

## **THE BIBLE AND MISSION**

### **A Fresh Hermeneutical Perspective**

#### **A. Mission among the theologians**

The classic shape of the western Theology curriculum:  
Biblical Criticism and Exegesis; Biblical Theology; Systematic Theology; Church History

*Where is Mission, or Missiology?*

Sometimes to be found under Practical Theology, along with Ethics, Apologetics, Evangelism, Pastoralia, Homiletics etc. i.e. an *extra*

But, in origin and history, all the significant theological issues have arisen out of the mission of the church in order to explain or defend the Christian message.

#### **B. Whose mission is it anyway?**

God's.

*Missio Dei.* Biblically, mission is not primarily something we do, but something God is doing which God calls us to participate in.

Mission means: The committed participation of God's people in the purposes of God for the redemption of the whole creation.

**Not:** God has a mission for his church in the world

**But:** *God has a church for **his** mission in the world*

#### **C. Mission as a key perspective for understanding the Bible**

The Bible itself as the product of mission: texts which arose out of the historical engagement of God's people with God in God's world.

Missiological significance of all the key biblical events, persons, affirmations, literatures, etc.

A fresh set of questions to ask of any biblical text.

## THE MANIFESTO OF MISSION

### A. "PAUL'S GOSPEL"

The success of Paul's mission among the gentiles/nations raised the urgent question: "How can gentile nations be part of the people of God, if membership of that people is defined by circumcision, the Mosaic covenant, and keeping the law?"

Paul's answer: "**CONSIDER ABRAHAM!**"

Gal. 3:6-8, 14, 26-29, cf. Rom. 4:16-17.

From the beginning, it had been God's purpose to bring the nations into his people. That was "the gospel" announced to Abraham. Therefore, the Gentile Mission was a *fulfilment*, not a contradiction, of the scriptures.

### B. THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM : GENESIS 12:1-3, etc.

#### 1. *Its canonical context*

**Gen. 1-11** God and the world of nations (ch. 10), and Babel (ch. 11)

The call of Abram in Gen. 12 is God's response to the problem of the nations of humanity.

Cf. also the end of the biblical story in Revelation: God and the nations reconciled in the new creation.

#### 2. *Its historical (= OT Israelite) content*

- \* **People**
- \* **Covenant relationship and blessing**
- \* **Land**

#### 3. *Its universal goal*

"in you/through you, all nations of the earth will receive blessing"

Gen. 12:3, 18:18, 22:18, 26:4-5, 28:14, 35:11

### C. THE MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

### 1. *A universal purpose.*

There was a universal purpose in God's election of Abraham and of the people of Israel. They were called and brought into existence *only* because of God's missionary purpose for the blessing of the nations.

Universality of the Bible's mission to the nations is not a NT "extra", but integral from the very beginning of God's historical action.

Echoes: Ps. 22:27, 72:17, Jer. 4:1-2, etc.

In later Jewish thought, Abraham/Israel was the new Adam – i.e. the restoration of true humanity.

### 2. *A unique particularity*

The universal goal (blessing for all nations) would be achieved by a particular historical means: "through you..." Thus the election of Israel has a missional significance.

The uniqueness of Israel (which is connected to the uniqueness of Yahweh and the uniqueness of Christ) is a key OT affirmation.

Echoes: Deut. 4:32ff., Amos 3:2, Ps. 147:19-20 [*see further Topic 3*]

Important to hold together in balance both biblical (OT and NT) truths:

- \* The inclusive, universal goal: God's commitment to bless
- \* The exclusive, particular means : by which he chooses to do so

### 3. *A missionary people*

God declares his commitment to bless the nations - through a particular people. Thus, *the primary agent of mission is the people of God.*

"You are my witnesses..." Isa. 43:10-12, Acts 1:8.

**Ecclesiology** must be founded in **missiology!** -- as it was for Paul.

## THE FOUNDATIONS OF MISSION

### INTRODUCTION

Acts 17:16-31. Paul in Athens. Preaching a scriptural (= OT) creation world-view, but without quoting the OT!

**The Creation Platform** provides:

- The basic biblical world-view of reality: **God, the earth, and humanity.**

- The basic human obligations:

- Love and obedience to God
- Care and keeping for the earth
- and for one another.

### A. HUMANITY - ON EARTH WITH A 'MISSION'

Gen. 1:27, 2:15. Humanity has been given a purpose, a mission, under God. Our mission begins with being human, not just being Christian.

#### 1. *Ecological*

"...have dominion"

"...to serve the earth and keep it."

Earthkeeping, stewardship of creation, "dominion through servanthood" - all this is a vital human duty, and a legitimate part of Christian mission.

#### 2. *Economic*

Responsibility of work (part of image of God in human life). Human life on God's earth requires economic structures and relationships. Christian concern for economic justice in relation to resources (access, exchange, distribution etc.) also a legitimate dimension of mission. A major biblical concern.

## **B. HUMANITY - CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE**

1. *All human beings are addressable by God*

Basis of meaningful mission: awareness of God.

Secondary nature of religious labels.

2. *All human beings are accountable to God*

Basis of biblical ethics: universal moral obligation

Christian mission must therefore treat all human beings, made in God's image, with dignity and respect.

## **C. HUMANITY - MADE IN, AND FOR, RELATIONSHIP**

"Male and female he made them" ... "Not good that man should be alone"

God's creative intention for human life includes social relationship. So, active concern for just and loving relationships between people and communities is a vital part of Christian mission (cf. Paul's gospel).

## **D. HUMANITY - IN REBELLION**

Christian mission must work with a holistic view of sin and evil.

1. *Sin affects every dimension of the human person*

Spiritual	Physical	Mental	Social
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2. *Sin affects human society and history*

The 'prophetic' perspective on human evil. More than individual.

3. *Sin affects the whole physical environment*

The earth under **curse** (Gen. 3); but also under **covenant** (Gen. 8:20-9:17).

## THE AGENT OF MISSION ISRAEL AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD

The covenant with Abraham declares God's intention to bless the nations through Abraham and his people. Other texts make this identity and purpose of Israel clearer. We shall sample four: What we are looking at is the relation between the people of God and their mission.

**Deut. 4:32-40, Gen. 18:19, Ex.19:3-6, Lev. 19.**

### A. COVENANTAL UNIQUENESS : DEUT. 4:32-40

#### 1. *Israel's unique experience vs. 32-34, 36-38*

\* of revelation (Sinai)

\* of salvation (Exodus)

#### 2. *Israel's unique knowledge and witness v. 35*

\* "so that you might know ..."

#### 3. *Israel's unique God vs. 35-39*

\* **YAHWEH** is God ... and there is no other"

Implications for biblical monotheism and NT Christology

Note the **ethical challenge** in v. 40:

Cf. the "missional" challenge in Deut. 4: 6-8  
and 1 Kgs. 8:60-61

**B. ETHICAL DISTINCTIVENESS : GENESIS 18:19**

**1. *Sodom: A model of our world***

Cf. Gen. 18:20-21, "outcry"; Gen. 19; Isa. 1:9ff., Ezek. 16:49

Sodom represents the way of the fallen world under God's judgement

Sodom also characterizes the context of Abraham's "mission": Called out of the land of Babel, into the land of Sodom! His response: intercession.

**2. *Abraham: A model of God's mission***

God "recaps" his purpose, v. 18. Cf. topic 2 above.

God's promise of a son in first part of the chapter is now seen in the light of this expression of his mission goal in the second part.

God, on his way to act in judgement on a particular evil society, stops to remind himself of his ultimate purpose of blessing to all nations

**3. *"The way of the LORD" : A model for God's people***

**a) Content**

\* "Way of the LORD" God's characteristic behaviour; our imitation of him. cf. Deut. 10: 12ff.

\* "Righteousness and justice"

Personal integrity and social justice; dominant ethical vocabulary of OT.

**b) Syntax and logic of v. 19**

Three clauses, joined together by two expressions of purpose:

".....*so that*.....*so that*....."

**Election -----> Ethics -----> Mission**

*The ethical quality of life of the people of God is the vital link between their calling and their mission. **There is no mission without ethics.***

### C. PRIESTLY HOLINESS : EXODUS 19:3-6

**The Context:** After the exodus; Israel at Mount Sinai.

**A 'Hinge' text:** Ex. 19:3-6 is a key text; a programmatic statement by God, coming in between **the exodus** (Ex. 1-18) and **the covenant and law** (Ex. 20-24).

#### 1. *God's redemptive initiative (v. 4)*

"You have seen what I have done..." God points to his own initiative of grace and redemption. A matter of historical fact, not future hope.

Importance of recognizing the priority of grace in OT theology of mission and ethics. Obedience to the law is based on, is a response to, God's salvation.

#### 2. *God's universal interest (v. 5b)*

"Out of all nations..." "The whole earth is mine..."

God's very special place for Israel ("treasured possession"), their identity and task, is here set in the context of his universality as God in relation to the nations of the earth (cf. the similar balance of particularity and universality in the Abraham covenant).

Therefore, the ethical and missional agenda for Israel has to be motivated by the same universal concern that characterizes Yahweh as God.

#### 3. *Israel's identity and duty (v. 6)*

##### a) A Priestly kingdom

To understand what this meant for Israel as a whole in relation to the nations, we have to understand what the priests were in Israel in relation to the rest of the people. A twofold task:

i) *Teaching the law* Lev. 10:11, Deut. 33:10, Jer. 18:18, Mal. 2:6f., Hos. 4:1-9

Through the priests, God would be known to the people

ii) *Handling the sacrifices* Lev. 1-7

Through the priests, the people could come to God

The priest also had the task of *blessing the people of Israel* (Num. 6:22-27).

The people of God are God's priesthood in the midst of the nations: bringing the knowledge of God, and bringing people to the means of atonement with God. Also Israel is to bless the nations as their priests blessed them. *i.e. Priesthood is a missional function.*

**1 Pet. 2:9-12** Peter applies the same identity and mission to Christians

**Rom. 15:16** Paul describes his mission to the nations as his "priestly duty."

**b) A holy nation**

Fundamental meaning: "**Be different**", because of who you are, the people belonging uniquely to Yahweh. In order to understand what holiness meant for Israel, we can look at some key texts in Leviticus. Again, we shall find a very practical concept.

**D. PRACTICAL HOLINESS : LEVITICUS 19**

Holiness is both a **fact** (it is something God does, cf. Lev. 20:8, 26 21:8, 15, 23, 22:32),

and a **command** (it is something we work out in life, cf. Lev. 18:3, 19:1, 20:7, 23, 26).

For Israel, the command basically meant: "You must be a different kind of nation, because Yahweh is a different kind of God"

**Leviticus 19:** - a key text, giving practical content to holiness.

Family and community respect	v. 3, 32
Religious loyalty	vs. 3b, 4-8, 12, 26-31
Economic relationships	vs. 9-10
Workers' rights	v. 13
Social compassion	v. 14
Judicial integrity	v. 15
Neighbourly attitudes and conduct	vs. 11, 16-18
Distinctiveness	v. 19
Sexual integrity	vs. 20-22, 29
Exclusion of idolatrous and occult	vs. 4, 26-31
Racial equality	vs. 33-34
Commercial honesty	vs. 35-36

*If Israel were to be God's priesthood in the midst of the nations, then they had to be **different**.*

This reinforces again **the integral relationship between mission and ethics** in biblical thinking. Cf. 1 Pet. 2:9-12.

The chief agent of God's mission to the nations is the people of God. The chief requirement on the people of God is that they should **be what they are; live out their identity.**

## THE SCOPE OF MISSION

How big is your gospel, and your concept of redemption? The Bible provides various models of God's idea of redemption, salvation, restoration, etc., both through historical events, and specific institutions or persons. We shall look at just two: exodus as a model of redemption, and jubilee as a model of restoration.

### I THE EXODUS : A MODEL OF REDEMPTION

**Exod. 15:13** "The people you have *redeemed*..." The exodus being described under the metaphor of redemption. Need to understand it in its OT social context.

*Ga'al* (vb.); *go'el* (noun). Used for the duty of the kinsman to act on behalf of another kinsman in trouble; e.g. through avenging his murder; redeeming land that was mortgaged for debt; buying back from slavery. It speaks of kinship commitment, cost and effort, and liberation. Yahweh is portrayed as Israel's "redeemer", and the exodus is the key historical example of God in action as redeemer. Thus, if we want to know the meaning of "redemption", we have to start with the exodus and see what God actually achieved through it, for that is what defined the term in the minds of Israelites, and continued to "flavour" it in the NT, although other social-context metaphors from the Greek-Roman world are more dominant there.

The exodus was above all an act of liberation or deliverance. But from what? The early chapters of Exodus show at least the following dimensions.

#### *Dimensions of Israel's bondage*

- \* Political Israel was an immigrant, ethnic minority people. Ex. 1:8-10 shows their vulnerability to unjust oppression, motivated by fear.
- \* Economic Ex. 1:11-14, The Israelites were exploited as slave labour, a common fate of ethnic minorities.
- \* Social The rest of Ex. 1 shows the intolerable violation of human rights that Israel's families suffered, culminating in state sponsored genocide (1:22).
- \* Spiritual Ex. 4:22, Israel as Yahweh's firstborn son, therefore absurd that they should be enslaved to Pharaoh. They must be released, so that they can "serve/worship" Yahweh. Liberation led to covenant at Sinai; cf. 3:12, 19:4.

#### *Wholistic nature of God's redemption*

In the exodus, God delivered Israel in *all* these dimensions of their need. We should neither *spiritualize* the exodus (treating it as only symbolic of spiritual salvation), nor *politicize* it (treating it as only liberation from socio-economic bondage and ignoring its spiritual essence also). God sees our total need, and achieved our total redemption. Mission responds to that. We should not say 'In the OT redemption/salvation was physical; in the NT it is spiritual'. Rather we should see the inclusiveness of all the dimensions of the biblical presentation.

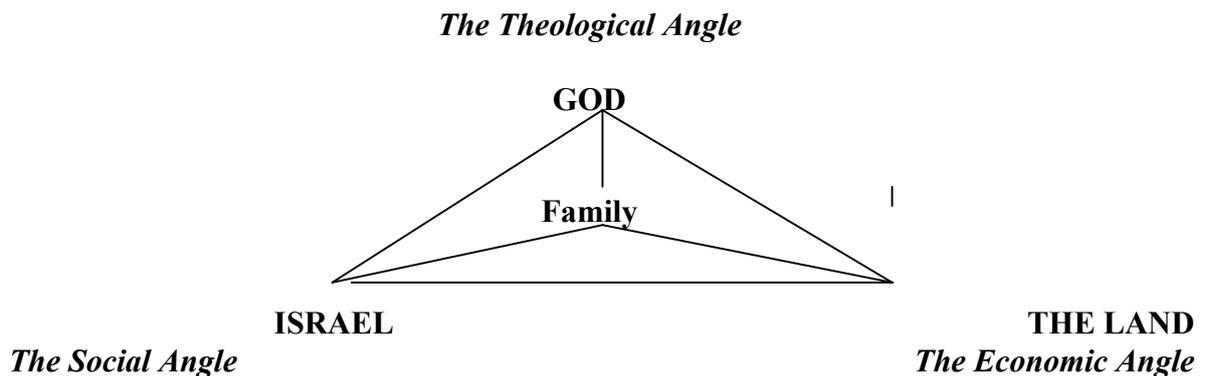
## II THE JUBILEE : A MODEL OF RESTORATION

**Key text: Lev. 25**

See: C.J.H. Wright, *Walking in the Ways of the Lord*, ch. 8 for details.

The jubilee was an economic institution designed to assist poorer families by providing periodic release from the burden of debt. It was to take place every 50 years (i.e. approximately every second generation), and enabled both land and family members that had become mortgaged or bonded for debt to be released and restored to the family.

It can best be understood by seeing the centrality of the family in the "triangle" of fundamental OT relationships.



\* *The Social Angle*

The family as basic unit of Israelite society  
Restoration, in jubilee, of family dignity, participation, and freedom.

\* *The Economic Angle*

Based on original widespread distribution of land (Josh. 13-19)  
Reversal of economic forces of debt and poverty  
Restoration of productive resources

\* *The Theological Angle*

God's sovereignty over all things (including time)  
God's providence (ability to provide)  
Memory of historical redemption (the exodus)  
Experience of atonement (it began on the Day of Atonement)  
Future hope

Like the exodus, the jubilee shows a comprehensive concern for human needs, and has the same tight combination of social, economic and spiritual dimensions.

The jubilee was a strong influence on the ministry of Jesus.

## THE CONFLICT OF MISSION

Monotheism undergirds the Bible, not as a philosophical abstract, but as a dynamic missionary conviction. Throughout the Bible, but especially in the OT, the one living God conflicts with the gods and idols of humanity. This conflict is close to the heart of mission. Cf Paul: Acts 26:17-18.

### A. THE OLD TESTAMENT

Deut. 6:4-5 - the essence of OT Israel's faith. One God, one Lord, one love. Note three major historical contexts of conflict with gods/idols.

#### I EGYPT

Context: state idolatry. Pharaoh deified. Result: politics of arrogance and oppression. The perversion of human authority into idolatry leads to injustice, oppression and abuse.

##### **Idolatry of power**

Story of exodus as a "*power encounter*". Crucial conflict of authority.

Ex. 5:2 sets the issue: "Who is Yahweh? I do not acknowledge Yahweh."

This leads to the sub-plot: "then you will know..." Cf. Ex. 7:5, 16, 8:10, 19, 22, 9:15-16, 29, 10:2, 14:18, 25.

Climax: Ex. 15. Knowledge and experience of Yahweh as the living God leads to liberation. *And liberation leads to celebration:*

*the uniqueness of Yahweh as God (v. 11)*

*the sovereignty of Yahweh as King (v. 18)*

"YAHWEH REIGNS!" and not Pharaoh! Cry of victory and joy when God confronts and destroys idolatrous, usurped, power.

Modern parallels?

#### II CANAAN

Context: The Baal cult. **Idolatry of nature, life, fertility.**

Desire for life, success, wealth, etc. through fertility, in crops, herds and women. Included ritual prostitution and child sacrifice. "Baalism sacralized sex and sacrificed babies" (cf. western cultural depravity).

Canaanite idolatry promised life, but delivered death, not only through child sacrifice, but through the structural injustice and oppression of Canaanite society. Cf. the fate of Naboth.

OT response: rejection and warning (Deut. 7, etc.)

challenge to renunciation (Elijah, 1 Kgs. 18)

call to repentance (e.g. Hosea's bold use of sexual imagery in calling Israel back to faithfulness in light of God's 'husband-love')

Modern parallels?

### III BABYLON

Context: Great imperial power again, with exalted claims to control the destinies of nations. Particular power of the astral deities (star-gods). Control of the future. **Idolatry of security and control of events.**

Isaiah 40-55 especially addresses Babylonian idolatry. **Unmasking the gods.**

40:27	The stars are created and controlled by Yahweh (not gods)
41:21-24	Alleged gods are powerless to speak or to act
44:6-20	Idolatry is blindness and delusion
46:1-7	The gods are helpless to save their own idols or their worshippers
47	Babylon's state idolatry is unmasked and exposed, and its attempts at security and control are shattered

44:6-8, 45:24 Yahweh alone controls history and therefore alone can give security.

43:9-13, 44:8 Israel is summoned to *witness* to Yahweh's supremacy in history.

Modern parallels?

## B. THE NEW TESTAMENT

A full study of this theme in the NT would need to look at the use of "idols/idolatry", "the powers", and "satan/demons". Cf. Spiritual Warfare section of Module 1.3.2, 'The God of Mission'.

All the above OT dimensions are also present in the NT: from popular pagan idolatry (including fertility cults and sexual immorality) to state idolatry (including emperor worship).

Paul's clashes with pagan idolatry:

e.g. fatally (almost) in Lystra, (Acts 14:8-20),

politely in Athens (Acts 17),

riotously in Ephesus! (Acts 19).

Rom. 1:21-32 idolatry at the root of a whole list of personal and social disorders. Idolatry was putting the self/flesh before God, hence "covetousness, which is idolatry" (cf. 1st and 10th commandments) (Col. 3:5, Gal. 5:19-21, Eph. 5:5)

1 Cor. 8 crucial text: on the one hand - "idols are nothing" (cf. Isa. 40-55), yet on the other hand, idolatry can be manipulated by the demonic. Hence Christians must beware. cf. 1 Cor. 10:14-22.

**The powers.** Another important theme in Paul's understanding of the nature of our conflict in mission, and his celebration of the victory of Christ.

Key texts to study carefully:

- 1 Cor. 2:6-8,
- Col. 1:15-20,
- Col. 2:15,
- Eph. 1:15-23,
- Eph. 4:8-10,
- Eph. 6:10-18.

Helpful reading: Clinton Arnold, *Powers of Darkness* (IVP, 1992).

## **THE GOAL OF MISSION GOD AND THE FUTURE OF THE NATIONS**

**1. God deals with *all* nations with justice and mercy.**

Nations as wholes can be

- \* under God's judgement, Deut. 9:4-6, Isa. 24, 'oracles against the nations'
- \* agents of God's judgement, Isa. 10:5-19
- \* recipients of God's mercy, Jer. 12:15f., 18:1-10, Jonah

**2. The nations as 'observers' of what God was doing in Israel**

Ex. 15:14-16, 32:11f.,

Deut. 4:6-8, 29: 22-28,

Ezek. 36: 16-23

**3. The nations 'benefit' from Israel's salvation-history**

Ps. 47:1-4, 22:27-28, 67, 96:1-3, 98:1-3, etc.

I Kgs. 8:41-43

**4. The nations ultimately to be included, along with Israel, as the extended people of God**

Ps. 47:9

Isa. 19:19-25,

Isa. 56:3-8

Isa. 66:18-21

Amos 9:11-12 [= Acts 15:13-18]  
Zech. 14

## 5. **Salvation will extend 'to the ends of the earth'**

Isa. 42:1-4, 45:22, 49:1-6

This is particularly associated with the mission of the "**Servant of Yahweh**" figure who would be the means of *both* restoring Israel to Yahweh *and* fulfilling Israel's mission of bringing the blessing and salvation of Yahweh to the nations.

## 6. **Jesus' sense of mission**

Primarily: Jesus saw himself as sent to restore Israel (cf. John the Baptist), in line with OT (and intertestamental) hopes, and particularly in line with the mission of the servant. Mark 10:45, etc. He would bring about the victory and the reign of Israel's God – but not in the way that many of his contemporaries expected.

But the vision of the ingathering of the nations is there, though not fulfilled in his earthly ministry, except in some symbolic words and acts

Matt. 8:5-13,

Matt. 28:18-20, Luke 24:45-48

Acts 1:8

## 7 **Paul: Apostle to the Nations ['Gentiles']**

Acts 13:44-48 Paul applies the Servant texts [= Isa. 49:6] to himself and the Christian mission to the nations.

Rom. 1:1-5, 16:25-27 Paul's ministry, to produce "the obedience of faith among the nations"

Rom. 15:16, a possible echo of Exod. 19:4-6: priestly ministry as evangelization of the nations

Eph. 2:11-3:6, Rom. 9-11, Paul sees the fruit of the gentile mission as the creation of a new, extended Israel in the Messiah, incorporating believing Jews and Gentiles

Rom. 15:8-12 Paul sees the servanthood of Christ to the Jews as the means of fulfilling the promise to Abraham - ie. blessing to the nations (hence the quotes from the OT referring to the nations rejoicing with Israel)

On these points (and especially 6 and 7), see Chris Wright *Knowing Jesus Through the OT*, pp. 34-54, and chapt. 4, and also, *idem*, "A Christian Approach to OT Prophecy" in P.W.L. Walker (ed.), *Jerusalem Past and Present in the Purposes of God*.

## NT WITNESSES TO MISSION

The gospels were written in and for the mission context of the early church.

### A. MATTHEW

#### 1. *A Gospel for Jews*

Presents Jesus predominantly as Messiah-King, and as the fulfilment of the Hebrew Scriptures (OT). Cf. the motif of chs. 1-2.

Other names and titles of Jesus all presuppose this OT background: Immanuel, Son of David, Son of Abraham, Son of Man.

Also, Jesus as the "new Moses": Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mt. Sinai); 5 main blocks of teaching (cf. Pentateuch); Mount of Ascension (cf. Mt. Nebo, Dt. 34).

So the mission of Jesus is presented as shaped by the mission of Israel in the OT scriptures. [cf. Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the OT*]

#### 2. *A Gospel also for Gentiles*

Matthew also has an awareness of the nations, and of the significance of Jesus for the nations. e.g.

1:3,5,6

2:1, 13

4:24f.

8:5-13

15:21-28

21:43

24:14

27:54

### 3. **"The Great Commission" : Matt. 28:16-20**

The climax and key to the whole Gospel, in which its major themes are gathered up and applied to the ongoing mission of the apostles.

#### a) **The authority of Jesus as cosmic Lord**

cf. Deut. 4:32-40 re Yahweh, now claimed by Jesus,  
"Therefore..."

Mission an inescapable implication of Christ's Lordship.

#### b) **Mission as discipling**

"Disciple the nations" is the main command of the whole sentence.  
Discipleship a prominent theme in Matthew:

Discipleship includes *faith, obedience, righteousness, and taking up the cross*.

Note the continuity between what Jesus has done for his disciples and what he now commands them to do for the nations.

#### c) **Mission through baptizing**

"into the name.." Mission is making disciples in relation to all that God the trinity is, has done, and is doing.

#### d) **Mission through teaching**

Church as a community of learning and living by the will of God.  
"to observe all..." = pure Deuteronomy! Mission involves creating out of the nations communities of obedience as God had wanted Israel to be. Strong continuity here between OT and NT.

Cf the link with the Great Commandment, Matt. 22:37-40, also quotes Deut. 6:4-5.

#### e) **Mission with the promise of the presence of Jesus**

"I am with you..." - also a strongly OT promise, spoken by Yahweh to hosts of OT characters, usually accompanied the commonest command in the Bible: "Fear not." Here calmly spoken by Jesus himself as the basis and assurance of mission.

## B. LUKE-ACTS

### 1. *A deliberately planned two-volume work*

Luke had lived as a missionary with Paul, and he had researched Jesus; now his writing puts them both together. All of it as work of Jesus.

The Ascension, Lk. 24 and Acts 1, like "verbal velcro" that binds the two volumes together.

Theological purpose: the double dimension of mission:

Restoration of Israel (Gospel) (cf. Lk 1, 24, Acts 1 and 28)

Ingathering of nations (Acts)

Even reflected in the geography of the work.

Gospel sees Jesus move from Galilee (of the gentiles) to Jerusalem;

Acts sees the Gospel move from Jerusalem to Rome, capital of the nations of the day.

### 2. *"The Nazareth Manifesto" Luke 4:18-31*

#### a) The power of the Holy Spirit

#### b) Mission of justice, compassion, enlightenment, liberation

#### c) The centrality of the poor

Economic issues important in both Luke and Acts; indeed some stories seem almost deliberate parallels: Zacchaeus and Barnabas; Rich Young Ruler and Annanias and Sapphira.

#### d) Rejection of vengeance

#### e) Gentile mission

Widow of Zarephath; Naaman.  
Samaritans.

### 3. *"The Jerusalem Manifesto" Luke 24:40-49*

NB Post-Resurrection Jesus. This is Luke's equivalent of Matthew's Great Commission.

a) **The fulfilment of the OT**

= "This is what was written..."

Where?? Reflects a mission reading of whole OT

b) **The death and resurrection of the Messiah**

= redemption of Israel

c) **Repentance and forgiveness**

= the content of salvation

d) **The name of Christ**

= focus and authority of mission

e) **To all nations: beginning in Jerusalem**

= the mission strategy followed in Acts, with its goal of reaching the nations, but "...to the Jew first..."

f) **You are witnesses**

= Jesus taking the role of Yahweh entrusting Israel with witness to his uniqueness as God and Saviour,

cf. Isa. 43:9-13

g) **The power of the Holy Spirit**

= the major mission theme flowing through both Luke and Acts.

## Paul's Missionary Theology

*Based on an unpublished lecture at the Missiologists' Forum, April, 1997, by Dr Eddie Adams, Lecturer in NT at King's College, London.*

### Introduction

1. Not simply a matter of Paul's missionary *methods*, but of the theological basis of all his work.
2. The importance of Paul's conversion, calling and commissioning (Acts 9:15-16).

### 1. The missionary purpose of Paul's letters

1. Paul's missionary purpose: not just individual conversions, but building of church communities. 1 Cor. 3:10
2. Paul's letters: like his visits, aiming to strengthen and nurture these new, young communities, towards social stability and spiritual maturity. 2 Cor. 10:8-11
3. A sociological perspective on Paul's letter writing: What do healthy social groups need for survival and growth?
  - *Identity* (who we are);
  - *Distinctiveness* (who/what we are not)
  - *Belonging* (images of family, body, building)
  - *Legitimation* (justifying our existence in terms of a new worldview)

In sociological terms, Paul's writing provided the 'symbolic universe', or the 'sacred canopy', for the newly established Christian communities.

### B. The missionary theology of Paul's letters

1. Most of Paul's letters were written to churches founded by himself, or those he knew (except Romans). Most of them were situationally determined (including Romans, but probably except Ephesians) – i.e. written to deal with problems and tensions.
  - *1-2 Thessalonians*: To comfort and encourage believers experiencing social and emotional conflicts after conversion; loss of family roots a problem at bereavement;

eschatological misunderstanding

- *1 Corinthians*: Range of problems caused by the abiding influence of the Graeco-Roman cultural environment upon the Christian community. Perennial problem of cross-cultural mission.
  - *2 Corinthians*: Paul's self-defence against opponents who challenged Paul's model and practice of leadership (which was not in line with secular models). Problem of new arrivals in a mission-founded church de-stabilizing the work of the original pioneer church-planters.
  - *Galatians*: Similar problem. Jewish Christian missionaries as new arrivals in 'Paul's' church, disturbing his original work. Illustrates the vulnerability of young congregations to quasi-Christian missionary groups.
  - *Romans*: Jewish Christians in a predominantly Gentile church. Danger of the church fragmenting on racial lines (with the cultural and religious preferences dictating the splits). The essence of the Gospel (1-8) and the historical purpose of God for both Jew and Gentile (9-11), argue for preserving unity while accepting diversity (14-15).
  - *Philemon*: The cultural/legal problem of slavery. Interesting personal application of the demands of the Gospel in relation to accepted cultural practice in surrounding society.
  - *Colossians*: Tackles false teaching in another young church. Probably syncretism of Christian, Jewish and pagan elements.
  - *Philippians*: To resolve personal conflict between two church members!
2. Paul's letters address problems endemic to cross-cultural mission and church-planting. His letter writing, therefore, is no less 'missionary' than his direct evangelism. Paul, as a church nurturer, pastor, trouble-shooter, teacher, etc. was just as much being a 'missionary' as when he was doing primary evangelistic preaching.
3. Three elements in his purpose: (again, using sociological tools)
- De-enculturation: by converting their world-view
  - Re-socialization: by presenting the church as the new primary source of identity and network of relationships
  - Preservation: by protecting from false missionaries, etc., and providing for structures of continuity (as e.g. in the Pastorals)

### C. The missionary nature of Paul's doctrines

1. *Justification by faith*: Not only a matter of individual 'getting right with God', but related to the Jew-Gentile theological controversy.

- No single nations has an automatic claim on God
- God is now reaching out to people of all nations on the same basis: grace and faith

The missionary nature of the doctrine of justification by faith

2. *Theology of the Cross*: 1 Cor. 1:23 = Paul's Gospel, but it was offensive to both Jew and Greek.

Cross centred Gospel confronts society and culture. Reverses human outlooks. Therefore the church itself will be counter-cultural in structure and behaviour

3. *Cosmic Christology*: Colossians 1: Christ and Creation

Colossians 2: Christ and the powers

Note: the kind of community shaped by such doctrines:

- (1) Not defined by race or culture
- (2) Refuses to be bound by societal or cultural norms
- (3) Accepting the sovereign lordship of Christ and thus dethroning all other gods

**D. The missionary nature of Paul's ethics**

1. Church should be distinct from the world: ethical implications; e.g. Eph. 4:17ff. This has a missionary edge, for Christians 'shine like stars' (Phil.2 14-16, echoing Dan.12:3).
  
2. 1 Cor. 9:19-23 - Missionary motivation for flexibility of behaviour, in areas of social and cultural identity
  
3. Christian behaviour before a watching world
  - Social and moral responsibility: Gal. 6:10, Rom. 13, etc. The social and political authorities should not have reason to condemn Christians for moral offences or lawlessness.
  - Household codes, Col. 3:18 – 4:1, Eph. 5:21 – 6:9. Paul addresses Christians in accordance with the structures of Graeco-Roman households. A balance of structural conformity, with internal and behavioural transformation. Again, a missionary motivation: Christians should have the respect of non-believers where possible; Attract, don't offend unnecessarily.