



**Winter 2020**

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## Jimmy Allen:

### Evangelistic Preacher Par Excellence

*"For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:16).*

*Editor's Note: Jimmy Allen passed away on August 5, 2020 at the age of 90. He taught Bible and church history here at Harding University for 50 years. Jimmy preached for more than 60 years and baptized at least 10,000 people. Our thanks to Dr. Eddie Cloer for sharing the following tribute.*

When Abraham Lincoln died, his great admirer Edwin M. Stanton

said to those who were at the President's bedside, "He now belongs to the ages." When Jimmy Allen died, those of us who were waiting for the solemn word of his death said in our hearts, "He was with us, we walked with him, we laughed with him, and we fished with him; but now he belongs to the historical archives of the great preachers who have in some cases, even single-handedly, changed the world for good."



Dr. Jimmy Allen

Jimmy's boyhood days, teenage years, and early twenties make one of the most touching narratives of a boy—with almost nothing in his favor—arising and making someone tremendously special out of his life. His abilities and accomplishments as an

evangelistic preacher have produced some of the most thrilling chapters in the history of preaching in the church.

His preaching career spans mine; and I cannot remember a time during my life as a located and evangelistic preacher that Jimmy was not having some kind of spiritual influence upon me. So far as I know, Jimmy never took a preaching class; he learned about preaching by preaching.

His life as a local preacher (from 1953 to 1959 in Prescott, Magnolia, and Lepanto, Arkansas) involved preaching two and three times each Sunday, teaching Bible classes, debating when necessary, studying with non-

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Christians, solving church struggles as best he could, and preaching in ten to twelve gospel meetings each year.

His first few sermons (though they were not as thoroughly organized as his later sermons would be) indicated that he had what it takes to develop into a great preacher. His grammar was poor, but his diction was good. His mind was sharp, and his determination was unparalleled. He had a strong voice and a handsome appearance; he could speak rapidly without slurring a single word. From the start, he preached to make a difference, and responses came to almost every sermon that he preached. The more he preached, the clearer it became that Jimmy Allen was God's gift to the church at that unique time in history.

In my Doctor of Ministry program at the Harding Graduate School of Religion, I was privileged to study the persuasive techniques of Jimmy Allen's evangelistic preaching. The thesis I presented to the faculty of the Harding Graduate School in 1991 was entitled *Profiles in Evangelistic Persuasion*. This study of him and a few other preachers gave me the opportunity to dig as deeply as I could into the personality, preaching, methods of sermon building and delivery, and accomplishments of Jimmy Allen as an evangelistic preacher. I established that Jimmy had eight characteristics as a persuasive proclaimer of the gospel that contributed heavily to his success—a success that will be forever remembered.

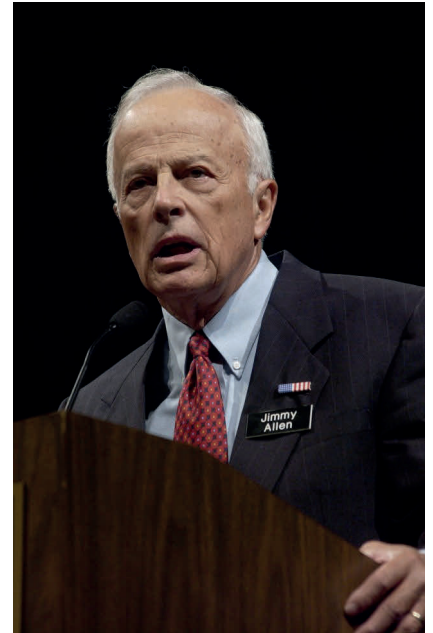
First, his sermons had a *simple, easy-to-follow structure to them*. His major points were drawn from the topic that he was discussing. Usually he would revolve his sermon around three to five major points. No one was ever confused about the direction he was going with his sermon.

Second, Jimmy *wanted to be biblical in every presentation* he made. His style of developing a major point would generally be done in four steps: (1) quotations of Scriptures interspersed with (2) explanations, (3) illustrations, and (4) applications. He would average quoting and explaining twenty plus Scriptures in each sermon that I have analyzed.

Third, he had a *gospel-centered method* to his gospel meetings. He followed it in the eight-day meetings, and he also followed it in his short three-day meetings. He related it to me with four C's: The "C" of conviction; the "C" of Christ; the "C" of conversion; and the "C" of compulsion. The first part of the meeting would be spent convicting the non-Christian or wayward Christian of his need to respond to Jesus. The second part would emphasize Christ. He would try to hold up Christ as high as he could. The third part was given to discussing conversion. The fourth part, that is, the last night or two, he would seek to persuade the people he had taught to decide to obey and follow Christ.

Fourth, Jimmy had a *genuine sense of expectation* when he got up to preach. If he did not have that type of spirit, he believed he did not have the right to go into the pulpit. He was grieved deeply when no one responded to the preaching he did.

Fifth, Jimmy *sought to be interesting* in his delivery. One of the most frightening thoughts to Jimmy was that he might become dull and uninteresting whenever he preached the gospel. Due to his speaking ability and his dynamic delivery, one would think that he would never need to think about being interesting; but he did. He thought about it every time he preached.



Continued on page 3

Sixth, he believed strongly in *illustrating his presentation* well. In my research on his sermons, I found that Jimmy used an average of nearly seventy illustrations, hypothetical situations, statistics, memories, etc., in each sermon. His use of illustrations assisted him in making his points clear and in his grabbing and holding the attention of the listener.

Seventh, Jimmy was *one big bundle of natural ability*. He had the voice, the appearance, and mental ability to think and reason clearly before large assemblies of people. I could not tell if Jimmy ever knew how great his ability was. He showed sincere consideration to every one he met. If he knew or even suspected his greatness, he was indeed humble about it.

Eighth, Jimmy was *adamant about being prepared* before he spoke. He spent a great deal of time on each sermon. When he got up to preach, he knew exactly what he was going to say. He had constructed his sermon to persuade people on that topic, and he was going to preach with all the force he had. While preaching, very seldom did he pursue a tangent; when he did, in his mind, the situation really called for it.

Who can explain the providence of God? It has often been said that it is better to look at His providence through the rearview mirror than through the windshield. If that is the case, we can say that God raised up Jimmy Allen for this special time in history. At the beginning of Jimmy's preaching career, the big cooperative meetings among the churches of Christ began. That time was the early sixties and lasted into the late seventies. When that time came, Jimmy was entering his prime as an evangelistic preacher.



Perhaps Jimmy's power as an evangelistic preacher brought about that period to some degree. I am not sure of the exact number, but Jimmy told me that he had held over 50 of the cooperative meetings when I interviewed him in 1990. Some of these meetings went over 8,000 in attendance. During the latter part of Jimmy's preaching life, gospel meetings, as such, became fewer. However, during the period that Jimmy was holding twenty or more meetings a year, hundreds responded to his preaching to be baptized or restored to the faith. In 1990, Jimmy reported that in his meetings, 7,600 had come for baptism and 24,500 had come for prayer. However, I never knew Jimmy to say much about these responses to his preaching.

Jimmy believed that evangelistic persuasion in both public and private teaching is demanded by 2 Corinthians 11:5, "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men." He always listed three reasons that constrained him to engage in soul-winning preaching: (1) to save the alien sinner, (2) to restore the backslider, and (3) to honor God. He made a distinction between plain persuasion and evangelistic preaching. All preaching, he believed, must be persuasive regardless of the subject matter under consideration; but evangelistic preaching, to Jimmy Allen, was a public attempt with the Word of God to move the unsaved to a decision regarding Jesus Christ.

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God has a place for every Christian man and every gospel preacher. If he is faithful in God's service and is living for and walking with God, he will be blessed with the privilege of entering the purpose and pleasures of God.

*"Praise the Lord! How blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in His commandments. . . . His righteousness endures forever" (Psalm 112:1, 9b).*

**-Eddie Cloer**

# MUSEUM UPDATED



Dr. Dale Manor

The **Linda Byrd Smith Museum of Biblical Archaeology** recently underwent an updating, with additional items now accessible for viewing, according to Dr. Dale Manor, Professor Emeritus of Archaeology and Bible and founder and curator of the museum.

Both the weapons/military and the religion displays have been expanded and the "theme" along the west wall now focuses on the Late Bronze Age (1600-1200 BC).

Many of the items have a number at the bottom of the display card. If one accesses either the QR code (posted at a number of tags in the museum) or the website ([harding.edu/archaeology](http://harding.edu/archaeology)) the number coordinates with one "in the cloud" supplying additional information. Usually there is more historical background and more explicit connection with the biblical story.

The museum is located in Room 146 of the McInteer Bible building and is open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Since the museum opened in 2017 it has welcomed over 2800 guests who have signed the guest book, drawing from 44 states and 41 countries.

## Director of Church Outreach

**Andrew Braxter**, our Director of Church Outreach, continues to maintain an extensive speaking schedule. Here are his most recent appointments:

- The National Revival Conference - Biloxi, MS - August 4, 2020: "From Overdrawn to Overflow"
- Joshua Conference - Cincinnati, OH - August 24, 2020: "Keep Going: You've Got What It Takes"
- Reformation Nashville 1st Year Celebration - Nashville, TN - September 5, 2020: "The Weight That Comes With Another Year"
- McAlmont Church of Christ's Johnny Lawrence/Labor Day Lectures - North Little Rock, AR - September 7, 2020:
- "Holding On To God's Unchanging Hand Through The Frustrating Side of Faith"
- Sugarland Church of Christ September Series - Sugarland, TX - September 16, 2020: "When the Lord Is All You Have"
- Harding University's Virtual Lectureship—Searcy, AR - September 26, 2020: "The Greatest Story Never Told"



# INVINCIBLE!

## Courageous Faith In Troubled Times

A Study of the book of Daniel

September 26-29, 2021

It was their darkest hour. God's covenant people were experiencing more than a crisis – it was a full-blown catastrophe. Their kingdom had been crushed by the mighty Babylonian army. Jerusalem was destroyed. Most galling of all, their holy temple, which symbolized the dwelling place of God Himself, was burned by Nebuchadnezzar. And when he took the sacred temple furnishings and triumphantly carted them off as trophies for the treasure house of his own god in Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar was making an arrogant boast: "My god won, and yours lost!"

That's why, when the best and brightest of the young men of Judah were deported to far-away Babylon, it must have been spiritually disorienting. After all, they found themselves immersed in an alien culture: given Babylonian names, indoctrinated into a Babylonian worldview, expected to worship Babylonian gods. The promises of the Hebrew God suddenly seemed a distant memory, while the power of the Babylonian gods appeared overwhelming.



Photo by [Luke Tanis](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Yet out of that darkest of hours shines one of the brightest beams of hope – the story of Daniel and his companions provides some of the greatest examples of courageous faith in troubled times. Their steadfastness was rewarded again and again, as God rescued them from the executioner's ax, from a fiery furnace, and from the lions' den. Not only that, the book of Daniel goes on to reveal a breathtaking prophetic message: "*The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed*" (2:44), an "*eternal kingdom*" (4:3, 5:34, 7:14, 7:18). The kingdoms of men rise and fall – great empires go from rule to ruin – but God's kingdom is invincible!

God's people today likewise live in troubled times, as we find ourselves in an increasingly alien culture. Headlines proclaim the decline of faith. Enemies of Christianity are growing more and more aggressive. Our government is unsettled, and our culture is in a downward spiral. In these darkening days we need to hear anew the message of the book of Daniel:

*"There is a God in heaven"* (2:28)

*"The Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men"* (4:17, 4:32, 5:21)

With the 2021 Harding Bible Lectureship we affirm that our God is still in heaven, He is still sovereign over history, and his kingdom is invincible! May that confidence enable us, like Daniel, to live faithfully and courageously in troubled times.

I invite you to plan to join us on September 26-29, 2021 for the 97<sup>th</sup> annual Harding Bible Lectureship.

-Dan Williams, Lectureship Director

# MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS:

**Homecoming (*Virtual*)**  
*www.harding.edu/homecoming*  
October 29-31, 2020

**2nd Annual Harding Preaching Conference**  
“Preaching the Book of Job”  
Feb. 16, 2021

**Bloom Conference**  
**(formerly W.I.N.G.S.)**  
TBA

**Spring Sing**  
April 14-16, 2021

**Abundant Living Retreat**  
Edgewater Hotel and Conference Center  
Gatlinburg, TN  
April 19-22, 2021

**Uplift I, II and III**  
TBA

**Harding’s 97th Annual Bible Lectureship (*Virtual*)**  
**“Invincible! Courageous Faith in Troubled Times”**  
A Study of the book of Daniel  
Sept. 26-9, 2021

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