

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

YOU PREACH A SERMON!

Over the years, I have preached thousands of sermons and taught thousands of various types of Bible Classes. During this period of time, my sole desire has been to *"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine"* (II Timothy 4:2). It certainly is my hope and desire that the thousands who have heard the Word preached have benefited eternally by these efforts. I always stand in awe of this great responsibility that is laid before me. But one of the things we often forget is that the member also preached a sermon. It is done by what they say and do each day that they live. The apostle Paul said, *"Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men"* (II Corinthians 3:2). What are some ways we do this?

1. We preach a sermon every day by what we say (I Peter 4:11). In our everyday lives in the public sector, what are people reading about us?
2. We preach a sermon every day by what we do (Colossians 3:17). What does the world at large know about us and what we do?
3. We preach a sermon every day by what we wear (I Timothy 2:9). When the world sees us (and what we wear), do they see a modest Christian or a person that shows no reverence or God?

Likewise, in worship, each member preaches a sermon in addition to the one the minister publicly delivers. An as example:

1. Each member, in worship, preaches a sermon on the importance of gathering with the saints (Hebrews 10:25). Will we gather and show the world (and God) how important worship is, or will our seat be empty (I Samuel 20:18)?
2. Each member, in worship, preaches on the importance of fellowship (Hebrews 3:13; I John 1:7). Are we involved in "joint participation" with the body of Christ?
3. Each member, in worship, preaches on the joy of singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). Do we sing to God, and teach and admonish one another?
4. Each member, in worship, preaches on the importance and reference of the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-29; I Corinthians 11:26). Do we prepare our hearts and minds for this great event each week?
5. Each member, in worship, preaches on the privilege of prayer (James 5:16; I Thessalonians 5:17). As we humble ourselves before God, do we possess the right heart and demeanor to approach Him as He would have to us?
6. Each member in worship, preaches on the importance of giving (I Corinthians 16:2; II Corinthians 9:7). Are we following His command?
7. Each member, in worship, preaches a sermon on the importance of the word being preached (John 5:39; II Timothy 2:15). Do we listen attentively and apply the message as applicable?

I take my job very seriously when it comes to preaching; it is an honor and privilege. What about you? What sermons will you preach this coming year?

-Steve Fishel

LESSONS FROM TEARDROPS

Two little teardrops were floating down the river of life. One said to the other, "Who are you?" It replied, "I am a teardrop from a girl who loved a man and lost him. Who are you?" The first responded, "Well, I am a teardrop from the girl who got him!"

Like is like that. We cry over things we cannot have. If we only knew it, we would probably cry more if we had received them. Paul had the right idea when he said, *"I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content"* (Philippians 4:11).

GREAT WOMEN OF LOW ESTATE

Text: _____

- I. _____ in the Work
 - A. _____ with _____
 - B. _____ with _____
 - C. _____ with _____
- II. _____ for the Work
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____ for _____
- III. _____ by the Work
 - A. _____, why?
 - B. _____, how?

JUDAH'S NEW BEGINNING

Text: _____

- I. Zedekiah's _____
 - A. Zedekiah's _____
 - B. Zedekiah's _____
 - C. Zedekiah's _____
- II. Jerusalem is _____
 - A. Jerusalem _____
 - B. Jerusalem's _____
- III. Cyrus _____
 - A. Persia's _____
 - B. Persia's _____

“Daddy, I want to ask you a question,” said little Bobby after his first day in Sunday school. “Yes, Bobby, what is it?” “The teacher was reading the Bible to us, all about the children of Israel building the temple, the children of Israel crossing the Red Sea, the children of Israel making sacrifices. Didn’t the grown-ups do anything?”

DART THROWING

Sally related an experience she had in a Bible class taught by Professor Smith. He was known for elaborate object lessons. One day, Sally walked into the classroom and knew they were in for a fun day. One the wall was a big target; on a table were many darts.

Smith told the students to draw a picture of someone they disliked or someone who had made them angry in the past. Sally’s friend drew a picture of a girl who had stolen her boyfriend. Another drew a picture of his little brother. Sally drew a former friend, with a great deal of detail, even drawing pimples on the face. Sally was pleased with the effect she achieved.

The class lined up and began throwing darts. Some threw with such force that the target ripped apart. Sally looked forward to her turn, but was disappointed when the teach said they were out of time.

As she sat down, thinking about how angry she was because she did not have a chance to throw at her target, the professor began removing the target from the wall. Underneath was a picture of Jesus.

A hush fell over the room as each student viewed the mangled picture of Jesus. Holes and jagged marks covered His face and His eyes. Smith said only these words, “...*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me*” (Matthew 25:40).

INVITE YOUR NEIGHBOR TO WORSHIP!

A man came out of his house on his way to worship services one Sunday morning. At the same time his neighbor came out of his house, fishing pole in hand. The neighbor said, “Jim, why don’t you go fishing with me today. The fishing report from my buddies at work is that the bass are tearing it up over at the lake back around Buzzard Slew.”

Jim, with an expression of disgust on his face, replied, “This is the Lord’s Day Bill, and my family and I go to church and worship God every Sunday. You know that I would never forsake worship to go fishing.”

After a moment’s silence, Bill sincerely and somewhat disgusted himself said, “You know, Jim, I have often wondered about your church, and I have admired your faithfulness. This is about the tenth time I have invited you to go fishing with me and you have gone with me on a Friday or Saturday, but you know, you have **never** invited me to go to church with you!”

How often do we invite our neighbors to worship with us that they might learn about Christ? We do things with our neighbors. We see them almost daily. Their children spend time with our children. But, do we encourage them to serve God. One may not feel comfortable or adequate enough to study with them personally, but it only takes a minute to invite them to worship. Invite your neighbor to worship next week? You might just be surprised.

THE BOOK OF NATIONAL HISTORY

When studied, the books of I and II Kings and I and II Chronicles are often studied together because of the vast amount of similar material recorded in each. However, wherein they are similar, they are also distinct in the way that the writers present the accounts. The basic difference is rooted in the span of time covered by the two accounts. I and II Kings, continuing from II Samuel, begins with David's death and Solomon's appointment to the Israelite throne. However, I and II Chronicles, continuing from II Samuel, goes all the way back to Adam and gives a condensed version of national history all the way from the beginning of creation and actually through the seventy year captivity of Judah in Babylon, to the raising up of Cyrus and the Medo-Persian empire who proclaimed Israel with the right to return home from captivity. So the two accounts are, for all practical purposes, similar, but it is likewise obvious that the Chronicles covers a much broader span of time, a period of over 3,500 years.

It should be noted, however, that the first 2,950 years of history are given in a very brief genealogical form, comprising the first nine chapters of I Chronicles. Following that the remaining 550-600 years is recorded in the following fashion: (1) I Chronicles 10-29 record the reign of David; (2) II Chronicles 1-9 record the reign of Solomon; and (3) II Chronicles 10-36 record the history of the kings of Judah leading up to the captivity, and then the proclamation to return home.

Again, though similar, another difference between the accounts of Kings and Chronicles would be the purpose for which they were written. I and II Kings, in all probability were written for the benefit of those in exile because the account concludes with the people being led away to Babylon. However, I and II Chronicles records an additional seventy years' worth of history, concluding with Cyrus decreeing that Israel return and rebuild their city, nation, and lives. Therefore the books of Chronicles were probably written for the benefit of those who survived the exile and were returning home.

Another difference of distinction between the Chronicles and the accounts of the Kings is the scope of the text. I and II Kings, in addition to I and II Samuel, were written primarily to give a political history of Israel and Judah. However, the Chronicles takes a different approach to the history of the nation, relying on the religious history of the Davidic reign in Judah, being written from a "priestly and spiritual perspective."

The name "Chronicles" was given to these writings by Jerome in the fourth century A.D. and makes reference to their literary form as diaries or annals. The title given to the books in the Hebrew translates into the "Words of the Day" or "Journals." They were written, as believed by most scholars, sometime in the late fifth century B.C. some time after the end of the Babylonian exile and the return of the nation to Palestine. Tradition most widely links the writing of these books to Ezra the priest. Dunn stated the similarity between I and II Chronicles and the book of Ezra writing, "They are written from a priestly viewpoint: genealogies, temple worship, ministry of the priesthood, and obedience to the law of God. Also the closing verses of II Chronicles (36:22-23) are repeated with minor changes as the opening verses of Ezra (1:1-3). Chronicles and Ezra may have been one continuous history as were Luke and Acts." Also, Jewish tradition states Ezra to be the human penman.

The theme of the Chronicles could probably not be summarized any better than it was by Wilkinson and Boa: "Because it was written to the returning remnant, Chronicles has a more positive thrust than Samuel or Kings. It does not deny failures but concentrates on the messianic line, the temple, and spiritual reforms. The readers needed encouragement in rebuilding their heritage. Chronicles teaches that Yahweh (Jehovah) is still with them – He brought them back and enabled them to rebuild the temple. All is not lost; though the glory has departed and they are under the control of Gentile powers, God still has a future for them. The throne of David was gone but the line of David still stood."

It was through that line of David that the Christ is seen and pictured in I and II Chronicles. In I Chronicles the genealogy of the first nine chapters serves as a preamble to the genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1. And in II Chronicles He is seen through the providential hand of God preserving all that was needed to put away the threats to the Messianic line, but to see it through as was His eternal purpose.

I and II Chronicles, though similar in many ways to I and II Kings, serves as a valuable tool in the Christian's understanding of the One through whom salvation is made possible. May God's longsuffering nature and undeterred promise of redemption through His Son serve as an inspiration to all Christians to give glory to God in word and deed.

-Andy Brewer