

On Evangelism in 'Apocalyptic Evangelism'

by Reggie Kelly

Apocalyptic evangelism is preaching the gospel in an apocalyptic context of flight from wrath, using the prophetic scriptures to make the gospel known and to demonstrate the miracle of fulfilled prophecy.

Scripture: Isaiah 66:19, Zechariah 8:23, Matthew 24:14, Romans 16:25

Topics: "Evangelism Methods", "Apocalyptic Theology"

Description

Reggie Kelly emphasizes the importance of presenting the gospel as the revelation of a mystery foretold in the prophets but hidden until its appointed time of manifestation. The apostolic approach to preaching the gospel was centered on fulfilling prophecy, proving its authenticity and appealing to both Jews and Gentiles. Apocalyptic evangelism involves urgent repentance, the imminence of God's kingdom, and the divine contention over covenant righteousness, leading to a powerful call for faith and obedience. The ultimate goal is to bring down all pride and boasting, revealing the apocalyptic righteousness of the Spirit that quickens the spiritually dead.

Transcript

believe we are using the word, "evangelism" in the apostolic sense of the word, which necessarily included the context of a revealed mystery to be made known to all nations by means of the prophetic scriptures. It is the gospel, the good news, the proclamation, but it is the gospel 'according to'. According to what? "According to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets ... made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." All of this, the means and the end, is also "according to," according to the commandment of the everlasting God.

So I take it that God is very keen that the gospel be presented as the revelation of a mystery that was fully foretold in the prophets but hidden, not only from men, both just and unjust, but also from the principalities and powers of this age till its appointed time of revelation and manifestation. This gospel includes both comings and the relation of those comings to Israel. It is the OT mystery of Messiah's coming, departure, and return to Israel. Now I realize that's a mouthful and preaching the gospel does not have to follow a prescribed method, but this is the framework and understanding that all the apostles were proceeding. It was the approach they took and they understood the preaching of the gospel as the revelation of a mystery that proves itself by its conformity to what was written in the prophets. That's its apologetic force and appeal that removes the intellectual refuge in the face of the miracle of fulfilled, and being fulfilled

prophecy. This content and this means of making the gospel known was, in their understanding, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, since it pleases God to make Himself known as the God who declares the end from the beginning, the one to whom is known (and foretold) all His works from the beginning. "The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy."

This does not have to be explicit in every preaching of the gospel, of course. There is great freedom. But this should be the context and framework of understanding that is understood as implicit, not as a rigid method, by no means, but as a consciousness of the aims of God, not only as to His ends but as to His commanded means, namely, the use of the scriptures of the prophets. When the gospel is preached in this way, built right into it is a powerful apologetic through the miracle of fulfilled prophecy. It is the power of prophecy in evangelism that has been all too neglected. Yet, it is this that God enjoins on us as 'according to the commandment of the everlasting God', as I understand Paul's statement in Ro 16:25-26, and as observed in the common practice of apostolic preaching as we have it recorded in the book of Acts.

The gospel was first preached in an apocalyptic context of flight from the wrath to come, as an urgent message of repentance in view of the shortness of the time, beneath the shadow of an imminent destruction of Jerusalem that would naturally be understood in inextricable connection with the judgment of the nations and restoration of the kingdom to Israel. That's where they were and where we find ourselves again, full circle.

It is also the "witness" (Travis' "credible witness") of the imminence of the kingdom of God (Mt 24:14) God will not judge fully and finally until there has first gone forth in power and clarity this "witness" so to leave all men without excuse for a very compelling opportunity for faith that to reject is to expose the powerful predisposition of the natural heart.

Apocalyptic evangelism is not limited to Jews, though it is meant to appeal to them, not only from the evidence of fulfilled prophecy but of things presently unfolding and soon to follow in their lifetime. Thus, it has the working of a delayed reaction bomb. This is especially seen in Isa 28 where the gospel is first dismissed, but soon enough the forewarned disaster falls and this is calculated to have powerful working on the Jewish conscience in his time of calamity. The same can be said of the rising tide of anti-Semitism, which a futuristic understanding of prophecy has always clearly anticipated. That too is again upon us. Apocalyptic evangelism exploits this evidence to point the Jew, and the nations to the implied divine contention over the nature of true covenant righteousness, and all the issues of God's face being hidden from the beleaguered nation till the coming in of the everlasting righteousness. Even that statement presumes a mystery, since this righteousness was revealed in the gospel but waits to become the experience of the entirety of the nation when it is born in a day.

The target audience is "whosoever will." The issue of Israel and the controversy God has with them is for the nations to consider, but they will not consider it rightly until they have understood how God is using the issue of Zion to confront the nations with His controversy with them. All is designed to bring down every high look, to destroy all boasting, whether Jewish or gentile. Actually, all evangelism is apocalyptic in the sense that all preaching of the gospel should presuppose this context of the everlasting covenant and the breaking in of the judgments of the day of the Lord, as well as the ever present danger of eternal hell for the spiritually dead. It is this apocalyptic righteousness of the Spirit that quickens the dead, apart from works, that the gospel reveals, now to those who obey and then to the surviving remnant who look upon Him whom they pierced and cry with one voice, "blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

Apocalyptic evangelism is a call to the nations, albeit in the context of a convincing witness of both the presence and imminence of the kingdom, which implies the return of the King to reign from Zion's little hill over all nations through a restored "Jewish" nation. It's that last part that stumbles many. It was so intended. That's why this sovereign prerogative (the scandal of particularity) will be openly vindicated and employed as a divinely intended challenge to the nations for a thousand years (Isa 66:19-22; Zech 8:23; 14:17-18).

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