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# Book Review

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## Old Testament Evangelistic Sermons

*D Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

*Banner of Truth, 1995, 268 pp, £12.95, hardback*

This book is a most welcome addition to the published works of the late Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones ; it should be read by all preachers as well as by thoughtful believers and unbelievers. The value of the book is enhanced by Iain Murray's useful and stimulating introduction on 'The Evangelistic Use of the Old Testament in the Preaching of Dr Lloyd-Jones' (pp vii-xxxii). He reminds us that the 'Doctor' was primarily an evangelist. While 'at least half of his preaching was evangelistic' yet 'only a fraction of that preaching has so far been published' (p viii). Murray acknowledges that publishers are 'partly to blame' for the misconception that Lloyd-Jones' preaching was expository and aimed primarily at believers. A second reason is Lloyd-Jones' 'opposition to features of modern evangelism' which in turn led some to question his commitment to evangelism *per se*.

There are twenty-one sermons in the book, fifteen of which were first preached in his first pastorate in South Wales and the rest delivered at Westminster Chapel. These sermons exhibit 'a sound structure' and principles which are 'logically argued' (p x).

For his evangelistic preaching, the 'Doctor' mainly used single texts 'likely to bring to mind the necessity of salvation' (p xi). It was a strongly held conviction on the part of Lloyd-Jones that evangelistic preaching should exist '*as a special category of preaching*'; indeed, gospel preaching was for him the main part of

preaching. Murray, rightly in my view, insists that 'today there is a need to re-establish the recognition that the type of sermon most likely to be used to aid the non-Christian is not the same as one intended for those who already believe'. Lloyd-Jones maintained that there 'ought to be a distinct difference in the approach of the preacher when he is speaking to the unconverted'. One reason for this is the need to hold the attention of unbelievers and 'to break into the world where they are' (p xii). A second and more important reason is that the evangelistic sermon is 'much narrower in its intention than one addressed to Christians'. The unbeliever 'needs only one thing : he needs to be convicted, to be humbled, to be brought to an end of himself'. While 'all preaching ought to be *more* than teaching', adds Murray, 'in the case of evangelistic preaching it is imperative. It *must* reach the heart and the conscience or it will fail' (p xiii).

Concerning Lloyd-Jones' evangelistic sermons, Murray informs us that in Aberavon 'approximately a third of his texts' were taken from the Old Testament while at Westminster Chapel the percentage was 'only slightly lower' with about 430 Old Testament texts. Murray then provides two reasons why Lloyd-Jones attached such importance to the Old Testament in his preaching, firstly 'because he saw the neglect and near disappearance of the Old Testament as a powerful influence in contemporary Christianity' (p xiv) and, secondly, he 'viewed the disuse of the Old Testament as serious because, being an essential part of divine revelation, such neglect is bound to have far-reaching practical consequences' (p xvi). One practical consequence of the

disuse of the Old Testament relates to the special purpose of the Old Testament, namely, that it 'demonstrates at length and in detail that man is in a condition from which only a divine Saviour can deliver him... men need to know that it is the Creator of the universe, the Lord of the nations, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, this God and no other, who so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son' (p xvii). Lloyd-Jones claimed that 'the importance of keeping your eye on the Old Testament emerges here in the whole question of evangelism and revivals' (p xix). What preaching Lloyd-Jones heard from the Old Testament in his youth was 'sentimental and moralistic'. The 'key' to his own preaching from the Old Testament, Murray concludes, is that 'it came out of his own experience' (p xxii).

Helpfully, Murray pinpoints for us Lloyd-Jones' understanding of the 'chief emphases of the Old Testament'. The first is that, 'Scripture reveals sin in its true nature'. The 'Doctor' distinguished carefully between 'moralising preaching' from the Old Testament and 'true evangelistic preaching'; the former deals with sin only 'in terms of its symptoms and secondary features' while the latter focuses on the 'essence of sin, the true seriousness of sin... in terms of a wrong relationship and attitude to God himself'. From the historic fact of man's fall, 'the whole human race stands alienated from God' (p xxiv). Two deductions are constantly made by Lloyd-Jones from this foundational point, namely, that 'sin must never be preached as though it were *primarily* a matter of actions' and also that, 'until a person comes to know the truth about himself he can never approach the Gospel in the right spirit'.

A second main emphasis for Lloyd-Jones is that 'Scripture reveals the absolute futility of life without God' (p xxv). It may

surprise some readers to discover that for Lloyd-Jones 'the Gospel itself is not necessarily the main subject in true evangelistic teaching, rather the main subject must often be truth which brings home to men and women their need of the Gospel'. This is how he viewed much of the purpose of Old Testament history and, writes Murray, 'he never had a problem in moving from an Old Testament character to his own day'. Old Testament history of nations also declared for Lloyd-Jones 'the same lesson' of man's inability to deal with his problems. Murray interestingly observes 'only one difference' between his earlier and later preaching : 'In his later ministry he made more direct use of the supporting testimony of modern non-Christians to show the emptiness of all human expectations'. The third emphasis in his evangelistic preaching from the Old Testament is that 'above all else, the Old Testament is a book about God' (p xxvi). This emphasis, of course, runs contrary to the modern critical view of the Old Testament. The glory, sovereignty, holiness, wrath and power of God are key doctrines clearly taught in the Old Testament.

The twenty-one sermons included in this volume are placed according to their Biblical sequence and are wide-ranging in representing Old Testament Scripture. These texts are : Genesis 3:8-9; 32:24; Exodus 3:3-5; Judges 18:7, 28; 1 Samuel 5:1-4; 2 Samuel 12:13; 1 Kings 1:41; 2 Kings 5:1, 8-16; 2 Chronicles 10:8; Job 9:1-2; 21:14-15; Psalm 107; Isaiah 8:6-7, 22:8-14, 35:7; Jeremiah 17:9, 10, 14, 30:18, 19; Zechariah 8:19. And all these sermons are interesting and challenging. Buy the book and, if you are a preacher, urgently review your evangelistic preaching in the light of these pages.

*Dr D Eryl Davies*