
Preaching

DEFINITION AND ETYMOLOGY

The word “preach” is found in many places in the New Testament (KJV); however, it has been translated from several different Greek words. For example, in 1 Cor. 1:17, the phrase “preach the Gospel” comes from εὐ-αγγελίζω (**euangelidzo**); while in 1:18 we see the phrase “the preaching of the cross”, which is ὁ λόγος γὰρ ὁ τοῦ σταυροῦ. You can see that the translators took some liberties with their use of the word “preach”.

The Greek verb κηρυσσω (**keiruso**) was commonly used in ancient times to refer to public proclamation or public teaching, and there are many NT verses where it is found. A complete listing can be found in a Greek concordance.

The noun κηρυξ (**keirux**) refers to the “proclaimer; publisher; messenger” who is making the proclamation. Thus,

1 Tim. 2:7, “Whereunto I (Paul) am ordained a preacher (**keirux**), and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.” (Likewise in 2 Tim. 1:11)

In 2 Pet. 2:5, Abraham is called a “preacher (**keirux**) of righteousness”.

The word **keirux** was used in several ways in ancient times. The **keirux** was a “publisher”, or “herald”, in the sense that he would broadcast important news to townspeople. The person making official proclamations or announcements to the public was called **keirux**, a sort of town cryer.

A man assigned to carry messages between enemies on a battlefield was also called **keirux**.

The message of the **keirux** is the κηρυγμα (**keirugma**). The **keirugma** is what was given to the **keirux** to proclaim. The

originator of the message may have been a battlefield officer or a public official.

In the Bible, the **keirux** is the preacher, the **keirugma** is his message, and keiruso is the act of preaching.

The English word “preaching” would be correct if it were used in its primary etymological sense of “proclaiming before the public”, the meaning which is derived from the Latin, *praedicere*. However, the modern use of “delivering a moral discourse or religious message of any kind and in any manner” does not give the meaning of **keirugma**. There is no finger-pointing or arm waving in **keirugma**.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES USING **keirugma**

In Matt. 12:41 and Luke 11:32, Jonah's message to the Ninevites is called keirugma. Jonah's job was to proclaim God's message of salvation in the Assyrian capital.

1 Cor. 1:17-22, “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel (**euangelidzw**): not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

For the preaching (**logos**) of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

[Note: to “stop the mouths” of those who are opposed (Titus 1:9-11), the Lord employs preachers to bring an unusual message.]

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness (**morias**) of preaching (**keirugma**) to save them that believe.

For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

But we preach (**keiruso**) Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

1 Cor. 2:1-10

Titus 1:3

PRINCIPLES OF **keirugma**

1. The emphasis of **keirugma** is on the message. Someone in authority, who has something to communicate, gives the message to a messenger, the **keirux**, preacher, who passes the information on to someone else, usually in a public setting. It is expected that there will be attentive hearers who will be receptive to the message and who expect to derive some benefit from the message.
2. The messenger does not proclaim his own viewpoint, his own political opinions, his own grievances. The message is another person's communication. The public

proclamation is not the platform for him to expound his own theories, to support his side in a debate, talk about his own projects, or get things off his chest. The **keirux** does not call the people together for an important proclamation, then, instead, lecture them on some private matter not associated with the real message.

3. The Bible teacher gets his **keirugma** from God Himself, as revealed in the Word of God. Correct preaching is done by making the message clear to the people who are listening to the proclamation. Public teaching protects the privacy of the believer. Confining himself to the message, the preacher does not unduly influence the listeners with personality dynamics or bullying techniques. The listener can accept or reject the message in private.
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