

What It Means To “Preach Christ”

by Bill Crews

According to Acts 8:5 Philip went to the city of Samaria and “*preached Christ*” unto the people there.

This is not the only time we read of such preaching in the New Testament. Philip “*preached Jesus*” unto the eunuch from Ethiopia (Acts 8:35). Surely to preach Christ and to preach Jesus are one and the same. Notice:

Saul (later called Paul) preached Jesus at Damascus (Acts 9:20); Paul preached Jesus at Thessalonica (Acts 17:3); Paul preached Jesus at Athens (Acts 17:18); Paul preached Jesus at Ephesus (Acts 19:13); the Son of God, Jesus Christ was preached by Paul, Silas and Timothy at Corinth (2 Cor. 1:19); in Philippians 1:15-18 Paul speaks of preaching Christ; in Colossians 1:28 Paul, speaking of Christ, said, “*whom we preach*”; and in Romans 16:25 Paul speaks of “*the preaching of Jesus Christ*” (A. T. Robertson says of this passage, “Objective genitive, ‘about Jesus Christ’”).

All of these passages obviously refer to the same preaching, but **what** did these men preach when they preached Christ or Jesus? Today, all preachers who claim to believe the Bible and to be Christians would surely insist that they preach Christ; yet, they do not preach the same things. In fact they preach contrary or contradictory things while calling it “preaching Christ.” Some even go so far as to say that they “just preach Christ, and not doctrine.” Or they plead for all preachers to “preach Christ, and not doctrine.” But “*doctrine*,” according to the dictionary, means “teaching, instruction, that which is taught.” How could anyone preach Christ without doing any teaching or giving any instruction? Did not Christ do much teaching? Can we preach Christ without preaching what He taught? Over and over the New Testament speaks of “*His doctrine*” or “*the doctrine of Christ*.” How could anyone preach Christ without presenting His doctrine? Surely to preach Christ is to preach what Christ taught during His ministry as found in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. To preach Christ would be to preach what his apostles and others guided by the Holy Spirit preached in the book of Acts and in the letters they wrote to Christians and churches. The New Testament must be the rod by which all preaching is measured.

Let’s take a closer look at some of the passages that speak of preaching Christ or Jesus. We have a general statement in Acts 8:4: “*They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word.*”

And then a statement of **detail** in Acts 8:5: “*And Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed (or preached) unto them the Christ.*” Surely to preach the Christ and to preach the word are the same. Acts 15:21 says, “*For Moses from generations of old hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath.*” Moses was preached by having the things he wrote (the law of Moses) read. To the extent that the things that Jesus the Christ taught were preached, Christ or Jesus was preached. Acts 9:20 says, “*And straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God.*” Saul, in preaching Jesus, preached His deity, which would include evidences for that conclusion. In Acts 17:2-3 Paul, in a synagogue at Thessalonica, opened the Old Testament Scriptures and from them alleged that the Christ was to suffer and rise from the dead (so he gave the Old Testament passages that foretold these). And then he declared, “*that this Jesus, whom I proclaim unto you, is the Christ.*” So Paul, in preaching Jesus, preached that He is the Christ because of His death and resurrection. Acts 17:13 shows that what Paul preached at Thessalonica he preached at Berea, but it is called “*the word of God.*” Acts 17:18 refers to Paul preaching “*Jesus and the resurrection*” at Athens. By reading his sermon on the hill of Mars at Athens (vv. 22-33), we know that he preached the resurrection of Jesus and the coming resurrection of the dead and the judgment (“*dead*” in Acts 17:32 is **plural**, just as it is in Acts 4:2).

continued on page 301203

301202