both**, the Jew first and then to the Gentiles. He preached the Good News of salvation to everyone who would hear and believe what he was saying. He worked tirelessly to preach the Good News to as many people as he could. He desperately desired people to accept Jesus as their personal Savior and their Lord.

After that, many times Paul then changed from “preacher” to then working in the function of a “teacher,” training those who now believed in Jesus. He taught them how they were to live as the new children of God. He used as his text (mainly) the scriptures from what we refer to today as the Old Testament. He taught in and with the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

When Paul acted in the role of a “preacher” he would know his audience. For instance, he would adjust his approach depending on whether he was preaching to Jewish people or Gentiles. In Acts 13:14-15, we see that Paul entered the city of Antioch in Pisidia. Paul preached at the local synagogue to the Jewish people first.

Paul would use the scriptures from what we refer to as the Old Testament to preach the Good News of eternal life through Jesus. He would open up those scriptures and reveal what they were actually telling the Jewish people concerning the coming of Messiah and the new life they could have in and through Jesus, who was that Messiah.

The Jewish listeners would generally be familiar with the scriptural stories and familiar with understanding the doctrine of a Messiah. He preached to them right where they were at and what they all knew. Then he would immediately seek out any Gentiles who would listen to him.

Paul revealed to those Gentiles that there was One who they could believe in and receive eternal life through - Jesus. We must realize when Paul preached to the Gentiles, he needed to tell them in a way that they would be familiar with and show them that Yahweh God truly loved them as well. He could not do this by just using the Jewish scriptures because these Gentiles did not know them. No, He showed them Jesus in a way they could understand.

Paul and all the others who preached the Good News of salvation in Jesus, came to understand who they were speaking to and spoke to everyone of them – Jew and/or Gentile – in the way that they would be able to understand and see the true and living God. Paul, John, Matthew, Barnabas, Apollos and all the other ones who preached the Good News, knew their audience. They were given by God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the ability to speak to their audience, Jew or Gentile, in the way that these listeners could truly grasp and understand the love that God had for each one who were hearing their message of salvation.

In Acts 13:16-42, Paul works in the role of an apostle /evangelist (a preacher) as he first “preaches” to the Jewish people about Jesus. He showed them from the time of their Jewish captivity in Egypt to the time of Jesus’ death and resurrection that He was the One who God, the Father, sent to them to save them, not from the Romans, but rather from their own sin.

Then in the very next few verses, in Acts 13:43-48, we see Paul then preaches the Good News to the Gentiles of the same city. Paul was in the “preaching” mode. He was sharing the Good News of salvation to both the Jewish people and the Gentiles in the same city but in two different ways – ways that they could each grab a hold onto and understand. Whether they accepted the Good News or not was then left up to each one who heard the message.

However, if we notice, Paul seemed during his lifetime, to have had great pleasure as a “teacher.” He taught at Corinth for about 18 months “*teaching the word of God among them*” before moving on. (Acts 18:11) Paul preached (got people saved) and then taught (teacher) so much and so long at times that in one instance we read that someone fell asleep and fell out a window. We see that Paul, in the power of Holy Spirit and in the Name of Jesus, healed the man and then went right back to preaching and teaching. (Acts 20:8-12)

So what is the difference between “preaching” and “teaching.” We can define “preaching” as bringing forth a message about salvation that only comes by believing in Jesus. Then they would bring forth an invitation to those “unsaved” listeners and give them the opportunity to accept Jesus as their own personal Savior and Lord. It was the first step that needed to be done. People needed to accept Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord. People must be born again before they can rightfully hear, receive and then live out their life as a true child of God.

The main goal of preaching is to have the listener accept the invitation to receive Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord. Preaching is communication that moves in only one direction, from the “preacher” to the hearer. It is simply expressing the truth of what the individual needs for salvation. They need Jesus.

Teaching, by contrast, is the explanation of God’s Word to help the born again child of God in how to now live out this new life in Christ. It is a continuous life changing conversation and discussion between teacher and “student.” The teacher teaches the new believer to now live this new lifestyle of being a child of God and trains them to now be “disciples” of Christ.

Teaching, if done well, becomes a “conversation” between the teacher and the “student.” The communication of what is being taught is led by the teacher, but questions and answers from the students shape the discussion. It is for the purpose of helping the “new believer” to continually grow in their walk with the Lord now that they are a child of God.

Jesus was both, a “preacher and a teacher.” Jesus, as a “preacher,” preached that the only way of salvation was by one’s belief and acceptance of Him as the true Messiah, the son of Man and the Son of the Living God – the Savior of the world and the absolute, supreme and final authority over all things (Lord). They were not saved simply because they were Jewish. He expressed that salvation was (and still is) a personal choice and decision by an individual.

As a “teacher,” Jesus was often referred to as “Rabbi” which is the Jewish term for “Teacher.” The religious leaders and the “common” people both referred to him as “teacher” or “rabbi” and Jesus accepted that description (Mark 10:17–18; John 13:13). Jesus proclaimed that salvation would now be available (preacher). He instructed the people (teacher) in the actual way that the Word tells us that a child of God should now act and be as.

As a teacher, Jesus used illustrations (Luke 7:31–32), object lessons (Matthew 6:28), current events (Luke 13:4–5), and many stories (Matthew 13; Mark 4:2). He utilized the aspect of lecture (Matthew 5-7 and 24), dialogue (John 3), rhetorical questions (Luke 18:8), and proverbs (Luke 7:45). He gave “homework” and followed up on it (Matthew 9:13; 12:7). He used hyperbole (Matthew 5:29), metaphor (John 9:5), and provocative language (Luke 13:32). These are all aspects used by a good teacher.

Jesus, as a teacher, always had the best interests of His “students,” His disciples and all the people who listened to Him, as His first priority. The main subject and the “heart” of His teaching was the **absolute** and **unchanging truth** of God. He taught us how to truly understand what God was **really** telling us through His Word. It was never about the “letter of the Law” but rather it was always about the “spirit of the Law.” He simply made God’s Word understandable to everyone – if they would only have “eyes to see and ears to hear.”

What is the biblical difference between “preaching” and teaching?” Simply put: The Biblical difference between “preaching” and “teaching” is that preaching is primarily geared towards a “life-change,” becoming a “new creature,” while teaching is primarily aimed at transferring knowledge and truth of God’s living Word to that “new creature” so they can now live their life as that “one new man in Christ.” Preaching (salvation and new life) needs to be accomplished first before teaching (how to now live that new life) can be grasped and truly understood by the individual.

The New Testament word, “preacher,” refers to one who **proclaims the message of the Gospel**. In other words the term “preacher,” as found in the New Testament, is one who is literally doing the role of an apostle or evangelist. They are going forth and proclaiming the Good News of Jesus as the only Savior and Lord. Jesus is the only way an individual can be saved from the grips of hell and be given a new life, a new spirit and be “born-again.”

The term “evangelist” is a New Testament word not found in the Old Testament. It is from the Greek and it is a combination made up of two words, "good" and "to announce." It means one who “announces good news” or one who “proclaims the Gospel.” It is also another word used to refer to a “preacher” – the one who is declaring that Good News.

Preaching, as found in the New Testament, has the responsibility of proclaiming the Word of God and salvation to the world. The methods and audience may change because of culture and time, but the main objective remains the same - bringing people “face to face” with the truth, the message of Jesus and the Gospel.

As mentioned a “preacher” is actually more in the role of either an apostle or evangelist – they speak about salvation through Jesus. An “apostle” is one who desires to possibly start up a church or ministry in an area. An “evangelist” functions in an existing Body of Christ and is used to tell people the Good News and then get them to come to an existing church.

Preaching, as mentioned, can be thought of as bringing forth an exhortation and then an invitation to accept Jesus as one’s personal Savior and Lord. Preaching is literally announcing the Good News or explaining, clarifying, applying and exhorting those to accept Jesus as their Savior and Lord for their own life. Preaching is more of a “one way” conversation – you have the preacher who is proclaiming the Good News and the listener who is either receiving or rejecting the word that is being preached.

A “teacher” is one who is able to impart truth and wisdom into the lives of the believers. They literally are called to impart the truth and wisdom that is found in the full Word of God – the Bible – from Genesis to Revelation. Teaching is a means by which disciples of Jesus are continually transformed in order to become more and more like Christ. (Matthew 10:24–25)

A teacher or a pastor is one who takes the Word of God and brings it to the people in a congregation to help them in becoming, and then actually being, disciples of Jesus through God’s Word. It is an ongoing lifestyle change. We are always learning and teaching others and then learning again. The Word of God is a never ending “glass of truth” that continues on and on. It is so vast and deep. The more you drink, the more your glass is continually filled with more understanding and revelation to receive from our God.

Teaching is the explanation, as well as the revealing of God's truth as it is found throughout the scriptures for the purpose of helping those new believers in becoming true disciples. A teacher is to assist and help the student in how they are to now live out that new life as a child of God by the instruction given to us in the Word of God.

In good sound Godly teaching, there is usually a two way conversation going on between the "teacher" and the "student" with the purpose of the "students" engaging in the conversation and expressing their questions and thoughts as well as their difficulties – all for the purpose of bringing the truth of God's Word to the student. Ultimately, the teacher will also be continually learning. A good teacher never stops learning. They must be always willing to learn, as well.

Here is something to remember all of this by:

Preaching is proclaiming the Good News.

Teaching is educating on that Good News.

Preaching is announcing the way to get truth and new life by accepting Jesus.

Teaching is instruction on that truth and new life in Jesus.

Preaching is making a "believer."

Teaching is training up a "disciple."

We need true "preachers" today. We need those who are called to preach the Good News of salvation to this very hurt, confused and hurting world. The world needs to hear the Good News of Jesus for soon the end will come. Everyone needs to be saved; everyone needs the Savior, Jesus. The choice is up to the listener to either accept or deny the truth.

We need true teachers in this hour that will teach believers the truth about God and His Word. We need teachers that will teach the truth to all believers from Genesis to Revelation and everything in between. We need true teachers to help us to truly understand what it means to each of us that Jesus is our Lord. We need teachers to teach the things that will be coming soon and prepare the Body of Christ to be ready for the end times.

Will those who are truly called, to either "preach" or "teach" or maybe to do both, be ready and be willing to go forth into this world as they are sent by our God under the power of the Holy Spirit. The time is short and the time is now!!! We need to all be ready and willing to go forth!!!