

*"I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you." Genesis 12:2,3*

The Essentials: Missions Through the Bible

I'm rejoicing over the goodness of the Lord to us over these 40 days of prayer. I'm especially grateful for the elder's commitment to reminding us of the daily theme with a passage to read and pray through. May we increasingly be a church that prays. We are talking about essentials. What are the essentials and distinguishing biblical characteristics that make up a godly believing church? What is a New Testament supposed to look and sound like? We have looked at the necessity of the Holy Spirit to enable us to understand Scripture. And we have talked about prayer and worship.

Our theme today is missions. The Bible is a missionary book. Sacred scripture is saturated with the theme of missions. Let's take a rapid tour through the Bible, focusing on its missionary mandate, and looking at how the Word of God holds before us the heart of God for the nations. May we cultivate an ever-increasing desire to see the Gospel spread to the nations for the glory of Jesus.

The God of the Old Testament is a missionary God.

Let's start with the Old Testament, the God of the Old Testament is a missionary God. In Genesis 12, God promises to bless all the nations through Abraham. God and Abraham form what is called the Abrahamic Covenant, a covenant of love promising grace to the nations. When God comes to speak to Abraham, He is giving Abraham, and all of us, a missionary promise. "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you, I will curse and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:2-3.)

The missionary promise of the Abrahamic Covenant is found in the last phrase, “All peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” Matthew 1:1 references Jesus Christ the Messiah—the Son of Abraham. That missionary promise weaving its way through the Old Testament is ultimately and finally fulfilled in Jesus Christ. If you have embraced Jesus Christ by faith, then you are an heir of the Abrahamic Covenant. The missionary promise. “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29.)

Ultimately, all the nations will belong to the Messiah.

- Psalm 2— I will make the nations your inheritance.
- Psalm 72— All kings and nations will bow before and serve the Messiah.
- Isaiah 11—All the nations will rally to Him, and His resting place will be glorious.

And finally,

- Psalm 67:1-2—May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face shine on us—
so that your ways may be known on earth,
your salvation among all nations.

God looks on us with gracious favor so that, we can be a blessing to the nations as we herald the blessings of the Gospel. God promises to send a messiah. That Messiah is Jesus. The Word messiah means, “one anointed by God to perform a special task.” Messiah Jesus was anointed by God, set apart, the Redeemer and King, who rules in righteousness. He was promised in the Old Testament and provided in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament is an undeniable promise that ultimately all the nations will bow before the Lord and worship Him. Listen to this prophecy in Psalm 86:9, “All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to your name.” That prophecy is yet to be fulfilled. It will ultimately and finally be fulfilled in heaven; all the nations will come and worship at the feet of the Lord Jesus.

Jesus of the Gospels is a missionary Jesus.

Reading through the Gospels, one cannot possibly miss the missionary spirit and zeal of the Lord Jesus. At the beginning of our Lord's ministry, he enters the synagogue in Capernaum and preaches a message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. But he preaches with such profound authority that the people marvel over his preaching. He heals many people and cast out many demons. The next morning Jesus gets up early, way before daylight, and goes to a lonely place to pray. But while he is praying, people begin to gather at the synagogue in Capernaum. They want to hear more of his authoritative teaching. They want to see him perform more miracles.

His disciples come to him and say, “Jesus, the crowd has gathered. Let's return to the town where you can teach and do miracles.” But what Jesus says in response is astonishing. Jesus replies, “Let us go somewhere else, to the nearby villages so I can preach there also. That is why

I have come.” And the next verse— “Jesus went through all the villages of Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom and casting out demons.” Jesus is always forward-moving. On mission. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus defines his missionary adventure this way, “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” Jesus is on a mission to reach the unsaved with his gospel.

This is why Jesus had to go through Samaria. He had to tell the sinful woman at the well about living water. Jesus had to stay up late one night. To talk to Nicodemus about what it means to be born again. Jesus had to pass by a sycamore tree. To call Zacchaeus down to explain salvation to him. Our Lord was always on the go, always seeking to save the lost. He was always on mission.

The Great Commission

This same Lord Jesus Christ gave us what we often call the Great Commission. These words should be engraved on your soul. Your heart should beat with praise and prayer when you hear them. “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age’ ” (Matthew 28: 18-20.)

In these few verses, Jesus makes a great claim, he gives us great certainty, and sandwiched between he gives us a great commission.

A Great Claim. All authority on heaven and earth has been given to me. Jesus is the sovereign one. The supreme one. He possesses total authority because He is the Lord God Almighty. The omnipotent.

A Great Certainty. I will be with you always to the very end of the right age. Jesus is the ever-present Lord. Omnipresent. Jesus is sovereign. He is all-powerful and ever-present. If he is always with us in his power, his mission will succeed.

A Great Commission. “Go into all the world.” Take the gospel, preach it, live it, speak it. And when people come to faith, baptize them in the name of the Triune God. And disciple them, to obey all that I say. The Great Commission is not a Great idea. It is not a grand suggestion. It is our mandate. It is our marching orders. And it should never become to us the great omission. in the Gospels. Jesus is on the move, seeking to save the lost.

The Holy Spirit of Acts is a missionary spirit.

There are 28 chapters in the Book of Acts and each chapter is a biography telling the story of the apostles, their companions, and the early believers. We read how the apostles, empowered by the Holy Spirit, turned their world upside down. At least 11 times, we read phrases such as,

“the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” The gospel spread rapidly. At least nine or ten times we read about people filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking the word of God, with boldness. Acts 4:8, “Then Peter filled with the Holy Spirit preached with boldness. And many were saved.” Acts 4:31, “They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God boldly.”

In Acts 6, we can read about Stephen, the first martyr of the Christian Church. The members of the synagogue could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him. Stephen speaks with boldness and wisdom. We remember Barnabas, in Acts 11: 24. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

And of course, the Apostle Paul, in the last verse of Acts, 28:31, proclaims the Kingdom of God, teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance. Those who study these sorts of things tell us that the Book of Acts seems to end abruptly. Not the way we might end a book. Some might say this means the Book of Acts isn't finished. Ever since the days of Acts, the Gospel has spread rapidly and is honored all around our world.

We depend on the Holy Spirit to empower us to witness. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8.) The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost and empowered the believers for a mission. And they, like Jesus, are always moving forward on mission. They go to Jerusalem and preach the gospel there, then branch out to Samaria, and continue throughout the world.

in Acts 13, the church at Antioch is gathered together and the Holy Spirit interrupts their worship for a missionary purpose. Antioch is the first church to send out missionaries. We can read about it in Acts 13:2, “While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.”

My brothers and sisters, there is no missionary success without the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit wants the whole world for Jesus Christ. He wants all nations to become worshipers of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must depend on the Holy Spirit to reach our neighbors and the nations.

The Church of the Epistles is a missionary church.

There are a total of 21 epistles, from Romans to Jude. These epistles answer two basic questions,

- What are we to believe?
- How are we to live?

The epistles give us the doctrines that inflame our hearts about who God is, who the Spirit is, and who Christ is. We learn in these letters exactly what the Gospel is. They tell us what to believe and how to apply it. These 21 letters tell us to worship God, pursue holiness, and be a people of prayer. And they most certainly tell us to not ignore our missionary mandate.

And they tell us this in a variety of ways. 1 Thessalonians 3:1, "As for other matters, brothers and sisters pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored just as it was with you." Do you see it there? The Gospel came into Thessalonica. It spread rapidly there. Now the apostle is going to go to other villages. "Pray that the gospel will spread rapidly." A missionary people pray for missions.

Or 1 Peter 2:9. "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. God's special possession that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." You see, that's what the gospel does. We live in moral chaos, sin, and darkness. But the gospel calls us out of darkness and into light. And why? So you will declare His praises of him and be a witnessing people.

The church in Thessalonica is a very young church enduring severe persecution. And yet, the message of the Lord rang out in the midst of their severe persecution, (1 Thessalonians 1:8.) The Thessalonians moved forward like Jesus. They were a missionary people.

The Triumph of Revelation is a missionary triumph.

There will be people from everywhere that will worship the Lord Jesus. Recall Psalm 86:9, "All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, LORD. They will bring glory to your name." When is that to happen? Read it here in Revelation 7: 9-12. "After this, I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count from. Every nation, tribe, people and language. Standing before the throne and before the lamb, they were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands, and they cried out in a loud voice, salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the lamb."

When the dust of history settles, the *Lamb* wins. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world. He will be worshiped by a multinational, multi-lingual congregation of believers. Not a few stragglers living in some remote corner of the world. They will be from everywhere, worshipping the Lamb of God.

Estimates state that in 1900 there were about 27 believers for every unbeliever. By 1950, about 21 unbelievers for every believer. In 1980, the ratio was about 11 to one. And by 1989, there were seven unbelievers for every believer. The Gospel of Jesus is spreading rapidly and being honored. The Lord is fulfilling the promise. If you know Jesus Christ the Lord, someday you will be in that crowd, joining your lips and hearts to sing the praise of the victorious, triumphant

Lamb. the great triumph of revelation is a missionary triumph. Oh, that we would worship with him forever!

Heavenly Father, blessed Holy Son, Holy Spirit. You are missional, burdened, and zealous for the nations. You have provided the Gospel and your son has purchased the Gospel. And your spirit makes it precious to us and empowers us to proclaim it.

You call us to be a biblical, praying, and worshiping people. A missional people. Give us zeal to proclaim the thrill and power of the Gospel to our neighbors. We long for that day when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess to the glory of God, the Father that Jesus Christ is Lord. Until that day, Lord, may we be faithful. Amen.