

# THE CHURCH AND MISSIONS

## WEEK 1: WHAT IS OUR MANDATE?

### INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

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- The goal of this six-week class is to zero in on the mission of the church from a Biblical perspective.
- Our schedule will look like this:
  - **Week 1: What is our mandate?**
  - Week 2: What is the church's role in missions or the centrality of the church?
  - Week 3: What was the Apostle's Paul's strategy for missions?
  - Week 4: Kyle Baker sharing his personal call to missions.
  - Week 5: How has the church historically accomplished missions?
  - Week 6: How should church members be involved in missionary work?

### WHAT IS THE MISSION OF GOD?

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- The mission of God is what needs to drive the people of God. Have you ever thought about what the mission of God is right now? If we know the mission of God, we will be able to rightly align our own mission with it. If our definition of the mission of God is wrong, our mission work for God will be wrong.
- "If everything is mission, nothing is mission." Stephen Neill

#### **Some various church definitions from around the country.**

We believe that the Gospel compels us to learn from, interact with, and generously give back to our culture in the way that we live our lives. Jesus is transforming not only our individual hearts, but culture as a whole, and we want to work tirelessly to that end as we declare "on earth as it is in heaven"!

Missio Dei is a Latin theological term that can be translated as "Mission of God", it refers to the work of the church as being part of God's work. So the church's mission is a subset of a larger whole mission that is both part of God's mission to the world and not the entirety of God's work in the world. This definition provides a simple introduction to the concept of missio Dei which is essentially that the work or mission of the church is a subset of the work of God in the world, rather than something with an independent existence.

Because of Missio Dei, we know that the coffee shop we frequent is all filled up with the presence of God. He's already there and he's at work in peoples' lives whether you show up or not. But, he specifically ministers through you when you begin a conversation with the barista. When you do that, you acknowledge that God is at work and you choose to incarnate as well. Now you're joining God for a specific purpose to a person for a time. You've joined the mission of God.

The mission theology expressed in the Latin *Missio Dei* articulates the belief that mission is God's mission and we are God's instruments in that mission. The starting point of *Missio Dei* is a Trinitarian God: mission is the purpose and action of the triune God. *Missio Dei* causes the church to understand its very purpose as missionary. The church is both an object and the subject of mission. Unity is an embodiment of the mission of God that creates the church and works in the world. At the same time, the practice of mission is integral to a church that receives its purpose from this missionary God.

- A true, Biblical definition of what the mission of God is seems to be hard to fully and finally nail down. The reason is that those words/phrases are not explicitly in the Bible but must be derived from study.
- Generally speaking, mission is the work of God reconciling sinful humankind to himself.
  - This is also referred to *Missio Dei*, the mission of God. The mission of God was not something which was invented by man but comes from the very heart of God.
  - Mission originated with God as *the* way to bring fallen man back into a relationship with Him.
- “The Bible in its totality ascribes only one intention to God: to save mankind.” – Georg Vicedom<sup>1</sup>
- “It is understood throughout the Scriptures that the end result of such *Missio Dei* will be the glorification of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”<sup>2</sup>
- The mission of God (*Missio Dei*) is simply to reconcile mankind back to Himself. How God has accomplished this has been the same throughout the ages. It is in the person and work of Christ. The means that God has used throughout the years has not always been the same though.

## MISSION OF GOD'S PEOPLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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- Before getting into the New Testament discussion regarding the church and missions, I think that it is helpful to see what the Old Testament's view on missions was.
  - Israel and the church are not synonymous. Therefore, the mission of the church does not extend back into the OT as the church did not exist. But, if God's mission was to save mankind, and that mission has not changed, then we should be able to see God's working to this end throughout the Bible.
  - On a side note, once the church is gone (after the rapture) the mission of God is still the same. Once again though, the means by which the message goes out will be changed.
- The mission of God was not a concept which started with Jesus' *Great Commission* (**Matt. 28**). But there was never a direct command to the nation of Israel to go to other nations and convert them to Judaism.
  - Though there are examples of *some* Old Testament figures going to other nations (Jonah, Elijah and Elisha), it certainly is not the normative experience.

<sup>1</sup> Georg Vicedom in *A Biblical Theology of Missions* by George Peters, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> George Peters *A Biblical Theology of Missions*. p. 9.

- If this was God's intention, we should see some evidence to the fact. God's heart was to bless the nations (**Gen. 12:2**), but that ultimate blessing would be a future event with the coming of Christ, the church and ultimately in the Final Day.
- In the OT, as the outside world joined Israel, they would become blessed then by partaking in the covenant, but Israel never went to seek out converts.
- The election of Israel starts with the call of Abram in Gen. 12. This call was not to simply give a special privilege but to elect a nation unto service.
- Though Israel's mission was not going, they were to be *the* holy people of God as an example. The promised nation to Abram was not only going to be blessed but was to be a blessing to the nations. From the beginning, even though God elected Israel, His plans always included other nations (**Amos 9:7**).
- God elected and dealt with Israel for multiple purposes.
- **Firstly**, He desired to show His mighty power by His works. In Egypt, God allowed Moses and Aaron to do mighty works before Pharaoh and his people (**Ex. 7:20**). God did this so the people would see how great and powerful He was.
- He also did this to show it was not Israel's might which set them free, but their God. God does not do this merely for the blessing to Israel, but also for his redemptive plan for the world.
- **Secondly**, God desired to show how He dealt with Israel regarding His covenant with them. The point was for Israel to live in such a way which was radically and ethically challenging to the pagan nations.
  - This was God's mission for Israel and for the church today.
- **Thirdly**, and most importantly, God shows his power by the radical restoration and forgiveness He gave to a rebellious Israel. God's rescuing Israel was not only for Israel's sake. God was doing so to protect His name and His glory (**Eze. 36:22-23**).
- One of the greatest promises God gives is in **Psalms 67**. The psalmist prays for the Lord's salvation to be known among all the nations. Then he invites all peoples to praise God, be glad and sing for joy.

## **MISSION OF GOD'S PEOPLE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

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- If we believe that the mission of God is to bring men back into a relationship with Him, then the mission of the church must be in line with that definition. Missions is what flows from the mission of God.
- Missions are the plans of committed believers to accomplish the mission of God. Without knowing the mission of God, missions will be useless. Since God came to rescue the lost, set free the oppressed and heal the broken hearted (**Luke 4:18**), missions accomplishes this end.
- The church, God's called out people, are now commanded by Christ (**Matt. 28:19**) to take the gospel to the world. This is significantly different from the Old Testament, where Israel was called to be separate from

the world. As Peter points out in **Acts 3:25**, the Abrahamic promise that all nations would be blessed was fulfilled in Jesus. Peter also explains in **Acts 4:12** the universality of salvation for all nations.

- From the Samaritan revival and the salvation of the Ethiopian eunuch in **Acts 8** to Cornelius' salvation in **chapter 10**, it is now evident the mission of the church is to go to the world.
- With this, we see the fulfilment of many OT prophecies (**Psalm 117:1; Isa. 42:6; Mal. 1:11** to name a few).
- Why do we now take the gospel of God to all people in all places?

### **To Bring God Glory**

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- There should be no greater goal in missions work than the glorification of God. Bringing God glory is the unquestionable first purpose of missions. All we do should have the focus of God's glory.<sup>3</sup>
- **Psalm 83:18** "That they may know that You, whose name alone is the LORD, are the Most High over all the earth." The Lord desires His name to be glorified throughout the whole earth and so should we.
- It is this acknowledgement of God's glory which allowed the early church to not just survive but thrive in the face of culture. By thriving in the face of persecution and declaring the glory of God, the early church was able to be a witness for God in their culture.
  - Not only that, but the early church was also so zealous for God's glory and to get the gospel message out, the word spread like wildfire and the Christians were labelled as 'turning the world upside down' (**Acts 17:6**).
  - When our goal for missions is founded in the glory of God, the outside world is going to take notice.

### **Formation of New Churches (Church Planting)**

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- As the missionary is spreading the gospel, people will become Christians. As this happens, there is a new responsibility which falls on the missionary, to plant a church. We should not simply be spreading the gospel and scattering contacts all over. The goal is to shape those new believers into the body of Christ.
- Once a church is planted and the body of Christ is established, discipleship should be taking place. The goal of any missionary should be to reproduce themselves.
  - This is both the most rewarding and humbling task. It is rewarding because one gets to see people's lives change from enemies of God to friends of God.
  - It is humbling because the missionary will not be there forever. The goal of the missionary should not be to move into the area and live there forever, but to raise up indigenous people who can effectively minister to their own people. This is done best when churches are planted.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Bavinck JH 1960. *An introduction to the science of missions*. Grand Rapids. Baker.

<sup>4</sup> There are many theories to this last statement that we will look at further in week 3.

## **We Have Godly Compassion on the Lost**

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- Our first goal of missions is to bring God glory, and this is accomplished when the lost come into a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus. This happens when we proclaim the gospel to the unsaved. The gospel must include repentance from sin and responding in faith to the message of Christ. We see this displayed all throughout the New Testament (**Luke 5:32; Acts 2:30; Acts 9:20**).
- Since Jesus came to seek and save the lost (**Luke 19:10**), this should also be our overarching motivation for missions. If we are to imitate Christ, then our hearts should have compassion for the lost (**Matt. 9:36**). We should have a real desire to see those under the sway of the world come to saving faith in Christ Jesus. The believer should desire, more than their own comfort or homeland, to see the gospel in all the world.
- Our motivation for missions is not only something which is shaped by the Holy Spirit, but it is also subject to various cultural and historical perceptions.
  - The early church was so engulfed with God's glory which *would be revealed*, they did not care about participation as citizens in the larger culture.
  - This view of God's glory in the future coming of Christ led them shed their temporary struggles and focus on *Missio Dei*.

## **A Godly Commandment**

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- Jesus not only set the example for us by coming down from heaven (**Phil. 2:7**) but He also gave the command that we need to go (**John 20:21-23**) and preach the gospel (**Mark 16:14-20**).
- This command is from the one who died in our place, to take away our sins and to give us His righteousness needed for our heavenly home. We are bought (**1 Cor. 6:20**) and therefore not our own. Whether we proclaim the gospel to our co-workers or go around the globe, the command should be followed.

## **HOW DO WE PUT IT ALL INTO PRACTICE?**

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- The answer to this question is going to be answered throughout the course of this 6-week Equipping Hour study. Once we know what the Bible says and we know the right motivation to have, we have to then know how to properly carry out the commands and tasks before us.
- To set the groundwork for the rest of the classes, we need to fully understand what Jesus told His disciples regarding this mandate.
- If this mandate is for all people in the church, and not just for these disciples, we need to make sure that we understand and follow it. Furthermore, if this mandate is for the whole church, we should be able to see this fulfilled in the early church (think book of Acts) and then see a steady pattern of it throughout the history of the church.

- But, before we look at how the church accomplished or accomplishes Christ’s mandate and before we trace Paul through the Roman world, lets find out exactly what Jesus meant in **Matthew 28:16–20**.
- **Matthew 28:16–20** “But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”
- This is the original command that we hear from Christ.
- Commenting on **Matthew 28:16** “This short account contains the culmination and combination of all of Matthew’s central themes: (1) the move from particularism to universalism in the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom; (2) discipleship and the establishment of the church; (3) Jesus’ commands as ultimately incumbent on Christians; and (4) the abiding presence of Jesus as teacher, as divine Son of God, and the risen and sovereign Lord of the universe.”<sup>5</sup>
  - **Jesus has all authority in heaven and earth.**
    - Why is this important? Notice that in verses 16–17 the disciples came to Him and some worshipped, but some were doubtful.
    - Before telling them their command, He tells them that He has all authority over all realms. It is because of Jesus’ authority that He then makes the command to make disciples.
    - Jesus is passing the torch from Himself to His people.
    - Notice how He ends the conversation in **verse 20**. He reassures them that He is with them always, through eternity.
    - Christ has all authority; Christ sends His disciples and Christ says that He is with them. It is by this command and promise that we need to live our Christian lives.
  - In **verse 19**, we have a command...**make disciples**
    - This is the only actual command in this verse...make disciples. This is what we are to do to fulfil the commands of Christ.
    - “To “make disciples of all nations” does require many people to leave their homelands, but Jesus’ main focus remains on the task of all believers to duplicate themselves wherever they may be. The verb “make disciples” also commands a kind of evangelism that does not stop after someone makes a profession of faith. The truly subordinate participles in v. 19 explain

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<sup>5</sup> Craig Blomberg, Matthew, vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 429.

what making disciples involves: “baptizing” them and “teaching” them obedience to all of Jesus’ commandments. The first of these will be a once-for-all, decisive initiation into Christian community. The second proves a perennially incomplete, life-long task.”<sup>6</sup>

- Then there are three participles which support the making of disciples:
  - **Go**
    - This word is also translated *to pursue a journey* or *continue one’s journey*. It has the meaning of leaving where you are to follow another. Jesus is telling them they need to get out of where they are in order to fulfill the command to make disciples.
    - This is not *only* an overseas missionary call. This is a call to every Christian to get out and make disciples, wherever you are.
  - **Baptize**
    - This means they are being born again and now brought into the Christian community...known as the church.
    - We are to go to the nations but baptize individuals.
  - **Teaching them (verse 20)**
    - When balanced with baptizing, this shows that all believers are to be both those who are witness for Christ by sharing the gospel and those who are teaching about Christ by making disciples.
- Now let’s balance this with Acts 1:6–8 “So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.’”
- Here is not so much a command but a reorienting of the disciple’s priorities and then the means by which they were accomplish the task that Christ had given them.
- Notice they were still thinking about the earthly kingdom. They still thought that Jesus was there to bring Israel back to her former glory.
  - This question and answer section flies in the face of those who think it is the church’s job to restore or bring about some sort of order or fairness. If that was Jesus’ goal for coming to earth, this would

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<sup>6</sup> Craig Blomberg, Matthew, vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 431.

have been the perfect place for Him to answer *yes, I have come to right all the wrongs that have been done against you. I will now restore Israel to her former glory!* But He didn't.

- Jesus rather said *'It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.'*
- They were not to worry themselves about the *when*, but they were to be busy with the *what*. They were to wait for the power of the Holy Spirit whom Christ promised so that they could fulfill His commands.
- His command was for them to make disciples (Matthew 28:19). They were going to share the gospel (v. 19) and teach the new converts about Christ (v. 20). They were going to do this with the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Notice that Jesus told them where they were to go and be His witness.
- Jerusalem (this would be where they currently were).
- Judea and Samaria (this would be about 25 miles north of Jerusalem).
- The remotest part of the earth (this would be pretty remote...)
- The *going* we see in the book of Acts and the early church. They started the process of fulfilling the command of Christ in Matthew 28 and now we are doing the same thing they started.

## NEXT WEEK

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- We are going to look at the importance of the church and the central role that the church has in the life and ministry of missions.
- We will talk about para-church ministries, are they needed, are they Biblical, are they helpful?
- Our overall goal is to make sure that we as a church and "we" as a people are doing what the Lord has set before us to do for His glory and our good.