

SECTION 7

Preaching in the Old Testament

“PREACHING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT”

When one surveys the Scriptures for insight into the “ministry of the Word,” he should begin with the Old Testament. The analysis can be etymological, biographical or even chronological.

Etymologically, several key terms are important:

- *qohelet* - Preacher (Ecc. 1:1,2,12; 7:27; 12:8,9,10)
- *basar* - To tell good news (Ps. 40:9; Is. 61:1)
- *qara* - To call or proclaim (Is. 61:1-2; 2 Kings 23:16; Jon. 3:2)
- *qeria* - Preaching
- *nabi* - Prophet, one who delivers an oracle from God. Occurs 309 times in OT. (Num. 11:25-29; Deut. 13:1, 18:20; Jer. 23:16)
- *roeh* - Seer, vision; used 11 times, emphasizes means by which revelation was received (1 Sam. 9:9)
- *hozeh* - seer, synonym for prophet (Amos 7:12)

Historically, the earliest reference to preaching is of “Enoch, the seventh from Adam, [who] prophesied” (Jude 14) and of Noah, who is called “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5).

Peter Adam in *Speaking God’s Word* summarizes the OT testimony by dividing it into three major segments:

1. MOSES, THE GREAT MINISTER OF THE WORD (EXODUS, DEUTERONOMY)

- a. Moses speaks for God.
- b. Moses writes down the words of God.
- c. Moses reads the words of God.
- d. Moses the preacher: important features of his sermons:

First, they are an **exposition** of the law given on Mount Sinai. Secondly, Moses **applies** his text to his congregation. Thirdly, Moses **exhorts** the people to obedience (Deut. 1, 5, 29). “We now have the main ingredients of the ministry of the Word - the servant who hears God's words, the writing down and reading out aloud of God's words, and the preaching of God's words by means of exposition, application, and exhortation” (p.40).

2. AFTER MOSES

The ministry of the Word established in Moses was continued in successive generations; Elijah (1 Kings 17:2,8,16,24); Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4,9); Ezekiel (Ezk. 2:9-3:1); Amos (Am. 3:7); Proverbs (Pr. 1:8-9); Ezra (Ezr. 7:10,11); (Neh. 8:1-4,7-8,13,18); “It is worth emphasizing the common elements that we are discovering in the Old Testament ministry of the Word. These include the acceptance of the written or spoken Word as coming from God, the role of ‘Scripture’, the place of public reading and explanation, encouragement to the right response, and the effect of the ministry on the people” (p. 41).

3. A FUTURE MINISTRY

- a. The return from exile, the new exodus; Isaiah 40:3 (see Mk. 1:3; Lk. 3:6; Jn. 1:23)
- b. This ministry is not only to Israel, but also to the Gentiles (Is. 49:6)
- c. The Servant's ministry of the Word is the daily gift of God. (Is. 50:4; 55:10-11)

As one examines the OT in search of a “pattern” or “model” for the ministry of the Word, two texts in particular stand out: Ecclesiastes 12:9-14 and Nehemiah 8:1-12.

The preacher of Ecclesiastes reminds us that “good preaching” is the ability to deliver the “words of truth correctly” (Eccl. 12:10). Good exposition involves developing the skill of expounding the Bible using contemporary language and thought to give a clear and powerful proclamation. The elements of both teaching and preaching are made relevant through explanation and application.

In Nehemiah we read, “and they read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly; and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading” (Neh. 8:8, RSV). Here the exposition of the Word involved three elements: **presentation** of the Word (they read it); **explanation** of the Word (they interpreted it); and **exhortation** based on the Word (they applied it).

-Bryan Chapell, “Components of Expository Preaching,” *Preaching* 10, no. 6 (May-June 1995): 4. See also David C. Deuel, “An Old Testament Pattern in Expository Preaching,” *The Master's Seminary Journal* 2, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 136.

Taking these two texts as models, our own expositional/homiletical analysis of them could prove fruitful. Note the following outlines as representative of how one might approach these texts with a view to expounding them in the preaching/teaching context.

“THE PREACHER ON PREACHING”

Ecclesiastes 12:9-14

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| I. | <u>BIBLICAL PREACHING INVOLVES INSTRUCTION.</u> | 12:9-10 |
| 1. | We preach didactically. | 12:9 |
| 2. | We preach logically. | 12:9 |
| 3. | We preach thoughtfully. | 12:10 |
| 4. | We preach truthfully. | 12:10 |
| II. | <u>BIBLICAL PREACHING INVITES ADMONITION.</u> | 12:11-12 |
| 1. | It provides principles to guide us. | 12:11 |
| 2. | It provides priorities to guard us. | 12:12 |
| III. | <u>BIBLICAL PREACHING INCLUDES EXHORTATION.</u> | 12:13-14 |
| 1. | It reminds us of why we are here. | 12:13 |
| 2. | It reminds us of what God will do. | 12:14 |

“PREACHING AND THE WORD OF GOD”
Nehemiah 8:1-12

I. PREACHING SHOULD DRAW US TOGETHER TO HEAR THE MAN OF GOD. (8:1)

1. We should gather to hear God’s servant.
2. We should gather to hear the Holy Scriptures.

II. PREACHING SHOULD HELP US TO UNDERSTAND THE WORD OF GOD. (8:2-3, 5, 8)

1. We must read the Word of God. 8:2-3, 8
2. We must listen to the Word of God. 8:3
3. We must honor the Word of God. 8:5
4. We must explain the Word of God. 8:8

III. PREACHING SHOULD MOVE US TO WORSHIP THE GOD OF THE WORD. (8:6)

1. We should bless the Lord with our voice.
2. We should bow before the Lord with our face.

IV. PREACHING SHOULD INSPIRE US TO REJOICE IN THE GOD WHO IS HOLY. (8:9-12)

1. Preaching should bring conviction. 8:9
2. Preaching should bring celebration. 8:10-12

Deuel aptly summarizes the contribution Ezra made to preaching when he notes,

"While on the one hand Ezra's proclamation is not a Sunday sermon delivered to a local church, it does manifest a timeless and universal quality as regards the nature of exposition. Ezra models an expositor's commitment - studying, practicing godliness, and teaching - which leads him to perform an expositor's task - reading distinctly and explaining the Scriptures so that his congregation may hear with a view to learning, learn with a view to fearing, and fear with a view to practicing godliness. To the encouragement of expositors, God's people still repent and rejoice as they did in Ezra's day when a well prepared teacher helps them understand Scripture."

-(pgs. 137-138)