

The Message of the Apostles

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Introduction

In this book we will look closely at the message of the apostles, how they preached and the very basics of their salvational message. This is what the church and its preachers should continue to proclaim and stand by. The message of the apostles was the pure gospel and our purpose in this book is to call for a return to the apostolic message.

Core Reality

“Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

2 Corinthians 5:17

The essential reality of the Christian faith is not an inherited religious confession or a doctrinal statement of beliefs. The core reality is an experience with God that changes the course and direction of your life, that brings healing and wholeness to the entire human being.

The word salvation that we get from the New Testament is from a Greek word that essentially means healing. He saves us. That is, he takes what is broken in us and restores it. He forgives us and cleanses us from sin. But not only that, he gives us a new nature. And a new relationship forms that makes you a child of God. You have a new nature, new desires, hurts and pains are healed, and peace is given to you. You are made new.

This experience comes to us when we believe in what God has done for us through his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God is the foundational revelation that the apostle Peter was given by the Heavenly Father. Upon this rock the church is built. (Matthew 16:16-18) And when the claims of Christ are accepted, the Spirit of God comes into our lives and makes us new. (Romans 10:9) Christ washed away our guilt through the blood that he shed on the cross. Jesus takes our broken lives and makes us new. He comes to us through the work of the Spirit of God and gives us a new life and a new start.

Many of the teachings of the New Testament form around these basic experiences that we have with God. Who God is, who Jesus is, who we are in Him, the Spirit of God's work, baptism, predestination, and all the things we learn about God and his plan are so that we can know him personally in our lives today and know our hope for the future. He wants to be real to us now in our life, present tense, and to display himself to us in a way that we can intimately know Him. He heals us, he provides for us, he gives us wisdom and leads us in life's decisions. We can talk to him and he talks to us.

Romans 8:14 says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." To be a son of God means to have a relationship with God. It is not merely a title, when you are a son in good standing with your father you have a relationship with him. To be led by the Spirit of God means that you hear from God and he directs your footsteps. This is not just an impersonal thing, but this is a very personal relationship where you find direction specifically for you. Truly all things are NEW!

The Church Changed The Message

While the message of the apostles has never changed, the message that the Church has preached has changed over the years.

As we wrote previously, it is the message of the apostles that saves us. Their message is the authoritative message for the Church. The teachings of the apostles are the commands of the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:36-37, 2 Peter 3:2). And if any one deviates from them, they are accursed (Galatians 1:8-9). So the final authority of the Church is the apostolic message and doctrine.

Unfortunately, just as with the history of Israel, they deviated from God and his plan for them time and time again. God sent prophets or preachers to call Israel to return to God. He has done the same through the history of the Church. You might ask, how did the Church leave God and his plan?

A study of history will reveal the political nature of the councils that decided or accepted Church theology. Take some time to read about the ecumenical councils formed in Christian history. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecumenical_council "***The Second Council of Nicea, which annulled that of Hieria, was itself annulled at a synod held in 815 in Constantinople under Emperor Leo V.***"

God does not use politics to form the teaching of his church. He gives his Word to men to preach. God brings his message through men. Read what Martin Luther, a man used by God to call the Church to return to the Scriptures, said about councils and popes:

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted, and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen.

Church councils and popes have indeed contradicted themselves, but the Scriptures are the final authority and all teachings of the Church must be examined and accepted or rejected based upon their biblical basis.

What is the Message of the New Testament?

I want to introduce you to a simple subject using a complex word. The word is kerygma.

What in the world is kerygma and why should I care?

The word kerygma is the Greek word that means “preaching.” In the mid-twentieth century it became a theological word that denoted the actual essence of the Christian apostolic message. I don’t mean the apostolic movement, but the actual apostles of Jesus Christ that were called by him in the first century. It was the simple and life-transforming truths of biblical Christianity.

What it is not is the complex theological constructions and formulations of the church from the 4th and 5th centuries. It is the simple and powerful truth that there is one God and that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. He is Lord of all, he died for our sins, and was raised from the dead. Through him we have access to the Holy Spirit, and the power of the Holy Spirit works supernaturally to prove Christ’s resurrection, and that he is coming again to set up his kingdom on earth.

The Spirit of God is leading the church back to the essence of the apostolic message of the Bible. In the mid-twentieth century, writers like C.H. Dodd and Rudolf Bultmann began to write out the most basic and fundamental teachings of the apostles that can be clearly seen. They developed the doctrine of the kerygma. This is an important truth that the church needs to return to.

The ancient Christian kerygma as summarized by Dodd from Peter’s speeches in the New Testament Book of Acts is comprised of

1. The Age of Fulfillment has dawned, the “latter days” foretold by the prophets.
2. This has taken place through the birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
3. By virtue of the resurrection, Jesus has been exalted at the right hand of God as Messianic head of the new Israel.
4. The Holy Spirit in the church is the sign of Christ’s present power and glory.
5. The Messianic Age will reach its consummation in the return of Christ.
6. An appeal is made for repentance with the offer of forgiveness, the Holy Spirit, and salvation.

Let’s return to the kerygma of the apostles. Paul wrote, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” Galatians 1:8.

“Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. “
(1 Corinthians 15:1-5 ESV)

This is the Gospel by which we are saved. Jesus died for our sins, he was buried, and he raised on the third day, all in fulfillment of the Scriptures. We are not saved by belief in the Nicene or Athanasian Creed. We are saved and our lives are transformed by believing in the message of the Gospel.

The apostolic kerygma is what is necessary for salvation. We are not in need of a theological development apart from the Bible. The Bible itself is the preserved record that God has given to us to bring us salvation and the power of God. What we need is an experience with God that brings His Power to change our lives and become his witnesses. Let's stand for the simplicity of the Bible and leave the traditions of men. Proclaim the kerygma of the apostles.

Message of the Apostles Examined

The apostolic kerygma is the preaching or proclamation which signifies the very essence of their message. We listed six points that theologian C.H. Dodd made, which he gathered from the Book of Acts.

These were fine points, and I agree that they were the main points that the apostles proclaimed in their sermons that were written in the Book of Acts. However, I think even more basic and essential was their message that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, the Son of God, and that he died for our sins according to scripture, and was raised from the dead, and now sits on the right hand of God exalted.

Peter preached on the day of Pentecost these main points;

1. The signs of the Holy Spirit in them is the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32.
2. Jesus was killed and raised from the dead to fulfill the Scriptures (Psalm 16:8-11).
3. He is exalted at the right hand of God fulfilling the Scriptures (Psalm 110:1).
4. God made or ordained Jesus both Lord and Christ

The people saw the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit as the believers miraculously spoke in their own languages. Then Peter proclaimed the Gospel and the people responded saying, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

Then Peter said unto them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.
(Acts 2:38)

The same gift that they saw present in the original followers of Jesus would be given to them. This gift of the Holy Spirit was the sign of Christ's power and exaltation to the right hand of God.

Let's examine the kerygma of Paul in the book of Acts. In Chapter 13, he speaks a little about the history of Israel and then about how a Savior was promised through the seed of David. And then he gives two major points:

1. He was killed and raised from the dead, fulfilling Psalm 2:7, "Thou art my Son. This day have I begotten thee." And, Psalm 16:8-11, that his soul would not be left in hell, neither would his Holy One be left to see corruption.
2. Through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is preached, and by Him all that believe are justified from those things that the Law could not justify you.

In Acts 17, Paul preaches the word to Gentiles and he establishes three important points:

1. God made the world and he is not an idol – He is omnipresent.
2. He commands everyone to turn from sin.
3. He appointed Jesus to judge the world with justice, and we know this because he was raised from the dead.
- 4.

This is the foundational kerygma of the church. Within all of these points we can see the very basic outline of the doctrine of the church.

1. God is One
2. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. He is Lord sitting at the right hand of God
3. Jesus was killed and raised from the dead
4. In his name forgiveness of sins is preached
5. Through faith in his person and word we are saved
6. The gift of the Holy Spirit works supernaturally in the church to prove the position and resurrection of Jesus

We must return to this simple outline of church practice and teaching. Leave behind the complex and sometimes contradictory theological ideologies and return to the message of the apostles. In that message there is the power to turn the world upside down and change the course of lives.

Reviewed In Detail

The essence of the message of the apostles is what brought salvation to the lost. When received by faith and the words of the apostles were obeyed, the gift of the Holy Spirit was given. As a result, their lives were changed and they entered into a living relationship with Jesus Christ.

I want to examine a few of the basic points of the message of the apostles, the very first message preached by the apostles. Let's review the details of the inaugural sermon of the church, preached by the Apostle Peter.

First, the sermon was an explanation of what took place in Acts 2:4. People witnessed the Galilean disciples speak in many foreign languages. Then this story was spread from one person to another until everyone was wondering what happened. Then, no doubt in the temple area where many people were gathered, Peter stood up and began to explain what happened.

A Personal Experience With God

Next, this was an individual experience that each disciple had with the Holy Ghost. Therefore, one of the main results of faith in Christ is an experience with God. God is a Person not just an experience. When we encounter a Person we have an experience with him. As a result of this experience, we find various explanations in Scripture. In John 3:6, Jesus calls it being born again. Paul speaks of it as being a "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17), regeneration and renewing (Titus 3:5), reconciliation; i.e., restoration of a relationship (2 Corinthians 5:18-19), spiritual circumcision (Colossians 2:11) and, in Matthew 3:11 John says its a "baptism" with the Holy Ghost. Peter chose the verses in Joel 2:28 to describe what happened as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Our Experience Comes Through Jesus

As Peter continued on from the fulfillment of Joel 2:28, he began to testify about Jesus. He said several things regarding Jesus. (1) He said Jesus was a man. (2) that he was approved of God; (3) by miracles, wonders and signs, (4) that God did through him.

Through the plan of God, he was crucified by wicked hands, but God raised him from the dead. He said this fulfills Psalm 16:8-11, that the Holy One would not see corruption. Then he said we are witnesses of Jesus' resurrection.

Then in explanation of what took place when they spoke in other languages, he said, "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear," (Act 2:33). Because Jesus is at the right hand of God and having received this promise of the Holy Spirit from God, he has given it to us and it is manifested in what you now see and hear. "For David is not ascended into the heavens, but He saith himself, "The LORD said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool," (Acts 2:34-35). Jesus fulfilled Psalm 110:1 because he is now exalted at the right hand of God. He died, he was raised, and now he is exalted at the right hand of God.

So before we examine what is said next in verse 36, we can say that the experience that the apostles had with God was rooted and grounded in the death, resurrection, and exaltation of

Jesus Christ. In Peter's explanation of the supernatural event, of Galileans speaking in foreign languages meant, he said:

1. Jesus was crucified
2. He was raised from the dead
3. He was exalted to the right hand of God
4. He gave us the Holy Spirit

Our experience that we have with the Holy Spirit comes from Jesus death, resurrection, and exaltation. Then in Acts 2:36, Peter says that God made Jesus both Lord and Christ. He appointed him as such by an act of his will and divine purpose. This was not an afterthought or, as some people put it, a choice as a result of Jesus' goodness but, as Peter wrote in Peter 1:20, he was foreordained before the foundation of the world.

Jesus is both Lord and Christ

Let's define what it means that he is Lord and Messiah according to the Scriptures, not according to philosophy or even modern theology. But understanding what it means that he is Lord and Messiah is critical to our faith. First, Lord, if obviously a title that came in fulfillment of Psalm 110:1. And in this verse it speaks of two Lords in our English language, but in the Hebrew it speaks of two different words. First, we have the Sacred Name of God, Yahweh. Yahweh is the one that speaks and says to the Lord sit at my right hand. Yahweh is the invisible God, the great I AM, the Creator and Father. Let's take a look at the Hebrew for what David calls "my Lord." It is the word **Adoni** from Hebrew and it means ruler. It is the same word used in 1 Samuel 24:8 when David spoke to Saul. He said to Saul, "my lord, the king." So when David was writing this Psalm, he was speaking of his offspring who would be the Messiah that would rule from Jerusalem forever. This was the human Messiah, who is our Lord.

The next title used is Messiah. It is from the Hebrew word mashiyach. It means anointed and refers to a consecrated person, either a king, priest, or saint. It comes from the root word "mashach" which means to rub with oil. That is an external event that speaks of a more internal event that takes place as we read in Isaiah 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." So the Spirit of Yahweh is upon him because He anointed him. He is anointed or consecrated to God by the Spirit of God. In Acts 10:38 Peter said Jesus was anointed with the Holy Ghost. So to summarize,

1. Jesus is Lord – he is the King, the one appointed by God to rule and judge the world
2. Jesus is Messiah – he is anointed with the Holy Spirit

What Should We Do?

Then the people believed the words of Peter and they were convicted in their hearts. They asked him what should we do. This is also a critical portion of his message. There are three sections to the message he delivers.

1. What is our experience with the Holy Spirit?
2. How did this experience come to us?
3. How can you receive this same experience?

Peter's answer to them is critical and also demonstrates that throughout the ages the church has changed their answer to how others can receive this experience. The teaching of the apostles is the plumb-line which we must build our house upon as Christian ministers. Once the apostles established this, it should remain the same.

Peter first told them to repent. The word repent means to think differently. Fruit of repentance (changing your mind) is living a different life. Next, he tells them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. In Matthew 28:19 Jesus told them to baptize in the NAME of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Here, Peter, tells them to be baptized in the NAME of Jesus Christ. Peter was not disobeying Jesus. He was obeying and clearly following the instructions of Jesus. The NAME that we must be saved by is Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12), and the NAME by which the whole family in heaven and earth is named is Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 3:14-15). Jesus said a singular NAME in Matthew 28:19; not the NAMES of Father, Son and Spirit, but the NAME of Father, Son and Spirit, which is, as Peter declares, Jesus Christ. And as historians recognize, the early church always baptized in the name of Jesus Christ or the Lord Jesus or the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have not been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, I exhort you to be baptized again according to scriptural baptism.

Then as a result, there is forgiveness of sins and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 13:39 Paul says that all that believe are justified, that is, their sins are forgiven. So Peter tells them what they must do as a result of his message in order to obtain what is offered to them by God, namely, the Holy Ghost.

1. Repent
2. Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ

First, the people responded to the message of Peter with faith. They believed it because if they had not they would not have asked what they should do. First, faith in their hearts and then the desire to respond in obedience. In verse 39 Peter declares that the promise is to the people present, their children, and to people that are far off, and even as many as the Lord our God shall call. So this promise and this framework is for the entire Gospel dispensation.

Return To the Original

The church departed from this foundation that was laid. They made sacraments and penance that was required for salvation. The evangelicals made people come forward to pray the sinners prayer and to join church. When the people asked what should we do, Peter did not say, "Pray this prayer with me" and he did not say "join with our group" and he did not say "follow the sacraments." He said repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. This is what we should do with those who believe.

We cannot change what the church did and how they sinned, but we can change what we do. The call goes forth now, return to the original faith, the original preaching of the apostles. Follow their pattern and obey their teaching. If you want to arrange biblical baptism, please be in touch with us at contendingforthemessage.com

There are several additional booklets that can be obtained that were written by Jason DeMars. To order them go to <http://contendingforthemessage.com/store/>

Holiness Unto the Lord

In this book I have an in-depth study of Christian modesty according to the Bible, addressing many objections and providing scriptural and historical evidence defending the position of the message regarding it.

Amazing Gift

This is a booklet that is evangelistic in nature. It presents the Gospel and addresses several objections against it that we face in the Western Culture.

A Message To Return to the Original Faith

In this booklet we take a look at history to examine how the church developed doctrine over time and we examine Scripture to find out what the message for today is. In each age there is a message to the church and the purpose is for it to Reform. One teaching of the Reformation is that the church should always be in the process of examining itself and returning to the Bible.

God's Basic Instructions

In this book I cover the basics of the Christian faith from the perspective of the message. Without going into great depth on each subject yet covering the details of the new birth, law and grace, the Ten Commandments, the three ordinances, the Godhead and Prayer. The main purpose of this book is to provide a foundation to those who have grown up in the message and for those seeking a foundation of which to build upon their understanding of the truth.