

Is It Possible To Preach Christ And Not Preach The Plan Of Salvation or To Preach Christ And Not Preach The Church?

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From time to time men set forth the doctrine that we should "preach Christ" and leave the controversial subjects of the plan of salvation and the church alone. Some say, "just preach the man and not the plan"; others say, "preach Christ and not the church". Their idea is that we can get more people to listen to us if we don't identify ourselves with the church of Christ; people are "turned off" by the church, they say. This doctrine is presently being propagated by some and needs to be examined in light of the word of God. Is it possible to "preach the man and not the plan", or to "preach Christ and not the church"? Let us see what we can learn from God's word.

Can one preach Christ without preaching the Plan?

The first lesson we all need to learn is that Jesus Christ is revealed to us in the word of God, and to fully preach Christ is to preach Him as He is revealed in that Word. Christ is inseparably connected with the Old Testament (Luke 24: 44); He was foreshadowed by the Law (Heb. 10:1-4). Christ is inseparably connected with every book of the New Testament. He is the one Lawgiver (James 4: 12); the One who authorized it (Matt. 28:18). He is inseparably connected with all His commands, His promises, His warnings, His church, His supper (the Lord's Supper), and His plan of salvation. All this being true, we cannot ignore any part of what He has said without ignoring that much of Christ. We cannot ignore part of His will and be pleasing in His sight (James 2: 10).

Philip is an example of one who preached Christ (Acts 8): "*Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.*" (Acts 8:5) ". . . *But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.*" (Acts 8:12). This text says Philip "*preached Christ*"; what did he preach?

- "*things concerning the kingdom of God*" (the church, Matt. 16: 18- 19);
- "*the name of Jesus Christ*" (Christ's authority, Matt. 28:18);
- "*they believed. . . were baptized . . .*" (the plan of salvation, Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16).

We can see that in preaching Christ Philip preached the plan of salvation. What did Peter preach on the day of Pentecost? He preached the plan of salvation (Acts 2: 22 - 38). Christ is not fully preached without the plan; man cannot be saved without obedience to that plan (Rom. 6:17; 2 Thess. 1:8), so it is impossible to "preach the man without the plan".

Can one preach Christ and not preach the Church?

Christ and the church were inseparable in the eternal purpose of God (Eph. 3: 9 - 11), and one cannot preach Christ without preaching His church. When Philip preached Christ in Samaria he preached the church ("*the things concerning the kingdom of God*", Acts 8: 5, 12).

One cannot preach on the blood of Christ and not preach the church. Paul taught that the church was purchased with the blood of Christ (Eph. 5: 25; Acts 20:28). The church, therefore, is inseparably connected with the blood of Christ; to be bought with the blood of Christ is to be in His church. We contact the blood of Christ in baptism (Rom. 6:3), and enter the body, the church, by baptism (I Cor. 12:13); when we are baptized we are bought with the blood of Christ (I Cor. 6:20), and are added to His church (Acts 2:47). That which Christ purchased with His blood was His church (Acts 20:28), and one cannot fully preach what the New Testament teaches concerning the blood of Jesus Christ without preaching His church.

One cannot preach salvation in Christ without preaching salvation in the church. The apostle Paul said that salvation is in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10) and that the church, the body of Christ, is the fullness of Christ (Eph. 1: 22- 23); so every blessing in Christ is enjoyed in the church. Paul told the Ephesians that Christ is the Saviour of the body (Eph. 5:23), and Luke said that the saved are added to the church (Acts 2:47). Since salvation is in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10); the church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1: 22 -23); Christ is the Saviour of the body (Eph. 5:23); and the saved are added to the church (Acts 2: 47), then it follows that salvation is in the church. One cannot, therefore, preach salvation in Christ without preaching salvation in the church.

One cannot preach glory to God in Christ without preaching the church. One cannot give glory to God in Christ without being in the church. Paul said in Ephesians 3:21: "*Unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations forever and ever.*" (ASV). When one is baptized he is baptized into Christ (Gal. 3: 27); into the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:13), and it is God's will that He (God) be glorified in the church and in Christ.

The importance of the church is seen when we consider that:

- Christ purchased it -- gave Himself for it (Eph. 5:25; Acts 20:28);
- Christ loved it (Eph. 5:25);
- Christ is the Saviour of it (Eph. 5:23);
- Christ sanctified and cleansed it (Eph. 5:26);
- Christ is the Head of it (Eph. 5: 23);
- It is the fullness of Christ (Eph. 1: 22-23);
- Christ and the church are one (Eph. 5: 31 - 32);
- Christ will present it to Himself a glorious church (Eph. 5:27).

I believe you can see from this short examination of the scriptures that one cannot fully preach Christ without preaching the plan of salvation and the church. To be ashamed of the church is to be ashamed of Christ because the church is His body (Eph. 1: 22 -23). Let us never think we can preach Christ and not preach His church. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (I Tim. 3:15). Let us never be guilty of trying to separate Christ and His church; it is an impossibility if we walk in truth.

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