

Romans 1:2-4, Prophecy and Evangelism (*Series 2 on Romans and Evangelism*)

10/12/07

Verse 1 (covered in a previous eprayer)

Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God...

Verses 2-4:

which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

God promised many things to us *before* in the holy Scriptures in the Old Testament- do you know how to share these things with others? If not, I'd encourage you to begin memorizing or at least knowing well the scriptures below, to be able to give an adequate answer to those you share with on the streets or wherever. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus spoke to two of his disciples immediately after the resurrection, drawing out faith in them from the Old Testament scriptures, "Then He said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?' And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself... And they said to one another, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the scriptures to us?'" (*Luke 24:25-26, 32*) When Philip approached the Ethiopian eunuch who was reading *Isaiah 53* in his carriage, "Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him." (*Acts 8:35*) Jesus promised those who opposed Him, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me." (*John 5:39*)

We don't need to depend completely on the New Testament to tell people about Jesus- we can show them from the prophecies- something people from other religions or cults can't possibly do! Here's God's promise about prophecy, "Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets." (*Amos 3:7*) God's boast and challenge to other religions and false books is this: "'Present your case,' says the Lord. 'Bring forth your strong reasons,' says the King of Jacob. 'Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; let them show the former things, what they were, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare to us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods.'" (*Isaiah 41:21-23*)

One necessary tool in the toolbox of evangelism that every Christian should study to show himself/herself approved and ready for every good work is the tool of prophecy of Jesus Christ's first coming. Paul and the other preachers knew this tool so well. Paul was bold about it: that the gospel was given beforehand (*Romans 1:2*) through the prophets- and he proved it- can you? Paul spoke of the gospel beforehand, of the Christ beforehand, of the resurrection beforehand, of the Christ being the seed of David beforehand- all prophesied beforehand in the Old Testament, validating his gospel (and it was Paul's gospel, and our gospel, Amen?)- can you?

I'm not going to write out all these verses or list out all 300 of them- it would make this writing too long (I know, you already think it's too long)- but here is a start- look them up- do you know these passages? Have you committed them to memory, or at least can regurgitate the address of the verses and the basic content while sharing the gospel with someone?

1. The gospel beforehand: *Gen 2:17, 3:15, Hab 2:4, Jer 31:31-34, Isa 52:13-53:12*
2. The Messiah as God's Son: *Psalms 2:6-12, Proverbs 30:4, Isa 9:6, (cf. Gal 4:4)*
3. The Messiah as Lord, God become a man: *Jer 23:6, Isa 9:6-7, Psalm 110:1-7*

4. The Messiah's lineage as the Seed of David: *Gen 3:15, Isa 7:14, Gen 12:3, 21:12, 49:10, 2 Sam 7:16, Ps 89:3-4, 19,24*
5. The Resurrection: *Psalm 16:9-10, Isa 53:10-12, (cf. 2 Tim 2:8)*

Apologetics, using a walk through the Bible and prophecy, was my "first blood" in evangelism. In my 4th year in college at Iowa State University, 1985, I had a longing to share the gospel with people, but was frustrated that every time I shared with people, it seemed to get nowhere (I hadn't learned yet the powerful principles of using the Law as a tutor to lead self-righteous people to Christ). In one of my engineering classes was a graduate student named Soon from Malaysia. I befriended him and then got the courage up, "Hey- I'm a Christian and was wondering if you would be interested in an overview of the Bible that I could give you?" "Mike, I'm not religious, really, I don't believe in that stuff." "Well, that's understandable- I didn't grow up in a religious home, either. I still would be interested in giving you an overview of the Bible if you're interested- I wouldn't be offended if you didn't believe- that book has had such a powerful impact in my life." "OK", he said, to my shock! We met about 3 times at his apartment with his shy Malaysian wife, starting in Genesis and step by step going through His story. I hadn't even gotten to the New Testament when I knocked on his door the last time and he and his wife stood there at the door with great big smiles on their faces, as if they wanted me to say something. I sensed that something had happened, but was afraid to ask. Finally Soon said, "Mike, we believe in Jesus!" He came to church with me once, then the semester was over- he graduated and I lost touch with where he went- he got a job somewhere- I often think back with wonder... from that time on, my heart has been to evangelize to international students- not long after that, I bumped into my wife to be, who is Indonesian and was Muslim. The rest is history.

Here are things I see about using prophecy as it relates to evangelism: to people who were open and humble, prophecy was used and they repented and received Jesus Christ. To those who were proud, Jesus and the Apostles used prophecy as well, in combination with conviction of sin using God's Law, and then preaching repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

How have I used prophecy in evangelism lately?

1. When preaching on an amplifier, I make bold statements, just like God did in *Isaiah 41:21-23*, that the Bible is the only book that is the truth, and we know so because of prophecy- when preaching, there needs to be a boldness and a strong message that stirs people up- if you doubt me, just read the book of Acts! I'll state things like: there are 9400 verses of prophecy in the Bible, nearly 1/3 of the Bible is prophecy, and 8000 of those verses have already come true. If you rolled a pair of dice 8000 times in a row, and every time they came up snake eyes, you would come to a solid conclusion, that the dice are loaded, and you would conclude that the 1400 times coming up that the dice would also produce snake eyes (that's one on both dice). Since the Bible has accurately predicted prophecy on 8000 verses and has never been wrong, (and I'll begin to speak of Jesus being pierced for our transgressions, preaching on *Isa 53, Ps 22*, and His virgin birth, His ministry in Galilee, His lineage, His resurrection- on and on, whipping through the prophecies)- to what purpose? For 2 purposes- one, to disseminate truth to confront the lies about the Bible, and encourage people to search the truth, and secondly, to get a rise out of a person- to get a heckler, a doubting Thomas, to stir up the crowd and get the conversation moving- or to end up talking to such a doubter who comes over to talk, and then change the conversation to the Law- to convict of sin. That's an easy switch- once a person is questioning the scriptures with you, they've given you an open door to further conversation- ask them, "do you consider yourself to be a good person?" and take them through the Ten Commandments, using the Law to "stop every mouth and hold the whole world guilty before God" (*Rom 3:19-20*)

2. In one on one conversations, when going through the commandments, there will be objections as people “suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18) and go down various bunny trails where they trash the Bible as inaccurate, a book of man, corrupted, or they trash Jesus as just a man or a prophet- prophecies have a way of introducing some doubt in unbelievers- to the point where they may begin to question whether they have really thought things out properly. If I sense the conversation isn’t going anywhere, I’ll end it- but if I sense that the unbeliever is struggling, coming to a point of realizing that maybe there is more to the Bible and Jesus Christ than what he/she had originally thought, I’ll continue, and eventually switch back from speaking about prophecy/apologetics to speaking to their heart, using the Law to prick their conscience (*Romans 2:14-15*).

3. Prophecies like *Isaiah 53* are incredibly powerful to share with Muslims and Jews- Jews, because it is their scriptures, Muslims, because they deny that Jesus died on the cross. Numerous times, after sharing with a Muslim the Law and they affirm their good works and begin talking about Islam and how the Bible has been corrupted and Jesus wasn’t God, I’ll take them to *Isaiah 52:13-53:12*, open my Bible and say, “Here’s a prophecy from the prophet Isaiah written 700 B.C. about a man whom God calls, “My Servant”- could you interpret this for me? Who is this Servant?” Many times, a Muslim has read through the passage and said, “It’s Jesus” and I’ll say, “And what does it say happened to Jesus?” and he will say, “That He died for us”- to hear those words from a Muslim- can you imagine how powerful those words are??? From there, it is easy to go through *Isaiah 53* and reiterate why He died for us- after all, He was bruised for our iniquities- the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him- all our sins (and I’ll remind them of the commandments that they told me earlier they had broken), and go to further prophecies about Jesus Christ being God become a man, who rose victorious, proving He was God and talking about the firm hope I have in the forgiveness of all my sins, something no Muslim truly has, for even Muhammad said he wasn’t sure he was going to heaven...

One last point before we leave *Romans 1:2-4*, the resurrection from the dead. Do you know how to defend the resurrection? Any gospel presentation without the resurrection really isn’t complete. It is the core gospel (*See 1 Cor 15:1-7*). Do you feel you can adequately defend the resurrection? If not, my encouragement is to get a book or two and take notes: like Lee Stroebel’s book, *The Case for Christ*, or Josh McDowell’s books, such as *More Than a Carpenter* or Morrison’s *He Rolled Away the Stone*. The Resurrection sets apart Jesus from all other prophets- Muhammad- dead. Buddha- dead. Moses- dead. Jesus- risen from the dead and seated at the right hand of God. Paul tells us how important the resurrection is: *1 Cor 15*- are you convinced of how important it is to defend? If not, reread God’s words in *1 Cor 15* and consider this in the book of Acts: they continually preached the resurrection: (*Acts 2:25-35, 3:15, 4:10, 5:31, 7:55, 10:40-41, 13:30-38, 17:3, 18:31-31, 24:15, 21, 26:23*)- we must, also.

Notice in *Romans 1:4* that Jesus was raised “according to the Spirit of Holiness”- so we see the Trinity right there at the start of this awesome epistle! Notice how the Holy Spirit is in the middle of everything with Jesus and the Apostle’s ministry (*Matt 3:16-17, Luke 4:1, John 3:34, Acts 1:2, 4-5*) Let the Holy Spirit be at the center of all your ministry as well- cry out to God in prayer, before, during and after evangelism, trusting the Holy Spirit to lead and guide you.

In Christ’s Love,
Mike Porter