

“Ye Shall Die in Your Sins” – John 8:24

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In John 8:24 Jesus said, “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” These words, spoken primarily to the Pharisees among the Jews (vv. 13-14, 22) in the Temple (v. 20) are an excellent example of the direct, bold, and plain-spoken approach which characterized the preaching of the Son of God.

Current Concepts of Jesus

The concepts held by many (if not most) men concerning Jesus include the following elements:

1. He was a milksop, effeminate sort of man.
2. He was a man who never raised His voice, never became angry and never spoke in strong terms.
3. He was a man who always spoke in “positive” (as opposed to “negative”) terms.
4. He never rebuked anyone, but always had words of mildness and kindness for everyone.
5. He never engaged in religious controversy.
6. He never opposed or exposed any false teaching or purveyors thereof.
7. He never spoke in such a way as to offend anyone, even the most sensitive soul.

Anyone who has read much of the four Gospel accounts with any perception whatsoever is acutely aware that the aforementioned concepts do not accurately describe the “Jesus” described in the New Testament. Space constraints forbid even a brief review of the force and strength of the life and preaching of the Lord but suffice it to say that He was the opposite of each of the popular concepts listed above.

Current Concepts of and Attitudes Toward Preaching

The prevailing concepts of preaching are based in large measure upon the current misconceptions of Christ and of the way He lived and preached, I opine. Some of these attitudes toward preaching are as follows:

1. Preachers must not offend anyone (except possibly the Lord and faithful brethren), even the most sensitive soul (they might not return).
2. Preachers must not make anyone feel guilty about anything. Rather, preachers should aim at making all feel good about themselves.
3. Preachers should be wholly “positive.” They should deal only with “good” things and with such “positive” qualities as love, grace, peace, kindness, hope, Heaven, and such like. They should not deal with problems nor even indicate that such exist. They should ignore the

wrath of God, the justice and judgment of God, the need to obey the commandments of God, Hell, the need to fear God, and like subjects.

4. Preachers should not expose or oppose false teachers and their doctrines, nor stoop to engaging in controversy.
5. Preachers should not preach in straightforward, decisive terms that might leave the impression that the way of Christ is exclusive.
6. Preachers should never call names of institutions or persons in exposing false ways but should “just preach the Gospel and leave everyone else alone.”
7. More than anything else, preachers must be “good mixers” who can get along with everybody and who leave the impression that every doctrine and practice is acceptable. After all, the primary goals of the preacher are to:
 - a. attract as many people as possible by whatever means, and
 - b. never, never, never cause anyone to leave and not return.

If there were no other New Testament passages from which to judge the preaching of the Savior, John 8:24 would give us several important insights. Among them are the following:

1. He was not afraid of offending those He addressed. Of course, He never aimed at offending anyone just for the sake of doing so, but this passage reveals that He did not measure His words by whether His audience would be offended. On one occasion some of the disciples cautioned the Lord that His plain words had offended the Pharisees (Mat. 15:12), but if they expected Him to apologize, they were disappointed (w. 13-14). Doubtless the Pharisees described in John 8 were offended at being called “sinners” (vv. 21, 24) and men “from beneath” and “of this world” (v. 23) No matter to the Lord; they needed to hear those words. What a pity it is that in the minds of many today (including preachers) the “cardinal sin” for a preacher is to offend someone (as Christ did), regardless of how true or necessary his words may be.
2. Jesus’ words were exclusive. When He said, “Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins,” the Pharisees in their blind prejudice may not have understood **all** the implications of Jesus’ plain words, but they could not have misunderstood the claim of exclusiveness He uttered. It is tragic that modern men (including some preachers) do not want the exclusiveness of Christ Himself, His church, or His plan of salvation preached after the manner of the Lord.
3. Jesus’ words were not entirely “positive.” In fact, they were downright “negative.” In one breath He told them they were infidels and sinners and that they would be lost if they died in that condition. How sad that men now demand (and some preachers deliver) a kind of “preaching” almost completely foreign to that done by Christ.
4. Jesus’ words must have stirred some guilt, making the Pharisees feel rather bad. Despite the frequent use of guilt in the Lord’s preaching as a motive for repentance, men today think it

awful.

5. Jesus' words were not calculated to make Him more popular or to leave the impression that He could tolerate the Pharisees even though they were infidels. He did not try to attract multitudes by whatever means necessary. His blunt words sometimes caused people to be repelled rather than attracted (e.g., John 6:60-66). My judgment is that some churches of 500 members would be left with no more than 200 if their preachers preached more as Jesus did – and the smaller number would be spiritually stronger than the larger.

The Lord Jesus is our perfect model in every way (Heb. 4:15; I Pet. 2:21). This certainly means that His preaching must be the measure for our preaching. It is lamentable to contemplate the fact that were He among us in the flesh today He would not last more than one sermon (and maybe not all of that) in many of our pulpits. It is even sadder to consider that He would not be welcome on the campuses of some colleges and universities operated by brethren. Perhaps worst of all, He would be harshly criticized as an “unloving,” “negative” preacher by many of our editors and Gospel preachers.

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