**Preaching in the New Testament: An Exegetical and Biblical–Theological Study**

**By Jonathan Griffiths**

Jonathan Griffiths is the lead pastor of the Metropolitan Bible Church in Ottawa, Canada. He also is a Council member for TGC Canada. He studied theology at Oxford and Cambridge universities and is the author of a number of books including [*Messiah...Refreshed!*](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B082LTLXBP/ref%3Dsr_1_4?crid=34SO6W0KBLRBG&keywords=Jonathan+Griffiths&qid=1641779443&sprefix=jonathan+griffiths+%2Caps%2C466&sr=8-4)*, The Perfect Saviour: Key Themes in Hebrews, The Ministry Medical*, and most recently, *Preaching in the New Testament*. The latter book’s central interest is to search the New Testament to answer the following question: “﻿According to Scripture, is there such a thing as ‘preaching’ that is mandated in the post-apostolic context; and, if there is, how is it characterized and defined?” (kl 181).

 The book is divided into three parts. Part one addresses foundational matters, part two ﻿concentrate on sections of New Testament teaching that relate especially to the post-apostolic context, and part 3 ﻿summarizes the exegetical findings of the study and set them within the context of biblical theology, proposing a number of broader theological implications (kl 205–235). Griffiths’ main concern is to establish whether there is ﻿a biblical basis for the practice of ‘preaching.’ In his own words, “the central concern of this study is to discover what the New Testament teaches about preaching as a particular ministry of the word” (kl 677). And he does so by providing a thorough exegetical study of the various terms for preaching in the New Testament and by offering examinations of particular texts from the New Testament related to preaching.

 *Preaching the New Testament* offers an inductive study of certain passages of Scripture related to the subject of preaching. Griffiths 2 Timothy 2–4, Romans 10, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 2–6, 1 Thessalonians 1–2, and the book of Hebrews. Part of the central concern of the book is to discover what the New Testament teaches about preaching as a particular ministry of the word. More specifically, Griffiths focuses on the post–apostolic preaching of the New Testament. His study focuses on the New Testament words for preaching, namely *euangelizomai*, *katangellō* and *kēryssō*.

 Griffiths makes a clear distinction between preaching and “the ministry of the word.” He writes, “Preaching is not the only ministry of the word envisaged or mandated by Scripture . To isolate preaching from other ministries of the word or to claim that it is the sole ministry of the word is ‘to make preaching carry a load which it cannot bear; that is, the burden of doing all that the Bible expects of every form of the ministry of the Word’” (kl 674). In other words, there is a mandate for some who are appointed to preach, but the church too participates in the ministry of the Word through various means of proclamation (i.e. Sunday school teacher, evangelism). In all, he concludes that preaching is for the local church. Moreover, it is necessary and vital – but not all–sufficient – for the nourishment and edification of the local church.

 Griffiths’ book is technical in nature. It requires a working knowledge of biblical Greek and exegetical skills. Further, part of its goal is to provide a few broader theological implications for preaching. One of those is that preaching is the public proclamation of God’s word. As such, a preacher cannot be a self–acclaimed herald. He also believes preaching is a task for male leaders, though there’s room in his exegetical stance for the ministry of the word to manifest itself through women. *Preaching the New Testament* will serve lay leaders who are students of the Greek language. It can function as a sort of Bible tool for leaders who want to make the case for preaching from the Bible. One thing is clear in Griffith’s thinking the public proclamation of the God’s Word is of central importance for the life of the local church.

**Critique:**

Griffiths’s book is an exegetical work aimed at making the case for the importance of post–apostolic preaching. Griffiths believes that preaching is a distinctive activity of the New Testament. He writes, “The fact that the New Testament regularly uses this group of verbs in a specialized way to refer to the public proclamation of God’s word / the gospel by a leader strongly suggests that we are justified in speaking of ‘preaching’ as a recognized and distinct activity in the New Testament.” This is the reason why he focuses so much attention on the various terms for preaching in the New Testament and completely ignores any serious treatment of the subject in the Old Testament. Conversely, the vast majority of the book’s content focuses on post–apostolic preaching.

 Griffiths’ focus on “post–apostolic preaching” is perhaps limited. He barely addresses Jesus’ preaching ministry and does offer a detailed analysis of one of the major references of the New Testament about preaching, Colossians 1:28. Perhaps Dennis Johnson’s book, *Him We Proclaim*, could function as a companion to his work. Griffiths’ argumentation is hard to follow at times. But in his defense, any exegetical treatment of New Testament texts is complex. The transliteration of Greek words is helpful for those who cannot read koine Greek. The casual reader, however, will likely not enjoy reading his book because of its technical nature.

 Griffiths does try to aim to be practical. He offers a few charts throughout the book, but they are not easy to follow. One of the helpful clarifications he makes in the book is the distinction between the “ministry of the Word” and “preaching.” He leaves room for participation from the church in the proclamation of God’s word to the world. Meanwhile, he keeps the task of preaching centralized in the local church as a ministry to God’s people.

 Griffiths contends that preaching today is a continuation of the work of the Old Testament prophets. Preachers function as successors to their work as agents who prophetically speak on God’s behalf. Though Griffiths attempts to clarify that the preacher’s words are not inspired or prophetic in the sense of the apostles, he does leave the door open for misinterpretation. Are preachers prophets? Or are they simply heralds who proclaim God’s Word? According to Griffiths though, “Paul never designates himself a ‘prophet, there is a range of evidence within his letters that he views his own ministry as standing in a line of continuity with that of the Old Testament prophets” (kl 958) Consequently, preachers too give continuity to the work of the prophets. He states, “Christian preaching stands in a line of continuity with Old Testament prophetic proclamation” (kl 1020), which is a bold claim to make.

 Exegetically Griffiths makes the case that proclamation in preaching was made by ‘approved’ agents in the New Testament. The problem some may have with this line of argumentation is that the church may hold too much sway over who gets to preach and who does not. Of course, the biblical pattern of preaching, as laid out by Griffiths centers the preaching of God’s word in the context of the gathering of the saints. But what constitutes the “gathering of the saints.” What about preaching that takes place outside of the context of the local church? Regardless, Griffiths is right to point out that “preaching” is distinct from other forms of oratory in its style and source of ‘power’ (kl 1131).

 In all, chapter six offers a helpful conclusion to Griffiths book. He applies the conclusions of his research is a helpful way that instructs. Though he fails to define what he means by “authentic, faithful Christian preaching” in detail, one can conclude such preaching is one that is faithful to the text.

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**Significant Quotes:**

* First, according to Scripture, is there actually such a thing as ‘preaching’ that can be differentiated in any way from other forms of word ministry? Location 155

### Establishing whether there is a biblical basis for the practice of ‘preaching’ is vitally important because our conclusion on that matter will determine whether we cling on to preaching in times when it falls out of favor in evangelical culture or in seasons of church life when it appears to be less effective. – Location 194

### The central interest of this book is to search the New Testament to address the questions articulated above. It will consist primarily of a series of exegetical studies of key New Testament texts that relate to preaching – Location 207

### Scripture is not simply a depository and record of words that God spoke at some time in the past; it is the script that he continues to speak today. Scripture presents itself as a living thing. – Location 254

### The writer of Hebrews repeatedly treats Old Testament texts as being spoken by God in the contemporary context. – Location 257

### If it is the word of God that preachers preach, then insofar as they are saying what the Bible passage is saying, it follows that God is speaking and his voice is heard. – Location 263

### When preachers open up God’s word and say what it says, God is speaking, and the congregation is hearing his own voice. – Location 265

### God’s words are active; they always issue forth in God’s action and do his work. – Location 305

### Given the nature of the word as outlined here , we can conclude that at least three things must occur in and through any ministry of the word: (1) God is speaking, because through the Bible and by his Spirit God speaks today those words he once spoke; (2) God is achieving his purposes, because God’s word is living and active; and (3) God is encountering his people, because he characteristically meets and relates to his people through his word. – Location 372

### a working definition of ‘ preaching ’ is needed, and we will use the following: preaching is a public proclamation of God’s word. – Location 390

### The observations of this chapter confirm that euangelizomai , katangellō and kēryssō do function with a high degree of consistency as ‘semi - technical’ terms for preaching the gospel throughout the New Testament. – Location 509

### Furthermore, the fact that the New Testament regularly uses this group of verbs in a specialized way to refer to the public proclamation of God’s word / the gospel by a leader strongly suggests that we are justified in speaking of ‘preaching’ as a recognized and distinct activity in the New Testament. – Location 521

### We have noted that the ‘ preaching ’ to which our three key verbs refer in the New Testament is usually carried out by figures of recognized authority. – Location 552

### Preaching is not the only ministry of the word envisaged or mandated by Scripture . To isolate preaching from other ministries of the word or to claim that it is the sole ministry of the word is ‘to make preaching carry a load which it cannot bear; that is, the burden of doing all that the Bible expects of every form of the ministry of the Word ’. – Location 674

### the central concern of this study is to discover what the New Testament teaches about preaching as a particular ministry of the word. – Location 677

* Should we conclude that, apart from leaders with a commission to preach, believers in general do not have a role to play in word - based evangelism? The answer to that question is clearly and decisively ‘no.’ – Location 684

### Not only does the New Testament expect all believers to be involved in word - based evangelism, it also expects all believers to be engaged in word - based ministries of encouragement and discipleship within the church family. Location 695

### Again, the ministry of the whole church family to one another is to parallel the ministry of its leaders.  Location 725

### Nowhere does the New Testament call or instruct believers as a whole group to ‘preach’, but it does call them to minister the word to one another, and does so using language that can also describe preaching. – Location 747

### In calling Timothy to this task and identifying him as a ‘man of God’, Paul sets Timothy the preacher in a line of continuity with himself and his own apostolic preaching. Furthermore, he sets Timothy and preachers who follow him in a line of continuity with authoritative speakers of God’s word in the Old Testament. – Location 887

### One of the interests of this study is to set the New Testament’s presentation of preaching within its broader biblical - theological framework. – Location 891

### In light of the fact that the term ‘man of God’ often referred to the prophet of God in the Old Testament, these verses highlight one potentially rich vein of biblical - theological connection, namely, that the Christian preacher stands in a line of continuity with the Old Testament prophet. – Location 893

### As Jesus sends out his disciples to preach God’s word just as he preached it, he signals that the work of speaking God’s word is not limited to him alone. The disciples will act as agents of Jesus the great Prophet, speaking his words on his behalf. – Location 946

* Although Paul never designates himself a ‘prophet’, there is a range of evidence within his letters that he views his own ministry as standing in a line of continuity with that of the Old Testament prophets. – Location 958

### In sum, there is a biblical - theological line of continuity that runs from Old Testament prophets, finds fulfilment in Christ (the promised great Prophet like Moses) and then extends out from him to the church – and especially to the apostles, their agents and successors whose work it is to preach God’s word. –  Location 974

### Preaching reflects the nature of the gospel as something given and received. – Location 988

### Christian preaching stands in a line of continuity with Old Testament prophetic proclamation. – Location 1020

### Preaching requires a commission, but is not restricted to the apostles. – Location 1062

### The preached message, as a word that is proclaimed and heard , corresponds in a fundamental way to the gospel itself – a message of salvation that is freely given and intended simply to be received by faith . Gospel preaching stands in a line of continuity with Moses’ and Isaiah’s ministry, and fulfils the latter’s prophetic expectation of the proclamation of good news in the messianic age. – Location 1076

### Preaching is distinct from other forms of oratory in its style and source of ‘power’. – Location 1105

### Preachers have a specific identity and role within the church, carrying particular rights and obligations – Location 1135

### Christian preaching is the delivery of the received gospel of Christ – Location 1164

### Christian preaching is fundamentally nothing more and nothing less than an accurate transmission of the received gospel of the sin - bearing death and resurrection of Christ. –  Location 1176

### Preaching requires a believing response and leads to salvation. – Location 1179

### The faithful proclamation of this received word should be sufficient to put doubt to rest and precludes legitimate contradiction. Ultimately, the response – and continued response – to this preached word is a matter of life and death. – Location 1183

### The particular ministry he has in view is a ministry of public proclamation – Location 1223

### The difference Paul highlights between new - covenant and old - covenant ministry is not the basis of revelation in the Scriptures , but rather the ability of God’s people to perceive what is found in Scripture. Now under the new covenant the ‘the veil is removed’ through Christ (3:16), and so God’s people can behold Christ in his glory when the scriptural word is proclaimed. The clear implication is that the ministry remains grounded in the same Scriptures. – Location 1262

### Indeed, at certain points he implies strongly that this ministry of preaching is fundamentally something that God himself does in and through his agents. – Location 1267

### As Paul, Timothy and Silas proclaim the new covenant in the power of the Spirit , they themselves become recipients, along with God’s assembled people (‘we all’, 3: 18), of the transforming ministry of the Spirit. This is only possible because in the ministry of new - covenant proclamation , the primary actor is not the preacher, but God himself. – Location 1292

### Thus, the fruit of the encounter through the proclaimed word is radical, Spirit - enabled transformation of the people of God into the likeness of Christ. – Location 1347

### In this ministry, which is fundamentally a public proclamation of Christ grounded in the Scriptures, God the Trinity is at work as the primary agent. Through this new - covenant ministry, which is parallel to the prophetic ministries of Moses and Isaiah in significant respects, the glory of God is revealed and both the preacher and the hearers encounter God. – Location 1379

### The proclamation is made by ‘approved’ agents – Location 1432

### Hebrews is a sermon intended to be read aloud in the Christian assembly – Location 1499

### The Hebrews sermon constitutes an authoritative declaration of the word of God by a post-apostolic leader of the congregation. – Location 1553

### Given that the writer regularly uses the term ‘the word’ to refer to a word or message that comes from God, it is significant to note that on a number of occasions he designates the word spoken or preached by the leaders of God’s people as ‘the word’ [ho logos]. – Location 1568

### However, in an immediate sense, the voice the congregation are hearing as they listen to the sermon is the preacher’s voice. He is, if you like, the mouthpiece of God for them, and they are called to respond rightly to God’s word as the preacher declares it. – Location 1593

* As the only full - length sermon recorded in the New Testament, Hebrews gives us special insight into the nature of early Christian preaching and its theological character according to Scripture. By its shape and character, the Hebrews sermon highlights the fact that preaching ( at least for this NT writer ) consisted fundamentally in proclaiming Christ through the exposition of Scripture and exhorting hearers to respond. – Location 1715

### Preaching is a proclamation of the word of God – Location 1759

### it has been evident that the substance of preaching is consistently the Person and work of Christ from Scripture. – Location 1760

### Moving beyond the preaching of Jesus and the apostles into the post-apostolic context, it becomes all the more clear that Christian preaching proclaims Christ from Scripture, in accordance with the apostolic teaching. – Location 1762

### However, the New Testament indicates that the relationship between God’s word and faithful preaching is more integral than simply affirming that God’s word must be the content of Christian preaching. – Location 1767

### The New Testament makes it clear that preachers act as God’s heralds who proclaim his word on his behalf. – Location 1771

### When authentic, faithful Christian preaching of the biblical word takes place, that preaching constitutes a true proclamation of the word of God that enables God’s own voice to be heard. – Location 1772

### Christian preaching stands in a line of continuity with the preaching of Jesus and the apostles – Location 1776

### Although preachers today are not in the positions of unique authority of Jesus or his apostles (or of the foundational NT ‘prophets’), it is nonetheless valid – indeed necessary – to draw lessons about preaching from what we observe in the New Testament of their preaching ministries. – Location 1842

### Post - apostolic preaching ministry not only stands in a line of continuity with the ministry of Jesus, his apostles and their agents, but, together with those ministries, also stands in a line of continuity with prophetic ministry in the Old Testament. – Location 1845

### Preaching is not a generalized activity undertaken by all Christian people or on the basis of the preacher’s own initiative. – Location 1893

### Preaching is not a conversation or an exploration, but a declaration of a God - given message. – Location 1902

### Preaching is a divine and human activity that constitutes an encounter with God – Location 1908

### we are led to conclude that not all Christian believers are given a mandate to preach, while still allowing for the possibility that the New Testament may well mandate other forms of word ministry for non-leaders. – Location 1973

### Preaching is necessary and vital – but not all - sufficient – for the nourishment and edification of the local church. All God’s people are ministers of his word , and a healthy church will be a church where all kinds of word ministries (formal and informal) flourish and abound. – Location 1985

### The primary feeding and teaching of God’s people should come from the preaching that takes place week by week in the assembly. – Location 1988

### The preaching of the word of God is God’s gracious gift to his people. It is a gift by which he speaks to us , encounters us, equips us for ministry, and, through the power of his Spirit, transforms us – all for his glory. – Location 1990