

Preaching the Old Testament Like a Dispensationalist

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A Few Reasons We Don't Preach the Old Testament

1. It's too big.
2. It's culture and context are so foreign to us.
3. Narratives! Most pastors are trained to exposit epistles.
4. Leviticus.
5. Weird stuff (ie., Nephilim, angels in Ezekiel, necromancy, curses on adulterers, etc.)
6. Tough ethical questions (i.e., polygamy, ethnic cleansing, concubines, etc.)
7. Uncomfortable sections (i.e., Song of Solomon, priest/concubine, foreskins, Jael and the tent peg, etc.).
8. We're not Israel.

A Few Reasons We Need to Preach the Old Testament

1. It makes up 3/4 of the entire Bible. (39+27 books, but by chapters, the whole Bible has 1,189 chapters: the OT has 929, while the NT has 260. In verses, the OT has 23,145 and the NT has only 7,957 verses.
2. It lays the groundwork for the New Testament.
3. The NT requires the OT to understand it (think of Hebrews!).
4. Substantial OT quotations are used in the NT.
5. We are called to "preach the Word" (2 Tim 4:2-4), which for Paul and Timothy (and the early church) was the OT (2 Tim 3:15-16).
6. When we skip the OT, we skip a rich treasury of God's eternal Word to us.
7. The OT points to and prophesies of the coming Messiah!

A Few Helps for Preaching the Old Testament

1. Genre is important, so understand how it fits within a consistent LGH hermeneutic.
 - A. Genre helps determine our approach to the text and works together with the LGH hermeneutic to help us determine the authorial intent.
 - B. Learn the different types of genre in the Old Testament, and any special rules that might be necessary to get to the correct interpretation of that genre.

However, beware that genre can be abused to deny the plain meaning of the text.

C. Whatever the case, each literary type is pointing to a literal truth. Genre helps us distinguish these types of literature to aid our discovery process.

2. We must seek to understand the writer, recipients, setting, history, and any other background information to place the text in its original context. This takes effort, but it will help us understand what the text meant before we move on to what it means to us.
3. We must isolate the main theological idea of the text in order to derive our main sermon idea. This will require us to be very familiar with the text in its context. We must discover the connections between our chosen teaching unit and the greater context it fits within.
4. At times, we may seek to focus on a secondary theological idea that fits under the main idea. I.e., The Joseph story and the sovereignty of God.
5. Once we have determined what the text means, we can begin moving horizontally to parallel ideas or universal principles that apply to the Church. Universal theological principles found in the OT will be consistent with those in the NT since the God of Israel is the God of the Church.
6. We can test the universality of these principles by making sure they are found in other parts of the Scripture, especially in the NT.
7. We must seek to find legitimate connections between the nation of Israel as God's people, and the Church. We must distinguish (discontinuity) while also seeing the parallels (continuity). Not everything ports over from Israel to the Church, but some applications can be drawn from lessons in a text.
8. We must beware of overlapping similar but distinct ideas in the OT and Church. I.e., Priests/Prophets and Pastors; Baptism and circumcision; Israelite forms of worship and worship in the Church. By merging these ideas, we are introducing confusion and blurring the distinctions given in Scripture.
9. In prophetic passages, we need to distinguish between fulfilled prophecy that is now history from our vantage point and prophecy that is yet future. In teaching completed prophecy, biblical history and archeology can give valuable insight and further affirm that God always fulfills His Word.
10. Jesus is referenced in the OT, although not in the way Covenantalists often claim. Don't force Christ into every text, but make sure you don't leave Him out of the ones that He is in!
11. Beware of becoming a "hyper-typer." Not everything is a type of Christ. Make sure you have strong evidence of a type to avoid reading one into a text. Sometimes the tent pegs in the tabernacle are just there to hold up the walls.

12. In poetic passages we should attempt to understand enough about Hebrew poetry and some of the forms of poetry to be able to bring out emphases that cannot be seen in the English text.
13. Maps are helpful for us and our people to understand important geographical indicators. Bible dictionaries and atlases, along with books that deal with culture and backgrounds add spice and color to our understanding and teaching, along with bringing added clarity to the Scripture.
14. Timelines can be helpful, but most often are overwhelming to people. Limit your use of them and make them clear and simply to make your main point. Remember you are preaching, not teaching a seminary class.
15. Teaching from the OT doesn't mean we can't preach the gospel. Instead of forcing the gospel into a text, find some element of the gospel that occurs naturally in the text and use that to lead into the gospel. I.e., sin, death, God's glory, blood, sacrifice, rebellion etc.

TEXT TO SERMON

(From McDill, 136)

Text:

1. Identify the text subject in one word. This answers the question, "What is the text writer talking about?"
2. Identify the complement to your subject in one word. This answers the question, "How does the text writer limit the scope of his treatment of the subject?"
3. Using some form of the subject/complement words, write a working title for your emerging sermon.
4. Write the textual idea statement as the first of the four bridging sentences. Use the subject and complement, plus elements of the historical setting and literary context of the text.
5. Write the sermon idea by adapting the wording of the textual idea. Omit the historical trappings and make it a present tense statement of a universal theological principle.
6. Write the interrogative by restating the sermon idea as a question. Choose one of the following questions: who, what, when, where, why, how. This question will seek answers in the text, the predicates.

7. The transition sentence responds to your interrogative by using a KEY WORD to categorize the predicates in the text which express the subject/complement. Include the KEY WORD with a rewording of the sermon idea.
8. List the predicates in the text which express what the writer is saying about his subject. These are specific answers to the question raised in your interrogative. They will become the basis for your sermon divisions.

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