

The Essentials of the Kerygma

What must we Preach?

By Nate Wilson, January 2001

Introduction

The context of this paper is an assignment placed upon me in late December by the ordination committee of the Rocky Mountain Presbytery of the PCA, in fulfillment of a requirement for ordination. The purpose of this paper is to identify the essential elements which the apostles communicated in their Gospel messages. By assignment, the scope has been limited to Acts and First Corinthians, although we will briefly check our conclusions against the rest of Scripture. The natural application of what will be discovered in this paper is the conscious use of those elements today in evangelistic presentations.

The method of this paper will be to detail the usage of the Greek word κηρυγμα (*kerygma*), explore the usage of other related words in the New Testament, analyze transcriptions of evangelistic messages in Acts, corroborate common elements from the Biblical data with quotes from other theologians, and then apply this information to evangelism today.

The Kerygma

Before we go much further, let us define what is meant by κηρυγμα. *Kerygma* is a Greek noun meaning a “message” or a “proclamation.” Attic Greek used the word especially in relation to “a herald or public crier” and that it implies a carrier of the message – the Apostles in the case of the New Testament^[1]. It is public in nature; Pershbacher uses the phrases “public annunciation” and “public inculcation” in his definition. Arndt & Gingrich underscore the aspect of preaching, and this is in accordance with English translations of the Bible: the KJV, NAS, and NIV render *kerygma* as “preaching” 83% of the time. Although *kerygma* means generically a proclamation of any sort, in the New Testament it is always used to describe the Gospel.

Use of the word Kerygma

The word *kerygma* only appears 9 times in all the New Testament texts, so let us begin by looking at every use of this word:

- Matthew 12:41 and Luke 11:32, in identical parallel accounts, use the word *kerygma* to describe the action of the prophet Jonah in Nineveh. English Bibles unanimously translate the word as “preaching” here. What did Jonah preach? “Fourty days and Nineveh is overturned.” (Jo. 3:4) No more is recorded. This simple message was enough to bring the Ninevites to their knees before God. Jesus chided the Jewish religious leaders because they wanted more than a call to repentance, they wanted a miraculous sign on demand. They did not have the faith to believe the Good News the way that Jesus was presenting it. So we see that faith and repentance are to be a result of the *kerygma*, but that not all will respond this way.

- The dubiously-originated “Short ending” of Mark’s Gospel also uses the word. The New American Standard Bible is one of the few English Bibles that even prints it, ending the book by saying that the Jesus sent out the “proclamation of the eternal salvation” through “Peter and his companions.” Here, the *kerygma* is “sent out” by “Jesus Himself” through the apostles “from east to west.” The *kerygma* is about “eternal salvation.” Every one of these elements is highlighted in other passages of scripture, so even though we may not count this passage as authoritative scripture, it speaks the truth.
- In Romans 16:25, Paul finishes his epistle with a doxology to “Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel (*euangelion*) and the preaching (*kerygma*) of Jesus Christ...” This directly links the word “Gospel/Good News” with the *kerygma*. It also directly links the *kerygma* to Jesus Christ. In fact, the *kerygma* is the agent by which a person is established in Jesus Christ. Why does Paul make a distinction between “his gospel” and the “preaching of Jesus Christ”? Perhaps it is to show that everyone after him who preaches about Jesus Christ “according to the Scriptures” is just as legitimate a preacher as he himself was. The response of the *kerygma* stated in this verse is that it should lead to the “obedience of faith.” Note also that the hearer of the *Kerygma* doesn’t establish himself in Christ by his faith, rather it is “God” who establishes him!
- The book of First Corinthians uses the word *Kerygma* more often than any other in the New Testament. In chapter one verse 21, Paul and Sosthenes write that God saves believers through the “foolishness of the *kerygma* (preaching).” Again we see the *kerygma* brought out as the means to faith and salvation. This passage also reinforces the fact that God is the one who does the saving, not the preacher or the believer. It also gives the content of what is preached: “Christ crucified.” In this, it draws a contrast similar to the contrast Jesus drew with the Jews when he spoke of the preaching of Jonah in Nineveh. Whereas Judaism is centered around miracles and Greek religions were based upon wisdom, Christianity is based upon preaching about Christ crucified.
- Similar themes come forth in First Corinthians 2:4, where Paul says his preaching was not based upon wisdom but in the simplicity of knowing nothing but “Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” Although the *kerygma* here was communicated in “speech,” it was not done with “persuasive words,” rather it was the simple “demonstration of the Spirit and power ... of God.” The result again is “faith.”
- No study of the essentials of the Gospel would be complete without Paul’s summary of his Gospel presentations, as stated in I Corinthians 15. Paul uses the synonym, *ευαγγελιον* (“good news”), here to describe his message.

It should go without saying that this Gospel information was something to be “made known” and “preached” to others. (v.1) It was the “first” thing Paul wanted to deliver by word of mouth when he met new people (v.3).

Belief in this message is called for as the means to salvation. (v.2, 11)

Salvation is not earned by works; the word in v.2 is passive (“you are saved”), and Paul stresses in v.10 that it is God’s “grace” which is to be credited.

Paul preaches only what he has “received” and is careful to corroborate his Gospel message with the authority of the writings of Scripture. (v.3)^[2]

The message in brief was that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and was raised. (v.3-4)

Paul stresses the value of the testimony of eyewitnesses of these facts (v.5-8; as does the Apostle John in the first chapter of his first epistle, and Luke in the preamble to his Gospel.)

- Paul also uses the word *kerygma* in his pastoral epistles. Second Timothy 4:17 does not go into much detail on the content and context of the *kerygma*; but it does state that because the Lord strengthened Paul, the *kerygma* (NAS: “proclamation,” NIV & ASV: “message,” KJV: “preaching”) got out to all the Gentiles. The *kerygma* is a message intended for a universal audience!
- Finally, Paul uses the word *kerygma* in Titus 1:3, again concerning the history of his ministry, saying that God had promised eternal life in the Old Testament and then displayed it in the *kerygma* with which he (Paul) was entrusted. Again we see the sovereignty of God in salvation (“God’s elect ... revealing in His own timing His word in the preaching”), and the nature of the *kerygma* as revealing “eternal life” and bringing about “faith.”

The Verbal form of Kerygma in Acts and I Cor. and its Use

The Greek noun, *kerygma* (κηρυγμα), has a verbal form, *karusso* (κηρυσσω). Like the noun, the verb *karusso* is used in the New Testament to indicate public proclamation of a message and is usually translated in English Bibles with the verb “to preach.” (The only exceptions I found were on three occasions where the New American Standard Bible translated it “proclaimed” – Acts 9:20, 10:37, and 13:24. Interestingly enough, the full gospel was not preached in those three instances.) Lexicographers bear out the same themes for *karusso* as they did for *kerygma*: According to Zhodiates and Thayer, it carries a strong connotation of heraldry, and Thayer adds that it always has “a suggestion of formality, gravity, and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed.” It is public; in the words of Pershbacher, *karusso* means to, “announce openly and publicly, to noise abroad.”

In Appendix 1, the context of the twelve occurrences of the verb *karusso* in Acts and First Corinthians are charted out, according to who gave the authority to preach, who did the preaching, what the content of the message was, who the audience was, what the anticipated response was from the audience, what the result or the object was of the preaching, who brought about that result, and then what parallels or contrasts were drawn in the context. For comparison, see Appendix 2 on the eight Scriptural references to Kerygma.

The similarities are consistent:

- **Authority:** The authority of the message always comes from God
- **Messenger:** The preacher was in every case either an apostle or a prophet.
- **Content:** The message centers on Jesus and his death and resurrection^[3]. Often the crucifixion and the resurrection are not both mentioned, but one is always implied in the other. In the cases where the name of Jesus Christ is not explicitly listed in what is preached, it is either the “word of God” (the Logos^[4]), the “kingdom of God” or the “Gospel,” all of which imply the message of Christ’s death and resurrection. This is not the mere proclamation of historical events, however, but, as Ladd says, “of events meaningfully understood. Christ died *for our sins*. The Gospel is both historical event and meaning; and the meaning of the event is that God was acting in history for humanity’s salvation...”^[5]

- **Audience:** The audience of preaching was always non-Christians. As I have show in another paper, “What does it mean to PREACH?”^[6] this holds true not only for Acts and I Cor., but also for the rest of the Bible. If the objection is raised that Paul said he preached to the Corinthian church, the objection founders on the fact that in each case Paul uses the word in accounts of the history of the Gospel, so the preaching was done to the pre-saved elect, not to the church. The audience was also universal; it included Jews and Gentiles from all over the world.
- **Response:** Before Jesus began His ministry, the response called for was always repentance, and ever after, it is belief/faith. The reason for this is that Jesus did not publicly reveal Himself as Messiah and Lord early in His ministry. It was this revelation which led to His crucifixion, so He did not reveal it publicly until it was time for Him to die^[7]; after His death and resurrection, faith in Jesus as the Christ was publicly proclaimed.
- **Result:** Salvation is the word most frequently used to describe the object of the preaching. This is also described as freedom from the dominion of sin and Satan and as “eternal life.”
- **Effector** of Result: Salvation is never achieved by the believer or the preacher, it is always done by God!
- **Contrasts:** The two systems consistently contrasted with the message of the Gospel are the systems of Greek wisdom and of Judaism with its sign-seeking. In I Cor 1:17 and 2:4, Paul also speaks of not using “clever speech” and “persuasive words” in presenting the gospel. The Gospel must be kept simple, and people must not be browbeaten or wheedled into accepting it.
- **Parallels:** Every time a comparative is used (which is about half the time), the subject is the teachings of the Prophets or the Apostles. The gospel is consistently related back to the history of God’s revelation – a preacher who starts coming up with new ideas which are not rooted in the writings of the prophets and apostles of the Bible should be treated with suspicion! The parallel drawn in I Cor. 9 between the priests at the altar and the preacher with the gospel is particularly interesting. The altar was where the Gospel of God was proclaimed in the Old Testament, as the bloody substitute offered atonement for sins. Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament sacrificial system, and now the New Testament evangelist, rather than the Old Testament priest, becomes the new herald of the Gospel in its fullness. The sacrificial system was strictly regulated (Deut. 12:32), just as is the content of the *kerygma* (Gal. 1:6-9).^[8]

Synonyms for the Kerygma in Acts and I Cor.

The New Testament consistently uses the word εὐαγγέλιον (*euangelion*) and its verbal form εὐαγγελίζω (*euangelizō*) as a synonym for *kerugma* and *karusso*. *Euangelion* literally means “Good News,” and most English Bibles render this word as “Gospel,” following Wycliffe’s original translation into old English. We get our English verb “evangelize” as a transliteration from this word. *Kerygma* appears to be transposable with *euangellion*, based on passages such as Luke 4:18-19, Luke 8:1, Acts 9:16-27, 20:24-25, Romans 10:15, 16:25, I Corinthians 1:17-23; 9:18-27, and 15:1-14, where they are used interchangeably from one sentence to the next. As the lexical notes below indicate, the preaching of the *euangelion* is basically the same as the *kerygma* except that it connotes the added element of the “goodness” of the news proclaimed.

Spiros Zhodiatas' *New Testament Lexical Aids*: Euangellizo: To evangelize, proclaim the good news, almost always concerning the Son of God as declared in the Gospel... Used in the **act. voice**, to declare, proclaim; in the **pass. voice**... of matters to be proclaimed as glad tidings... in

the **mid. voice** especially of the message of salvation with a personal obj., either of the person preached or with a prep. of the persons evangelized...

Strong's *NT Dictionary* Euangellizo #2097: to announce good news (“evangelize”) espec. the gospel:--declare, bring (declare, show) glad (good) tidings, preach (the gospel)

Pershbacher's *Analytical Greek Lexicon* Euangellizo: to address with good tidings..., mid. to proclaim as good tidings, to announce good tidings of... to address with Gospel teaching, evangelize... absol. to announce the good tidings of the Gospel..., pass. to be announced as good tidings...

Thayer's *Greek Lexicon* Euangellizo: Sept. for rFeBi; [basar] to bring good news, to announce glad tidings... used in the O.T. for any kind of good news ... in the N.T. used esp. of the glad tidings of the coming kingdom of God, and of the salvation to be obtained in it through Christ, and of what relates to this salvation...

“What does it mean to PREACH?” contains a chart of all the uses of the words related to *euangelizo* found in the books of Acts and First Corinthians. A comparison of the charts on *karusso* and *euangelizo* in appendices two and three shows practically full uniformity of use. As with *kerygma*, the authority for the *euangelion* was always from God. All of the Gospel messages associated with *kerygma* are also associated with *euangelizo* (Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection, the kingdom, and the Word-λογος); the only message associated with *euangelizo* that was not associated with *kerygma* is “the grace of God” (Acts 20:24), which comes, of course through the death and resurrection of Jesus, so nothing essentially new has been introduced. The audiences are still non-Christians, and the response is still repentance and faith. The results are still salvation, freedom from the dominion of sin and Satan, and eternal life; and the effector of those results is still unanimously God. Judaism and pagan Greek religions are still contrasted with the Gospel, as is “clever speech,” and the same parallels are drawn with the Prophets and the Apostles.

Some minor differences show up, including the fact that since *euangelizo* (“preach the gospel”) has its own object (“the gospel”) already contained in it, the New Testament authors don't always need to describe further what was preached when they use this verb. Also, since it is a positive message (“good news”) it is less used in the negative message of repentance and more used in the aspect of the benefits that a believer receives. The only benefit, however, not mentioned already as an object of *karusso*, is membership in the body of Christ, as referred to in Acts 8:12, 35, where it speaks of baptism as a result of belief, and Acts 14:21, where the making of disciples is listed as the result of preaching. Part of the good news is that once we are saved, we become part of a new fellowship – the church! Finally, it is instructive to note that not all the bearers of the *euangelion* (Acts 8:4, 11:20) were apostles.

Use Of The Related Words In All Of Scripture

Since it is conceivable that we could come up with an imbalanced doctrine by only studying Acts and First Corinthians, we will look briefly throughout the rest of scripture to see if the rest of Scripture is consistent with what we are finding in these two books. The New Testament, with only 20% of the text of the Bible, contains over 90% of the Bible's references to preaching, and the noun and verb forms of *kerygma* and *euangelion* account for 95% of the instances of the word “preach” and “proclaim” in English translations of the New Testament. A list of every occurrence of these two words in the New Testament can be found in the Appendices. In the chart below, I have categorized into ten general themes the messages which are specifically stated as having been “preached” throughout Scripture.

WHAT IS PREACHED?	κηρυσσω ω out of 69 citations	ευαγγελιζω ω out of 56 citations	κηρυσσω ω + ευα γγελιζω 125 total
Repent/the kingdom of heaven is at hand/turn from vanity to the living God/[The Baptism Of] Repentance [For The Remission Of Sins]/righteousness (Call to repentance=R)	14	1	15
The Word [Of The Lord], Moses, Teachings of Jesus and of Scripture=W	8	3	11
The [Everlasting] Gospel [Of God] (Without Further Description)=G	11	20	31
Gospel of the kingdom/the Kingdom [of God]=K	8	6	14
Prophecies Of Christ/Jesus' Coming/The Arrival Of Messiah/ Birth Of John/Birth Of Jesus/ The kingdom of heaven is here (Announcement of Messiah's coming=M)	2	8	10
Peace/Promise/Grace/Riches By Jesus Christ (The benefits of being a Believer=B)	0	6	6
The Power And Works Of Jesus (personal eyewitness testimony-T)	3	1	4
Christ, Jesus, Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus [crucified/resurrected]=JC	12	9	21
Another Jesus, Another Gospel, Circumcision (Heresy=X)	2	1	3
The love and faith of the Thessalonian Church	0	1	1
UNSTATED	9	0	9

If we eliminate the 9 “unstated” references and the 4 miscellaneous instances referring to false gospels and fraternal greetings, and if we combine the categories which focus on Christ (JC, T, B, M, K, and G), we find that, 77% of the citations refer to telling the story of the person and work of Jesus, 13% have to do with pointing out that people need to turn from their sin, and 10%

are less specific, referring to the teachings which are now found Scripture (which would certainly revolve around the person and work of Christ!). It is also interesting to note that eleven out of the fifteen references to preaching as the call to repentance occurred before Jesus ascended. The whole of Scripture, therefore, bears out that the person and work of Jesus Christ is the central theme of the preaching of the Gospel and that a call to repentance is also part of the preaching of the Gospel.

Another related word is μαρτυριον (martyrion), usually translated “testimony” or “witness.” This is the word from which we get our English word “martyr” – one who is killed for preaching the Gospel. The word generally means a prolonged public witness in a legal setting^[9], but a little over half its uses in the New Testament have to do with the proclamation of the Gospel. Jesus said that His miracles *bore witness* as evidence of who He is (John 5:36). Many of the examples of the apostles’ preaching actually took place in court settings. John used the word more frequently than any other New Testament writer, but Luke comes in 2nd place. It is used in combination with *euangelion* (Acts 8:25, 20:24) and *kerygma* (Mt. 24:14). The focus of the *martyrion* is Jesus (I Jo 4:4, I Cor 1:6). Although the cross and the resurrection are not as closely associated with it, the kingdom of God, and the grace of God are associated with it in Acts 28:23 and 20:24. This witness is also associated with the prophets in I Pet. 1:10-11 and John 1:15, and it is also expected of followers of Christ to testify similarly world-wide (Mt 24:14, Acts 1:8, 22:15). The uses throughout Scripture of the word *martyrion* therefore line up with what we have seen for the *kerygma* and the *euangelion*.

This brief look at the rest of Scripture confirms that what we have found in our study of the word “kerygma” is consistent with the whole of Scripture. Now we turn from word studies to practical examples of preaching to see if the apostles “practiced what they preached!”

Comparison of Evangelistic messages in the book of Acts

The book of Acts was written to contain not only commentary on the travels and results of preaching but also to contain transcriptions of the messages preached. In fact, one quarter of the book is pure sermon transcriptions! Part of God's purpose in this is to leave practical examples for His people on how to preach evangelistic messages ourselves. Following is a list of every *verbatim* evangelistic presentation in the book of Acts. See Appendix 5 for a summary of each of these presentations.

- Peter's Pentecost sermon (2:14-41):
- Peter in the temple (3:12-4:4)
- Peter in his first court trial (4:8-12)
- Peter and apostles' Council trial (5:27-32)
- Stephen (7:1-60)
- Peter and Simon the Magician (8:18-24)
- Peter's healing of Æneas (9:33-42)
- Peter and Cornelius (10:34-48)
- Paul at Synagogue in Perga (13:17-41)
- Paul in Lystra (14:15-17)
- Paul and the Philippian Jailer (16:30-34)
- Paul at the Æropagus (17:22-34)
- Paul and Johanine disciples in Ephesus (19:1-6)
- Paul and temple mob in Jerusalem (22:1-21)
- Paul's trial before the Sanhedrin (23:6)
- Paul before Governor Felix (24:10-21)
- Paul testifies to King Agrippa (26:1-29)
- Paul with Roman Jews (28:17-29)

A comparison of these accounts is very much in line with what we already discovered in the word studies earlier; the authority comes from God, the preacher in every case but Stephen is an apostle, the person or work of Jesus is in every presentation, the audience is non-Christians, the response is faith, and the salvation that results is received, not achieved. Parallels are consistently drawn with the prophets, but the contrasts to Judaism and paganism are not drawn so starkly because the point of these messages was to win non-Christians, whereas the point of most of the passages we used earlier for the word studies was to warn those who were already Christians against religious pitfalls. Although the apostles drew clear distinctions between false religions and Christianity in their evangelistic presentations, they did not rail against those religions while trying to woo them to Christ; they reserved their harsh criticism of Judaism and paganism until after their audience had already become believers.

A general five-point outline can be developed from the pattern of the evangelistic presentations of the book of Acts:

1. Bridge from context

In every case, the apostles started with the context of the audience, whether it was an event they had just seen (such as the healing of the lame man in the Temple in Acts 3) or a cultural understanding (such as Paul's preamble about being a Jew brought up under Gamaliel when he addressed the temple mob in Acts 22, or in the case of Gentiles, Paul's preamble about the altar to the unknown god in Athens). The only place this kind of introduction is fully missing is when Paul addresses the synagogue in Perga (Acts 13), but perhaps this is because discourse on the Scriptures was expected in that context, so there was no need for an introduction.

2. Jesus

In every presentation of the Gospel, Jesus is mentioned. Sometimes the *person* of Jesus is referred to, using His name (only 66% mention the name Jesus) or a title ("Christ," "Savior," "Righteous One," "Lord," "Son of Man," "Hope of Israel"), and sometimes Jesus is referred to by His *work* – His death and resurrection (His death and/or resurrection is only referred to in 60% of these 18 occasions). In many cases, the use of titles for Jesus was the method of preaching the Gospel. In the Jewish context, it was a bold statement filled with mind-boggling ramifications simply to combine the name of Jesus with one of these titles. The simple phrase "Jesus Christ" preached the Gospel in a kernel because it meant that the man Jesus was the Christ – the anointed one, the Messiah who must be followed and who would save His people^[10]. In Gentile contexts, however, such Jewish titles meant nothing, so the apostles did not use them; instead they used titles, such as "God," "living God," "Lord of heaven and earth," "the man," and "judge."

3. The Prophets:

In almost every instance, the words of the prophets are brought in as corroborating evidence to the Gospel. Two prophets who were mentioned multiple times were Moses ("God will raise up a prophet like me from among you" Deut. 18:15) and David ("You will not allow Your Holy One to see decay" Psalm 16:10). Fully two-thirds the 18 incidences specifically mention the prophets, and of the six instances that don't (#6,7,10,11,14,15), one of them (#15) may not really be an evangelistic presentation (more on this later), and three others (#6,7,11) show from the context that we don't have the entire presentation recorded, so the prophets may have been mentioned "off the record," as it were. Even when preaching to Gentiles, such as Cornelius, Felix, and Agrippa, the apostles used the prophets to back up the Gospel message. However, in some cases, the prophets are not mentioned, but other people are brought in as witnesses: In #4, Peter says "we are witnesses ... so is the Holy Spirit," and in #10, Paul calls in the very elements of nature as witnesses to what he is saying about God. In one case, Paul even brought in quotes from pagan prophets as corroborating evidence (Acts 17:28)!

Why are the prophets so important? People with name-recognition in a culture can lend credibility to a message, so that may be part of it, but the reasons go deeper. Quoting prophets shows both epistemological and historical continuity: Epistemological in that the audience is taken back to the Scriptures as the basis for truth rather than some other source, such as feelings or experiences. Quoting the prophets shows that the truth of the Gospel is firmly rooted in God's revelation and teaches the hearers to keep going back to that revelation of Scripture as the basis

for truth. Historical continuity is also demonstrated when the prophets are quoted. It shows that the message we preach is rooted in a historical context; it is real and tangible – not made-up, and is consistent with what God has been doing throughout time.^[11]

4. Sin and judgment

The one universal thing in every one of these eighteen presentations is the identification of a deficiency in the audience. Eleven of them specifically mention sin (or “wickedness,” “vanity,” or actions “contrary to the law”), and of the remaining seven, all imply sin and judgement:

#3 “you crucified ... must be saved,”

#7 “turned to the Lord,”

#11 The Philippian jailer already knew he was doing wrong because the earthquake had alerted him to this, “What must I do to be saved?”

#12 “ignorance... repent... judge the world in righteousness,”

#13 baptism of John was for repentance of sins,

#16 “just and unjust ... conscience void of offense,”

#18 “because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain” implying that it was unjust for the Jerusalem Jews to reject the Gospel and therefore it would also be wrong for the Roman Jews to reject it).

So whatever we do in our presentations of the Gospel, we must point out the fact that our audience has sinned and will be judged for it. It is interesting to note that the apostles are gentler with those more ignorant of sin and harsher with those who have more knowledge of God. In the two encounters with pagans who were utterly unexposed to the true God (Lystra and the Æropegus), God’s grace is emphasized: “In the past He let the nations go their own way” (Acts 14:16); “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance...” (Acts 17:30). However, when speaking to people who should have known better the apostles could be quite harsh: Peter yelled at Simon, a believer, “May your silver perish with you!” and Paul also had choice words for the High Priest, “God shall smite you, you whitewashed wall!” To whom much is given, much is required.

5. Call to respond:

Every Gospel presentation finally calls for a response of faith^[12]. The presentations given in the five court cases (#3, 4, 5, 15, & 16) are the only ones which do not seem to include a call to respond, although in most of them it is nevertheless implied. In some other accounts, the call is not in the transcript, but the presentation is given in such a way that a response of faith is recorded (viz. #18 “and some believed.”).

The call to faith need not be explicit. The simple statement of the revolutionary truth of the Gospel and application of it to the human condition can be enough to motivate an audience to faith. We need not try to manipulate or browbeat an audience to make a decision, for, after all, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to create faith.^[13] But it is through the preaching of the Gospel that faith takes root in a person’s heart.^[14]

In the explicit accounts, three steps of response are called for: repentance, faith, and baptism. Not only must one believe in Jesus, it is also necessary to stop rebelling against His lordship by

repenting^[15]. Nowhere is this point better underscored than with Simon Magus, who believed, but needed to repent of his wickedness before he could be right with God. Baptism, however, was called for only when there was a local body of believers to whom they could immediately be joined (#1 & #14 in Jerusalem – 3,000 believers “added” at Pentecost, #8 Cornelius – a whole household of people, #11 jailer added to the church already started in Lydia’s house, #13 the Johannine synagogue). This does not mean that in the other thirteen cases where baptism was not called for, no baptisms occurred; most probably there just weren’t enough people responding in faith with enough grounding in the Scripture yet to baptize them and establish a new congregation in the immediate context of that gospel presentation. In those other thirteen cases, the believers were most probably baptized, but just not immediately after the sermon.

Another aspect that comes out in the calls to respond is the inclusiveness of the call. Peter said that the gift is “for you and your children and for all who are far off” (Acts 2:39), and later that “everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness” (Acts 10:43). Paul says the same thing in Acts 13:39 that “everyone who believes is freed,” and that “all men everywhere should repent” (Acts 17:30). Notice that whole households were baptized in the case of Cornelius and the Philippian jailer (and Stephanus in I Cor.). The gospel is for everybody – everybody in your house and everybody in the world^[16]!

Finally, this aspect of the message is what is called the *vocatio verbalis*, or the external call of preaching as distinguished from the testimony of the natural world or the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the listener^[17]. This *vocatio verbalis* may or may not be efficacious, for not all who heard the Gospel in the above accounts responded in repentance and faith. Jesus anticipated that when he taught His disciples to “preach the gospel ... he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieves shall be condemned” (Mk. 16:15,16) and “many are called, but few are chosen” (Mt. 22)^[18]. Only when the external call is combined with the irresistible inner call of the Holy Spirit in the listener’s heart does it become efficacious. In the words of Calvin,

“When calling is thus added to election, the Scripture plainly intimates that nothing is to be looked for in it but the free mercy of God. For if we ask whom it is he calls, and for what reason, he answers, it is those whom he had chosen. When we come to election, mercy alone everywhere appears; and, accordingly, in this the saying of Paul is truly realized, ‘So then , it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy; (Rom. 9:16)... Those therefore, whom he has created for dishonour during life and destruction at death, that they may be vessels of wrath and examples of severity, in bringing to their doom, [the Lord] at one time derives of the means of hearing his word, at another by the preaching of it blinds and stupefies them the more.” (Calvin, II, 241-251)

This five-point outline seems to hold true for all the Gospel presentations in the book of Acts.^[19] Not every presentation of the Gospel was the same, but the apostles started with what their audience knew (or didn’t know) about Jesus and brought them to the point where they had to do something with Jesus. Each presentation was tailor-made to the knowledge of the audience. For instance:

- Simon Magus had already heard the Gospel many times as he had followed Phillip around Samaria, and in fact had already believed in Jesus, therefore Peter’s call to him was not to believe in Jesus (Jesus isn’t even mentioned in the interchange), but rather to repent of thinking that the gift of God could be exchanged for money.

- Likewise, when Paul speaks to the mob at Jerusalem in ch.22, he does not mention the crucifixion because many of them had probably been there when Jesus was crucified. All he needed to say was that Jesus of Nazareth had appeared to him from heaven as the Righteous One, and they knew immediately what this meant.
- Some Gentiles knew more than others about God and the Messiah, so the apostles tailored their presentation of Jesus according to what they already knew: The Greek philosophers at the Aeropagus were clueless, so Paul had to start with the very basics of who God was in the first place, but with Felix, who was “well-acquainted” with Christianity, Paul merely mentions that he is a follower of “the Way” (he doesn’t even mention Jesus), and Felix knows exactly what Paul is talking about.
- The pagans in Lystra had no trouble with Gods becoming men – they were worshipping Paul and Barnabbus as Hermes and Zeus! – so Paul didn’t spend time on the doctrine of the incarnation with them, but for the Jews, the doctrine of the incarnation was so outside their thinking that Stephen had to spend a bit of time developing it. “The Most High does not dwell in houses... what kind of house will you build for me?” Hebrews develops a similar argument and answers it “A body thou hast prepared for me,” a human body, in Jesus the Nazarene, God became Man!

The apostles also made their preaching culturally relevant. Their presentations to Pagans were different from the presentations given to Jews. As Jesus once noted, the Jews of His day sought signs, so of the eleven presentations to Jewish audiences almost all of them refer to signs, whether miracles (#1), healings (#2,3, 7, 14), a prison escape (#3), a vision (#5), speaking in tongues (#13), or, of course, the resurrection (#9, 15). (#18, which doesn’t mention a sign, says Paul “expounded” on Jesus and the kingdom, so doubtless the miracles of Jesus and His resurrection were expounded on outside the record.) Preaching aimed at Jews also generally mentioned the prophets and the Messiah-ship of Jesus. When the Gospel was preached to Gentiles, however, the nature of God and His works of creation and providence were more often brought up (#10 & 12), because the Gentiles didn’t have the Old Testament background on the nature and work of God that the Jews had. Likewise, Jesus was more often described as an agent who saves from the judgement of God against sin (#6, 11) because gentiles would not identify with the meaning of “Christ/Messiah.” In conclusion, although there are these five common elements, each presentation was unique because of the unique circumstances of each audience.

Now, the question of whether all eighteen citations were actual instances of preaching the Gospel must be addressed. What is absolutely essential to preaching the Gospel? After a comprehensive study of the subject, we can safely say that a message is a Gospel message if its object is to call people to repent of their sins and believe on Jesus as their savior, as Bible says. Three of the sermon transcriptions in the book of Acts do not clearly do this. In the interchange with Simon Magus (#6), forgiveness for a sin appears to be the sole purpose. There is no mention of Jesus, faith, or of the Scriptures, so that is probably not *kerygma*. (In #13, however, you have the opposite situation, John’s disciples had repented of their sins, but had not believed on Christ. Although this is a special case, it should be counted as preaching the Gospel because faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins is the object.) Paul’s two court cases in Israel (#15 and #16) are the other instances which do not constitute a Gospel presentation. In neither of them is Jesus expounded, and in neither of them does Paul intend to see his audience come to faith in Jesus. Before the Sanhedrin, Paul was primarily seeking a way to diffuse the united opposition against

him on the part of the Jewish religious leaders, and before Felix, a man already well-acquainted with “the Way,” Paul merely states the cold facts of his court case. By this same token, the preaching of John the Baptist is not counted as preaching the Gospel.^[20]

Finally, the question of whether there is more than one Gospel must be addressed. Dispensationalists believe that one Gospel was preached during Christ’s ministry, the Gospel of the Kingdom, and a different Gospel, the Gospel of Grace, is proclaimed in the time of the Apostles and through the age of the Church today.^[21] The Bible certainly uses both of these nomenclatures, and it is true that the Gospel of the Kingdom is mentioned much more frequently during the ministry of Jesus than after. But is there a difference between the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of grace? No! Jesus didn’t fail in establishing His kingdom or change His mind in hopes of succeeding later at it; His kingdom began with His ministry on earth^[22] and He is still King of the universe today (Col. 1). Forgiveness of sin in the Old Testament was no less an operation of the Gospel of Grace than it is today. The calls to “believe the Gospel” and to “repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand” are synonymous:

“By announcing the kingdom of God, [John] called for faith, since by the kingdom of God which he declared to be at hand, he meant forgiveness of sins, salvation, life, and every other blessing which we obtain in Christ; wherefore we read in the other Evangelists, ‘John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins’ (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3) ... Thus too, Christ began his preaching, ‘The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel’ (Mark 1:5).” (Calvin, I, 525)

Furthermore, if the Gospel of the Kingdom were not for the church age, why did the apostles preach the kingdom long after the resurrection (Acts 8:12, 19:18, 20:24, 28:23, 31)?^[23] No, there are not two Gospels, only one.

Conclusion

What then, is the core of the Gospel message? Different theologians tackle it differently, but there are common threads:

- “The External call consists in the presentation and offering of salvation in Christ to sinners, together with an earnest exhortation to accept Christ by faith, in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins and life eternal... [essential elements include] a) A presentation of the gospel facts and of the doctrine of redemption, b) An invitation to accept Christ in repentance and faith, and c) A promise of forgiveness and salvation.” (Berkhoff, 461)
- “Full and free deliverance from sin on the simple basis of faith in Jesus Christ the vicarious sin-Bearer.” (Unger)
- One way to arrive at the core of the kerygma is to note that Paul, in Galatians 1:12 claims that his Gospel came not from man but purely from a revelation from God. The revelation he received on the road to Damascus was very simple; it was that Jesus, whom Paul was persecuting, is now the “resurrected and exalted Messiah... Both the redemptive meaning of what God has done in the cross and resurrection and the disclosure of what God will yet do at the consummation (I Cor. 3:10) are revealed in the kerygma, the gospel, the word of God, which exists in the form of an historical kerygmatic-pneumatic tradition.” (Ladd, 430-432)^[24]
- “*Gospel*, taken in a large sense, comprehends the evidences of mercy and paternal favor which God bestowed on the Patriarchs. Still, by way of excellence, it is applied to the promulgation of the grace manifested in Christ.” (Calvin, I, 365)

The essential of the kerygma is the Scriptural understanding of Jesus, leading to repentance from sin and faith in Him. It seems a bit ironic that so much study can result in such a simple conclusion, but this simple conclusion has many ramifications for evangelism today:

Authority

First the kerygma is an authoritative message. God has given us a message and has commanded us to proclaim it. We must therefore proclaim this message of Jesus with confidence and with a conscientiousness that we are under authority to do so. We must also demonstrate this authority by linking our message to Scripture. Every evangelistic presentation should point the hearer back to God’s Word, our ultimate authority. Finally, we must recognize that our authority in salvation ends with the proclamation of the Gospel. Salvation is God’s work, so we must leave the results of preaching up to Him and not allow ourselves to feel a sense of failure if our audience does not repent and believe. That is God’s authority.

Sin

Probably the most startling thing to a modern day evangelical is the fact that God’s love is never mentioned as part of the kerygma. The Gospel is not about meeting people’s felt needs or making them feel comfortable. J.I. Packer once wrote, “The gospel does bring us solutions to these problems, but it does so by first solving ... the deepest of all human problems, the problem of man’s relation with his Maker; and unless we make it plain that the solution of these former

problems depends on the settling of this latter one, we are misrepresenting the message and becoming false witnesses of God.^[25]”

The most consistent theme in all the Gospel presentations in the Bible is the exposure of sin and the portrayal of God as a judge of sin. This we must do in our evangelism too, no matter how socially unacceptable it is. The reason is simple:

“Before the mind of the sinner can be inclined to repentance, he must be aroused by the thought of divine judgment; but when once the thought that God will one day ascend his tribunal to take an account of all words and actions has taken possession of his mind, it will not allow him to rest, or have one moment’s peace, but will perpetually urge him to adopt a different plan of life, that he may be able to stand securely at that judgment-seat... (Acts. 17:30-31, II Cor 7:10) ... while we were asleep it were vain to allure us with soothing measures... There is another reason why the fear of God lies at the root of repentance – viz. that though the life of man were possessed of all things of virtue, still if they do not bear reference to God, however much they may be lauded in the world, they are mere abomination in heaven, inasmuch as it is the principal part of righteousness to render to God that service and honor of which he is impiously defrauded, whenever it is not our express purpose to submit to his authority.” (Calvin, I, 514).

Pointing out sin is a crucial part of the kerygma because it drives people to see their need for Jesus’ righteousness.

Simplicity

As Paul said, the Gospel was not preached with fancy or persuasive words. We should avoid pressure tactics and sales gimmicks in presenting the Gospel; people should not believe in Jesus because we’ve used psychological pressure on them but because the Holy Spirit has inclined them to believe. Nevertheless, we should do our part to make it understandable through simple presentations that are easy-to-understand, brief, and free from obscure language. It really is a very simple message about Jesus as He is presented in Scripture. As a result, any Christian should be able to present this good news to others. Christian teachers should do their part to make the Gospel look simple and convey the truth that Christians don’t need highly-specialized training to share their faith!

Purity

Parallel to the simplicity of the Gospel is the purity of the Gospel. The apostle Paul was a watchdog when it came to the content of the Gospel, and he reacted violently to any additions to the simple kerygma of faith in Jesus who died for our sins. Like Paul, we, as Christian teachers must remind believers of the essence of the Gospel and draw sharp contrasts between it and the many other religions and cults out there. While we seek to promote the proclamation of the Gospel outside the Church, we must also protect the purity of the Gospel within the church.

Universality

The kerygma is for the public. It is also for all ages - no child is too young to hear the Gospel! It must not be confined to the four walls of the church building; it must start in our houses and go from there into all the world! We must continually find venues to communicate this Gospel in public settings, and we must never be content with the progress we are making until every tongue, tribe, and nation have comprehended this message. There are still some 17,000 cultural

groups in this world which are still without access to the Gospel^[26]; we must carry the kerygma to them!

Contextualization

We must follow the example of the apostles and tailor each presentation of the Gospel to the particular audience. The Gospel can fit any context; we must be creative in bridging from any context to the kerygma. We must always be thinking, “How can I relate a title of Jesus or an aspect of His person or work to the situation in which God has placed me now?” When talking to people we need to be sensitive to what they already know; A humanist or a New Ager doesn’t need a lot of explanation about the incarnation, but a Muslim will. We should also be careful about the titles we choose for Jesus as we explain who he is; will people understand what “Lamb of God” or “Christ” or “Lord” mean? Be sensitive to that and build off of what they already know. We don’t have to get through a rote outline of a Gospel presentation because there are probably whole points in the outline that your audience already knows. Likewise, it takes wisdom to know what sort of response to call for; is repentance the thing to emphasize? Is your audience so far out in left field that you won’t get past the concept of a living God in the first presentation (as was the case of Paul and Barnabus in Lystra)? Should you call for baptism or are there other issues to deal with first? Be sensitive to the context and apply the Gospel with full appropriateness to that context.

Purpose

Finally, we must keep the goal in mind. When we speak to a non-believer, we must want to see him repent of his sins and believe in Jesus so that he will be saved and inherit eternal life. The goal in evangelism is not to look good; it is not to rack up points in a contest for souls saved; it is not to salve your conscience because you feel guilty for not sharing your faith. No, it is to see people saved by faith in Jesus Christ. Is that what is on your mind every time you are around non-Christians?

Actually, there is an even higher purpose, as John Piper reminds us, and that is the glory of God:

“The only submission that fully reflects the worth and glory of the King is glad submission... No gladness in the subject, no glory to the King... Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:5, ‘For what we preach is not ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord.’ But then in verse six he goes beneath that proclamation of the lordship of Christ – beneath the rule and authority of King Jesus – and tells the essence of his preaching: it is ‘the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.’ ... God’s deepest commitment to be glorified and my deepest longing to be satisfied are not in conflict, but in fact find simultaneous consummation in his display of and my delight in the glory of God. Therefore the goal of preaching is the glory of God reflected in the glad submission of the human heart.” (Piper 25,26)

This glad submission of the human heart to God through faith in Jesus means a transfer from kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God, and that should be our aim. Whether or not we explicitly state it to our audience, that is where we should be relentlessly taking them. As Cotton Mather said, “The great design and intention of the office of a Christian preacher is to restore the throne and dominion of God in the souls of men.”^[27]

APPENDIX 1: New Testament Usage of the word “Karusso”

Ref.	Authority	Mes-senger	Content	Audience	Response	Result	Effector of Result	Contrasts	Parallels
Acts 9:20	Calling of God on the road to Damascus	Paul	NAS: “Jesus ... is the son of God ... the Christ”	“Jews” in the “Synagogues” of “Damascus”	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated	Saul’s commission by Jews to persecute Xns	None
Acts 10:37	God, as implied by Jesus in Matt. 21:23	John the Baptizer	“The baptism”	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated	None	None
Acts 10:42	“Jesus”	Peter and apostles	“Jesus...appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead... that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.”	“the people”	“believe”	“forgiveness of sins”	“through [Jesus’] name”	None	“all the prophets bear witness”
Acts 13:24	God, as implied by Jesus in Matt. 21:23	John the Baptizer	“baptism of repentance ... ‘He ... is coming’”	“all the people of Israel.”	Repentance	Unstated	Unstated	None	None
Acts 15:21	Unstated	Unstated	“Moses” (fig. the Mosaic law)	“synagogues ... in every city”	“Abstain from contaminations of idols... and from blood”	Unstated	Unstated	None	Jerusalem counsel on the Conversion of the Gentiles
Acts 19:13	Unstated	Paul	“Jesus”	Unstated	Unstated	Exorcism	Jesus	Jewish exorcists	None
Acts 20:25	“ministry I received from the Lord Jesus”	Paul	“the kingdom” context incl. “repentance... faith... gospel of the Grace of God”	“with/among all of you” (elders in Ephesus)	Unstated	Unstated	Impl. God, since delivery of message, not acceptance, fulfills responsibility	None	None
Acts 28:31	“Holy Spirit” by impl. of quote from Isaiah	Paul	“the kingdom of God”	All who visited his house in Rome	“persuaded ... believe”	“Salvation”	“of God”	None	Preaching of Isaiah
1 Cor. 1:23	“God”	Paul and company	“Christ crucified”	“Jews ... Greeks ... the called”	“believe”	“save”	“God”	“to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness”	None

1 Cor. 9:27	“under the law of Christ”	Paul	“The Gospel”	“Others”	Unstated	“I may by all means save some and ... become a fellow partaker”	Unstated	None	“those who attend to the altar share in the altar” and “everyone who competes ... exercises self-control”
1 Cor. 15:11	“by the grace of God”	Paul and Apostles	The Gospel	Unbelieving Corinthians who believed as a result	“believed”	“saved”	Unstated	None	“according to the Scriptures” and “all the apostles”
1 Cor. 15:12	God, otherwise “witnessing against God”	Paul and the Apostles	“Christ has been raised from the dead”	Unstated	Faith	Impl. Freedom from “sins”	Impl. God, since without His raising Christ, “faith is vain”	“some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead”	None

APPENDIX 2: New Testament usage of the word “Kerygma”

Reference	Authority	Messenger	Content	Audience	Response	Result	Effector of result	Contrasts	Parallels
Matt. 12:41	God’s command	“Jonah”	40 Days and Nineveh is overturned	“men of Nineveh”	“repented”	Salvation	Unstated	“this generation” of Jews	None
Luke 11:32	God’s command	“Jonah”	40 Days and Nineveh is overturned	“men of Nineveh”	“repented”	Salvation	Unstated	“this generation” of Jews	None
Rom. 16:25	“Commandment of the eternal God”	Paul	“Jesus Christ”	“All the nations”	“Obedience of faith”	“establish”	“the only wise God”	None	“My gospel,” “revelation of the mystery,” “scriptures of the prophets”
I Cor. 1:21	“God’s good pleasure”	“We”	“Christ crucified”	Unstated	“believe”	“save”	“God”	“Greek” and “world’s” “wisdom,” “Jews ... signs”	None
I Cor. 2:4	“Spirit and power ... of God”	Paul	“Christ, and Him crucified”	Corinthians	“Faith”	Unstated	Unstated	“Wisdom of men,” “persuasive words”	None
I Cor. 15:14	Unstated	Eye-witnesses	“Christ ... has been raised from the dead”	“you”	“Faith”	Unstated	Unstated	“vain” if “there is no resurrection”	“according to the Scripture”
II Tim. 4:17	“the Lord”	Paul	Unstated	“all the Gentiles”	“hear”	Unstated	“the Lord stood by... strengthened”	None	None
Titus 1:3	“commandment of God”	“Paul”	“his word”	Unstated	“Faith”	Eternal life	“God our savior”	None	“promised before in times past”

APPENDIX 3: Use of “Euangelizo” in Acts and I Corinthians

Ref.	Authority	Messenger	Content	Audience	Response	Result	Effector of Result	Contrasts	Parallels
Acts 5:42	God (as per Gamaliel’s advice)	Peter & the apostles	“Jesus the Christ”	in the temple and at homes	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated	None	None
Acts 8:4	Unstated	“those who had been scattered” (NOT apostles)	“the word” (logon)	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated	None	None
Acts 8:12	Unstated	“Philip”	“the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ”, accompanied by “signs”	All the people in Samaria	“believed”	“were baptized” also exorcisms	“gift of God”	Magic of Simon	None
Acts 8:25	Unstated	“Peter & John”	---	“many villages of the Samaritans”	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated	None	None
Acts 8:35	“the Spirit”	“Philip”	“Jesus”	“an Ethiopian eunuch”	“believe” (v.37 not in most mss.)	“Being baptized”	Unstated	None	“Isaiah ... Scripture”
Acts 8:40	Unstated	Philip	---	“All the cities” from Azotus to Cæsarea.	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated	None	None
Acts 10:36	“God”	“The word” (logon)	“peace through Jesus Christ”	“sons of Israel”	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated	None	None
Acts 11:20	Unstated	“men of Cyprus & Cyrene”	“the Lord Jesus”	“Greeks” in Antioch	“Believed”	“Turned to the Lord”	“grace of God”	None	None
Acts 13:32	“The Spirit”	Paul & co.	“the promise made to the fathers” [of Jesus]	The synagogue at Psidian Antioch	“believe”	“Forgiveness of sins ... eternal life”	“grace of God ... appointed”	Law of Moses, Unbelief of Jews	Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, John, Isaiah
Acts 14:7	“The Spirit” (13:4)	Paul and Barnabus	---	Cities of Lyconeia, Lystra, Derbe, & environs	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated	“The Jews”	None
Acts 14:15	“The Spirit” (13:4)	Paul & Barnabus	---	Crowd in Lystra	“turn from these vanities unto the living God”	Unstated	Unstated	“Jews”	None

Acts 14:21	“The Spirit” (13:4)	Paul & Barnabus	---	“Derbe”	Unstated	“made many disciples”	Unstated	None	None
Acts 15:7	“God”	Peter	Gospel	“Gentiles” (Cornelius)	“believe”	“giving them the Holy Spirit”	“God”	“Moses”	“the words of the Prophets”
Acts 15:35	Unstated	“Paul and Barnabas ... with many others”	“the word (logon) of the Lord”	“Antioch”	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated	None	None
Acts 16:10	“God”	Paul & co.	---	Macedonians	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated	None	None
Acts 17:18	Unstated	Paul	“Jesus and the resurrection”	“Epicurean & Stoic philosophers”	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated	None	None
Acts 20:24	“Lord Jesus”	Paul	“Grace of God”	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated	None	None
Ref.	Authority	Messenger	Content	Audience	Response	Result	Effector of Result	Contrasts	Parallels
1 Cor. 1:17	“Christ”	Paul	“The cross of Christ”	Unstated.	“believe” (v.21)	“being saved”	“power of God”	“not send me to baptize” “not in cleverness of speech .. wisdom of the world:	Quote from Isaiah
1 Cor. 9:14	“the Lord”	“The ones who preach”	---	Unstated.	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated	preachers have a right to financial support just as priests at the altar.
1 Cor. 9:16	“the Lord”	Paul	---	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated	Uncomissioned preachers who make money off the Gospel	None
1 Cor. 9:18	Unstated	Paul	“Christ”	Many different types of audiences to “win”	Unstated	Unstated	Unstated	None	None
1 Cor. 15:1-2	“God”	Paul	“Christ died for our sins according to t. scriptures ...was buried... raised... appeared”	The Corinthians in the past.	“received ... stand ... believed ... hold fast the word”	“saved”	Unstated	None	Testimony of other apostles

APPENDIX 5: Evangelistic messages in the book of Acts

Following is a summary of every *verbatim* evangelistic presentation in the book of Acts. All bulleted text not in italics is direct quotes from the accounts:

1. Peter's Pentecost sermon (2:14-41):

- *Interprets the miraculous sign of disciples speaking in tongues with quote from Joel* "last days... pour forth my spirit ... signs ... day of the Lord... everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved."
- Jesus attested by signs... nailed to cross ... God raised Him up again ...
- *Quotes from David* "...Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades nor allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay..." and "descendant upon his throne" and "Lord said to my lord, sit at My right hand"
- *Interpretation: Jesus is the one David prophesied*, resurrection of the Christ ... exalted... poured forth Holy Spirit ... Jesus crucified is Lord and Christ (Messiah).
- *Call to response*: Repent ... be baptized into the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins ... receive the gift of the Holy Spirit ... you and your children and for all who are far off ... be saved from this perverse generation.

2. Peter in the temple (3:12-4:4)

- *Explains the power behind the sign of the lame man healed*: The God of ... our fathers has glorified His Servant Jesus ... the Holy and Righteous One ... you put to death ... God raised from the dead ... on the basis of faith ... name of Jesus ... strengthened this man
- *Prophets speak of Jesus*: The things God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled ... Moses "the Lord God shall raise up for a prophet like me..." all the prophets... from Samuel onward announced these days
- *Call to response*: Repent therefore and return that your sins may be wiped away ... and many who heard the message believed

3. Peter in his first court trial (4:8-12)

- *Lame man healed* By the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead
- *David speaks of Jesus*: "stone that builders rejected"
- *Call to response*: there is no other name under heaven ... by which we must be saved

4. Peter and apostles' Council trial (5:27-32)

- Answering why they disobeyed the Council: We must obey God rather than men
- God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death ... on a cross... God exalted ...

- Prince and Savior, to grant repentance ... forgiveness of sins... we are witnesses ... so is the Holy Spirit.

5. Stephen (7:1-60)

- *Relates history of Israel from books of Moses: Abraham ... Isaac ... Jacob ... patriarchs ... Joseph ... Moses ... “God shall raise up a prophet like me” ... our fathers were unwilling to obey ... Amos “Moloth ... images ... I will remove you to Babylon”*
- Joshua ... David ... tabernacle ... Most Igh does not dwell in houses ... *Isaiah* “heaven is my throne ... what kind of house will you build for me”
- You who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the HS ... just as your fathers did... your fathers .. killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murders you have now become:
- Son of Man standing at the right hand of God ... do not hold this sin against them

6. Peter and Simon the Magician (8:18-24)

- You thought you could obtain the gift of God with money ...
- your heart is not right before God.
- Therefore repent of this wickedness ... pray the Lord ... forgive...

7. Peter’s healing of Æneas (9:33-42)

- Jesus Christ
- heals you; arise, and make your bed.
- All who lived at Lydda saw him and turned to the Lord. *Likewise in the healing of Dorcas immediately following many believed in the Lord*

8. Peter and Cornelius (10:34-48)*

- *Commenting on his arrival at a Gentile house* God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him
- Jesus Christ ... Lord of all ... went about doing good and healing ... God was with Him ..
- We are witnesses ... Put to death ... on a cross... arose from the dead
- This is the one who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead
- All the prophets bear witness
- Through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins
- ... Received the Holy Spirit ... baptized

9. Paul at Synagogue in Perga (13:17-41)

- *History of Israel from Exodus: our fathers ... Egypt ... wilderness ... Caanan ... judges ... Samuel the prophet ... David ... from the offspring of this man, according to promise God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus ... John ... word of this salvation ...*

recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets ... fulfilled these by ... putting Him to death ... cross ... But God raised Him from the dead

- ... we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers ... fulfilled ... Jesus ... Psalm 2 “thou are my Son...” “not allow thy holy one to undergo decay” ... through Him forgiveness of sins ...
- *Call to action:*... everyone who believes ... *warning from Habakkuk* ... not believe...

10. Paul in Lystra (14:15-17)*

- Responding to sacrifices being offered to them as Zeus & Hermes: turn from these vain things
- unto a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is ...
- In past times he let the nations go their own way...
- Not left Himself without testimony: He did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness...

11. Paul and the Philippian Jailer (16:30-34)

- Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your house.
- And they spoke the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house... was baptized, he and all his, immediately... having believed in God.

12. Paul at the Æropagus (17:22-34)*

- I perceive that you are very religious... altar ... TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you.
- The God that made the world and all things ... Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples ... gives to all life, and breath, and all things ... appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation
- that they should seek God ... not far from each one of us
- “in him we live, and move, and have our being;” as certain even of your own poets have said, “For we are also his offspring.”
- Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of man.
- The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked...
- should all everywhere repent:
- inasmuch as he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained ... by raising Him from the dead...
- ...certain men followed him, and believed

13. Paul and Johanine disciples in Ephesus (19:1-6)

- Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?
- Into what then were you baptized?
- John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him that should come after him, that is, on Jesus.
- they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus... Holy Spirit came on them...

14. Paul and temple mob in Jerusalem (22:1-21)

- when they heard that he spoke unto them in the Hebrew language, they were ... quiet... I am a Jew... brought up in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel... zealous for God, even as you all are this day... I persecuted this Way...
- Damascus ... shone from heaven a great light... "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? ...I am Jesus of Nazareth..." ...Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well reported of by all the Jews... said unto me, "Brother Saul, receive your sight... The God of our fathers has appointed you to ... see the Righteous One..."
- "be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name..."

15. Paul's trial before the Sanhedrin (23:6)

- I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day.
- God shall smite you, you white-washed wall: you sit and judge me according to the law, but command me to be smitten contrary to the law!
- I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees
- touching the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

16. Paul before Governor Felix (24:10-21)

- You have been of many years a judge unto this nation
- I serve the God of our fathers according to the Way, believing ... the law, and ... the prophets...
- resurrection both of the just and unjust...
- I have a conscience void of offence toward God and men always... no crowd, nor tumult...
- Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question before you this day.

17. Paul testifies to King Agrippa (26:1-29)

- ...you are expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews...
- I lived a Pharisee...
- hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers... God raises the dead...

- I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests... persecuted them...
- Damascus... a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun... “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? ...I am Jesus... to this end have I appeared unto you, to appoint you a minister and a witness... to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me...
- I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but declared... that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance...
- testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come; how that the Christ must suffer, and how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles...
- Do you believe the prophets? ... I would to God, that ...all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds.

18. Paul with Roman Jews (28:17-29)

- ...I had done nothing against the people, or the customs of our fathers, yet was delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans...
- because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain...
- expounded the matter, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets...
- And some believed...

Bibliography

Arndt, William and Gingrich, Wilbur. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957, 1965.

Berkhof, Louis. Systematic Theology, New Combined Edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

Boice, James M. Foundations of the Christian Faith, revised ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986.

Chapell, Bryan. Christ-Centered Preaching. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994 ... 1999.

Earle, Ralph. Word Meanings in the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974, 1986.

Holy Bible: New American Standard, The Lockman Foundation, Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1960, 1977.

Ladd, George Eldon. A Theology of the New Testament., revised edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.

La Palabra De Dios. CLIE Rev. 1977 de la Versión Reina-Valera, East Brunswick, NJ: Sociedad Bíblica Internacional, 1979.

La Sainte Bible, Nouvelle Version, 2^{me} Rev., Alliance Biblique Universelle, Paris: Société Biblique Française, 1978.

Lloyd-Jones, Martin. *Preaching and Preachers*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972.

Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Tr. Henry Beveridge. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989, 1997.

Perschbacher, Wesley. *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon*. Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 1990.

Piper, John. *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1990, 1999.

Robertson, A.T. *A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ*. New York: Harper & Row, 1922, 1950.

Robertson, A.T. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1931.

Schlissel, Steve. *Messiah's Mandate, "All I really need to Know about Worship."* Messiah's Ministries, Brooklyn, New York, 1999.

Strong, James. *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1890 ... 1936.

Thayer, Joseph. *Greek-English Lexicon*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1901, 1977.

The Amplified New Testament. The Lockman Foundation. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958.

The Bible, American Standard Version (1901). Albany OR: SAGE software, 1996.

The Greek New Testament, Third Ed. Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1966 ... 1983

The Holy Bible: New International Version. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984, International Bible Society. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1987.

The Holy Bible: Authorized (King James) Version.

Taylor, Ken, *The Living New Testament*. Copyright 1967, Tyndale House Foundation. Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1973.

Unger, Merrill F. *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Ed. R.K. Harrison. Chicago: Moody Press, 1957, 1988.

Vincent, Marvin. *Word Studies in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1890, 1946.

Vos, Geerhardus. *Biblical Theology*. The Banner of Truth Trust, Carlisle PA, 1948 ... 1996.

Winter, Ralph and Hawthorne Steven, ed. *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, Reader, 3rd Ed. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981, 1992, 1999.

Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible: King James Version*. World, 1990.

Notes

^[1] Thayer's Greek Lexicon.

^[2] "Paul frequently refers to his preaching and teaching in the same terms that are used of the Jewish oral traditions: to deliver (*paradidonai*) and to receive (*paralambanein*) tradition (*paradosis*)... This tradition embodied the apostolic kerygma or euangelion. Paul delivered (*paredoka*) to the Corinthians the gospel that he also received (*parelabon*), that Christ died for our sins, that he was buried, that he rose on the third day, that he appeared to his disciples (I Cor. 15:1-5). It is generally accepted that verses 3b-5 embody a primitive piece of pre-Pauline kerygma that Paul has received as a tradition from those who were apostles before him... Paul says he received *apo*, not *para*, the Lord. The latter would suggest reception directly from the Lord, whereas the former indicates ultimate source." (Ladd 427).

^[3] "The primitive kerygma had its focal point in the death and exaltation of Jesus" (Ladd, 366).

^[4] "By identifying his Son as his Word [*Logos*], God reveals that his message and his person are inseparable." (Chapel, 19).

^[5] Ladd, 426.

^[6] <http://home.att.net/~nathan.wilson/preach.html> .

^[7] See my paper on "The Gentiles and Jesus' Time" <http://home.att.net/~nathan.wilson/timegentile.htm>.

^[8] Schlissel "All I really need to know about Worship" Vol. 1999, Part I, pg.6.

^[9] Hawthorne, 122-123.

^[10] "The impressive fact is that in Acts, *kyrios* is used simultaneously for God and for the exalted Jesus... This usage goes back to the Septuagint where *kyrios* is the translation not only of 'adonay but the ineffable covenant name *Yahweh*. It is therefore amazing to find the term used at the same time of both Jesus and God. (Acts 2:20-21, 36-39, 4:10-12...) Salvation comes not by confessing the Lord Jesus but by confessing Jesus as Lord (Rom. 10:9)... The heart of the apostolic kerygma is the proclamation of the Lordship of Jesus (2 Cor. 4:5)." (Ladd, 375).

^[11] Cross-reference: Vos p.188 "Prophecy is a factor of continuity in the history of revelation..."

^[12] "Paul designates faith as the obedience which is given to the Gospel (Rom. 1:5); and writing to the Philippians, he commends them for the obedience of faith (Phil. 2:17)" (Calvin, I, 474).

^[13] "As it is wrong to make a direct attack upon the emotions, so it is equally wrong to make a direct attack upon the will. In preaching we are to present the Truth, and clearly this is something first and foremost for the mind... The preaching of the Word and the call for decision should not be separated in our thinking... the tendency increasingly has been to put more and more emphasis on the 'appeal' and the making of a decision, and to regard it as something in and of itself... The convicted sinner no more 'decides' for Christ than the poor drowning man 'decides' to take hold of that rope that is thrown to him and suddenly provides him with the only means of escape. The term is entirely inappropriate... The appeal must be

in the Truth itself, and in the message. As you preach your sermon you should be applying it all the time, and especially, of course at the end when you come to the final application... Do not force these things. This is the work of the Holy Spirit of God.” (Lloyd-Jones, 271-282).

[14] “There exists a dynamic unity between the event and the proclamation of the event... apart from proclamation, the events are mere events in past history; but in proclamation, they become present redeeming events.... This is why Paul can speak of the gospel as itself the power of God unto salvation.” (Ladd 426).

[15] “For since pardon and forgiveness are offered by the preaching of the Gospel, in order that the sinner, delivered from the tyranny of Satan, the yoke of sin, and the miserable bondage of iniquity, may pass into the kingdom of God, it is certain that no man can embrace the grace of the Gospel without betaking himself from the errors of his former life into the right path and making it his whole study to practice repentance.” (Calvin, I, 509).

[16] “It is said that such a general invitation and offer is inconsistent with the doctrine of predestination and of particular atonement, doctrines in which, it is thought, the preacher should take his starting point. But the Bible does not teach that the preacher of the gospel should take his starting point in these doctrines, however important they may be. His starting point and warrant lie in the commission of his King; ‘Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature...’” (Berkhoff, 461).

[17] Berkhoff, 457.

[18] Berkhoff, 461.

[19] C.H. Dodd, in his book *The Apostolic Preaching* mentions a 6-point outline which fits only the first few sermons well: 1. The age of fulfillment of the prophets has dawned, 2. This has taken place through the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus, 3. By virtue of the resurrection, Jesus has been exalted at the right hand of God as the messianic head of the new Israel, 4. The H.S. in the church is the sign of Christ’s present power and glory, 5. The messianic age will shortly reach its consummation in the return of Christ, and 6. The kerygma always closes with an appeal for repentance, the offer of forgiveness and of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of salvation (Ladd, 365).

[20] “... though [John] gave a summary of the Gospel when he pronounced Christ to be ‘the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world,’ yet, inasmuch as he did not unfold the incomparable power and glory which shone forth in his resurrection, Christ says that he was not equal to the Apostles... (Matt. 11:11)” (Calvin, I, 367).

[21] See Unger on “Gospel.”

[22] “...by his advent the kingdom of heaven was erected on the earth (Matth. 12:28)” (Calvin, I, 367).

[23] Ladd, 369.

[24] “To receive the gospel tradition does not mean merely to accept the truthfulness of a report about certain historical facts, nor does it mean simply to receive instruction and intellectual enlightenment. To receive the tradition means to receive (*paralabete*) Christ Jesus as Lord (Col. 2:6)... Thus the tradition has a twofold character: it is both historical tradition and kerygmatic-pneumatic tradition at one and the same time. It is historical because it is tied to

events in history, and the tradition preserves the report of these events. It is kerygmatic because it can be perpetuated only as kerygma and received as a confession of faith. It is pneumatic because it can be received as preserved only by the enabling of the Spirit.” (Ladd 428).

^[25] Boice, 319.

^[26] Joshua Project II.

^[27] Piper, 22-24.

Source: <http://home.att.net/~nathan.wilson/index.htm>