

General Topics :: The History of Street Preaching**The History of Street Preaching - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2007/7/23 17:23**

The History of Street Preaching

“The Lord said unto me, Proclaim all these words....in the streets....” (Jeremiah 11:6)

Preaching outdoors, in the open air, outside the walls of religious meeting houses has a long history going back to the prophets of the Old Testament.

OLD TESTAMENT OPEN AIR PREACHERS

A popular place for OT prophets to preach was the GATES of the city (Proverbs 1:20-21).

Gates were very busy places, being the site of business transactions (Gen. 23:10ff.; 2 Kings 7:1), community meetings/city hall (Gen. 34:20ff.; 2 Sam. 19:8; Prov. 31:23; Lam. 5:14), court decisions (Deut. 22:15ff.; 25:7; Ruth 4:1; 2 Sam. 15:2; Amos 5:15; Zech. 8:16), public executions (Deut. 22:24), public mourning (2 Sam. 18:33), daily chores (2 Sam. 23:15; 1 Kings 17:10), religious meetings/idolatry (1 Kings 22:10; 2 Kings 23:8; 2 Chron. 18:9; Acts 14:13), beggars (Psalm 69:12; Prov. 22:22; Amos 5:12), and wartime negotiations (Isaiah 22:7; Jer. 1:15).

Isaiah 29:21 and Amos 5:10 mentions those who hate and lay a snare for the man who “rebuketh in the gate.”
ISAIAH AND AMOS WERE STREET PREACHERS!

The book of Jeremiah, more than any other, gives clear verses and examples of OPEN AIR PREACHING. Jeremiah’s ministry at the gates is mentioned in Jeremiah 7:1-2; 11:6; 17:19-20; 22:1-2; 36:10. This was the best place to get a message to the most people, to “all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem that enter in by these gates....”

JEREMIAH WAS A STREET PREACHER!

NEW TESTAMENT OPEN AIR PREACHERS

JOHN THE BAPTIST’S ministry was “in the wilderness” and at the Jordan River, where he did his baptisms. Since Jews returning to Galilee from their pilgrimages to Jerusalem would not go through Samaria, their route home took them to the Jordan river, to follow its course north. Here at this major thoroughfare we find John the Baptist and his sermons ringing with righteousness, preparing the way of the Lord. (Matthew 3:1-2; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3)

JESUS CHRIST visited Jerusalem during the Jewish feasts where huge crowds gathered. Most are familiar with His one-on-one witnessing (to Nicodemus, Zaccheus, and the woman at the well), but the Gospels give many more accounts of His dealings with “MULTITUDES” (see Matt. 4:25; 5:1; 8:1,18; 12:15; 13:2,34; 14:14; 15:10,30-35,39; 17:14; 19:2; 21:8,11.....).

Jesus lived in Galilee, where Matthew, Mark and Luke record His words and deeds. But John focuses on his trips to Jerusalem during the Jewish feasts and His dealing with the masses there. Everything in John revolves around Christ’s experiences in Jerusalem during the Jewish feasts (John 2:13; 5:1; 6:4; 7:2).

John 7:37, “In the last day, that great day of the feast, JESUS STOOD AND CRIED, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.”

JESUS WAS A STREET PREACHER.

Our Lord’s most famous sermons were preached outdoors: the Sermon on the MOUNT, the OLIVET discourse (on the Mount of Olives); His parables were preached from a boat “at the sea side” (Matthew 13:1-2) to a crowd on the beach (Jesus was a BEACH PREACHER!)

THE APOSTLES in Acts were no strangers to outdoor preaching. Acts 17:17 tells us that Paul “disputed in the market daily.” The early Christians had no church buildings so their sermons were of necessity preached outside of meeting house walls.

OPEN AIR PREACHERS SINCE THE APOSTLES

Our Anabaptist history of Baptist thinking continuing unbroken since the Apostles (see TRAIL OF BLOOD by J.M. Carroll) is full of examples of men preaching outdoors.

WALDENSES in France in the 12th century sold their possessions and gave the money to the poor, and travelled by twos through the villages of Europe, reading the Scriptures to multitudes in their own language, and preaching in the markets. The Pope launched Inquisitions against them to stamp them out.

HENRICIANS, followers of Henry of Lausanne, also preached in the street of southern France in the 12th century. They preached against images and infant baptism.

PETROBRUSSIANS, followers of Peter of Bruys, made enemies of the Papists as they preached open air in France in the 1100s.

LOLLARDS were taught by John Wycliffe in England in the 14th century, and preached against popery in the streets of England. Wycliffe translated the first English Bible and influenced all later Reformers. The Papists dug up his dead body from its grave, condemned him as a heretic, burned his body, and threw the ashes into the Thames river.

WILLIAM CAREY, the “father of modern missions,” went to India and preached in the streets of the brothel district of Calcutta. His assistant, Chamberlain, would go to the Ganges river and preach to crowds of Hindus there. One of their converts was a British sailor, Robert Flockhart, who returned to Scotland and preached in the streets until his death.

THE HALDANE brothers, who along with Rowland Hill founded the Religious Tract Society. These Baptists started a great revival in Scotland in the 1800s as they preached outdoors.

SPURGEON, the “prince of preachers” and pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, started out preaching in the streets (as did D.L. Moody and Billy Graham), and taught open air preaching to his pastoral students.

AMERICAN COLONISTS who were Baptists impressed Jefferson and Madison with their views on religious freedom. Baptists were often jailed in Virginia, where they would preach to crowds outside through the window of their jail cell. Jefferson used to enjoy pulling up a camp stool and listening to Baptist outdoor preachers. (Encyclopedia of Religious Freedom: “Baptist Dissenters in Virginia”)

OTHER OPEN AIR PREACHERS INCLUDE: Francis of Assisi, William Farel (friend of Calvin), George Wishart (his bodyguard, John Knox, later started the Presbyterian Church: compare also the Presbyterian field preachers, Richard Cameron and Donald Cargill of the 17th century); John Wesley (founder of Methodism) and George Whitefield and Howell Harris.

The REFORMED churches, PRESBYTERIAN churches, and METHODIST churches, and the MODERN MISSIONS MOVEMENT were all started by STREET PREACHERS!

“It would be very easy to prove that revivals of religion have usually been accompanied, if not caused, by a considerable amount of preaching out of doors, or in unusual places.”

“No sort of defense is needed for preaching out of doors, but it would need very potent arguments to prove that a man had done his duty who has never preached beyond the walls of his meeting-house. A defense is required for services within buildings than for worship outside of them.” (C.H. Spurgeon)

(<http://www.whitestoneonline.org/articles/History%20of%20Street%20Preaching.htm>) www.whitestoneonline.org

Re: The History of Street Preaching, on: 2007/7/23 17:39

A very full, complete and enlightened post. Well covered and backed up with the Word. I don't know how one could confirm it any better than you did and cover and confirm it any better than confirming it with in HIS Word and also adding the history of a nation that has been blessed by HIM and HIS WORD.

Good post.