

Peter's Presentation of the Gospel

Last Sunday morning we talked about how, according to early church tradition, the Gospel of Mark is a record of Peter's preaching and teaching. According to Irenaeus, "After the death of these [Peter and Paul] Mark also, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself handed down to us in writing the things which were preached by Peter" (AH 3.1.2). Nothing, ultimately, changes if Mark is not, in fact, a record of Peter's teaching; but it does shed an interesting light on the Gospel to think that these are Peter's words.

One element that supports this tradition was presented by C.H. Dodd.¹ According to Dodd, the presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that we find in the Gospel of Mark follows the same pattern as Peter's presentation of the Gospel in Cornelius' house in Acts 10. In other words, the Gospel of Mark is basically an extended version of the sermon that Peter preached in Acts 10.

Acts 10	Gospel of Mark
v.36 – "good news of peace" / "He is Lord of all"	1:1 – "the beginning of the gospel" / "The Son of God"
v. 37 – "beginning in Galilee"	1:16-8:26 – The Galilean ministry
v. 38 – "He went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil"	Mark's gospel focuses on Jesus' healings and exorcisms. Ex – John teaches; Mark records miracles
v. 39 – "We are witnesses of everything he did...in Jerusalem"	Chs. 11-14 – Ministry in Jerusalem
v. 39 – "They killed him by hanging him on a tree"	Ch. 15 – focus on the death of Christ
v. 40 – "God raised him from the dead on the third day"	Ch. 16 – resurrection and appearances

Dodd's thinking is that Peter's message was essentially the same whenever and wherever he presented it. With this in mind, let's make some observations about Peter's presentation of the Gospel (as least in so far as we can see it in Acts 10 and Mark). What did Peter preach?

1. Jesus was the Son of God who is Lord of all. These words were a politically inflammatory statement that ended up getting Peter killed. To speak about the "gospel," Jesus as "Lord" and the "Son of God" were direct shots at the Roman Emperor. Peter's message was that Jesus is king, and not the ruler of Rome.
2. Jesus went to Galilee and performed miracles that proved beyond the shadow of any doubt that he is, in fact, the Son of God and Lord of all (cf. Acts 2:22). That Jesus went straight to the "common folk" of Galilee before he went to the religious elite in Jerusalem teaches us something about who Jesus worked with. We might make a similar note about how Jesus chose fishermen, like Peter, to serve alongside him and to spread the Gospel after his death.
3. Peter spent a lot of time talking about what happened to Jesus in Jerusalem. When Jesus finally did go to where they religious elite were they killed him. One of the major messages of the Gospel of Mark is that while Jesus was truly God's Messiah, he was a suffering servant. So too, should his disciples expect to be.
4. Peter focused a large amount of his preaching on Jesus' death, resurrection and appearances. Without the resurrection Jesus' death was no different than any other death both before and after his. What makes Jesus' death different is that he didn't stay dead.

¹ C.H. Dodd, "The Framework of the Gospel Narrative," *Expository Times* 43 (1932): 396-400.

In all this, there is a lesson that we can learn, and that we should strive to emulate in our own preaching and teaching: Jesus is the center of everything. Whether we are talking about his Lordship, his miracles, his death or his resurrection it is always all about Jesus. At least this seems to be the case for Peter and his preaching.

Ryan Boyer, Preacher

Ellisville Church of Christ

www.SimplyChristians.com

62 Henry Ave. | Ellisville, MO 63021

Office: (636) 207-0789

Email: EllisvilleCofC@att.net