

Let us be careful that we do not preach as certain, things that are not certain in the Bible.

We may preach or teach as certain, many things that are portrayed as certain in the Bible. For example, the Bible clearly teaches that God created all things, Jesus is the Son of God, Jesus was obedient even unto death on the cross, and Jesus rose from the dead. There are many things like this that we may preach as certain because they are portrayed as certain in the Bible. But if we are not careful, we might preach as certain, things that are not portrayed as certain in the Bible. To illustrate, I will sight two examples of things that are uncertain that sometimes are taught as if they are certain. (I am not mentioning these here to say that one view is right and the other wrong. I am merely pointing out that neither view is portrayed as certain in the Bible.)

One such teaching suggests that seven years before Jesus comes back, He will rapture the church and those raptured will not have to go through a seven-year period of great tribulation coming upon the earth. Because the Bible does not clearly state this as certain, a degree of human deduction and speculation is required to arrive at this interpretation. Because the Bible does not portray such teaching as certain, a preacher should not teach it as if it is certain. If he truly reveres God, he should qualify this teaching as something he believes is true but not as if it is certain truth.

Another example is the teaching that once the canon (New Testament) was complete, gifts like tongues and prophecy ceased. Those who believe this base this teaching on the following passage:

“Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect¹ has come, then that which is in part will be done away” (I Corinthians 13:8-10). (They teach that the phrase “that which is perfect,” refers to the completion of the New Testament.)

While I cannot say with absolute certainty that this interpretation is false, I can say that it is definitely not certain. There is at least as much reason (if not more) to believe that this phrase refers to the second coming of Jesus, especially in light of verse 12 which follows it:

*“Now we see in a mirror, dimly, but **then** face to face” (I Corinthians 13:12).*

If a preacher holds to the view that “the perfect” refers to the completion of the New Testament, that is okay. But it is irreverent of him if he preaches that his view is certain, especially in light of Paul’s use of the personal phrase “face to face” just two verses later, which seems to be referring to “that which is perfect.”

In summary, let us preach as certain, things that the Bible teaches as certain. But let us qualify the things that the Bible does not teach as certain by telling the hearers that it is not the only viable possible interpretation. By doing this, we will prove ourselves reverent to God and loyal to His Word.

¹ In arguing for the first view (“that which is perfect” is the completion of canon), some have suggested that since the Greek adjective τέλειον (perfect) is in the neuter gender, it cannot be referring to Jesus (male gender). But this argument is invalid since this particular adjective is clearly substantival (acts like a noun). Substantival adjectives in neuter gender are sometimes used **for persons** to create suspense, craft concise principles, etc. (See Matt. 12:6, 41; I Cor. 1:27-28; Heb. 7:7.)