

MISSIONS

What are missions? What is a missionary? Is a missionary a person who brings food, clothing, and medicine to the underprivileged in foreign countries? What part is the church supposed to have in missions?

Missions are the center of the Great Commission. It is simply the fulfilling of getting the gospel out to every creature. In the mind of God there is no difference in home (USA) or foreign missions.

Henry Martin, missionary to India said, "The Spirit of Christ is the spirit of missions; and the nearer we get to Him, the more intensely missionary we become." God has only one Son and He became a missionary to earth! Out of Jesus' 12 apostles, only one did not become a missionary - he became a traitor. If it were not for missionaries, America would never have received the gospel.

THE NEED

America is the most Christian nation in the world. Most Americans claim to be Christians. That includes Baptists, Catholics, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Presbyterians, etc. Yet, America only makes up 8% of the world's population.

MOST OF THE WORLD IS UNSAVED!

Before we can see the importance of missions, we must see clearly the lost condition of men! If we are not careful, we will believe the devil's lie that "if someone has never heard the gospel, they will go to heaven when they die". That is not true. Are the heathen lost? Is the sincere person that worships a totem pole in darkest Africa on his way to hell? Yes! You say, "That does not seem fair."

Rom. 1:18-21 says: *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."*

Through nature God has revealed Himself to everyone. All nature encourages people to look up and desire to know their God. See also Rom. 1:22-32: the degradation caused by rejecting truth.

II Cor. 1:12 says: *"For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward."*

Besides **nature**, every man has a **conscience** to know the difference between right and wrong. Conscience creates guilt for sin so man will seek forgiveness. (See also John 8:9; Titus 1:15;

Heb. 10:2; 1 Tim. 3:9; Acts 23:1; 1 Tim. 1:5)

God gives truth to men by nature and conscience. As they respond to the truth and light that they have, God sends them more.

Heb. 11:6 says: *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”*

This is illustrated in the life of Cornelius (read Acts 10) who responded to the truth he had. God took notice and sent Peter (a missionary) by to give the gospel to him and his family.

Are the heathen lost? John 3:18 says: *“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”*

John 3:36 says: *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”*

Is there a need for missionaries? Ask yourself how many times you clearly heard the gospel before you got saved. The first time? Third? Twentieth?

Paul had a vision that encouraged him to meet the missionary need. Acts 16:9 says: *“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.”*

One Christian said, “Should anyone hear the gospel twice before everyone has heard it once?” How many times has anyone ever offered you a gospel tract? Remember, you live in the most Christianized nation on earth!

After World War II ended General Douglas MacArthur begged the United States to send 10,000 missionaries to Japan. He said the harvest was ripe and that the doors were wide open. The U.S. did not have 10,000 missionaries to send - therefore Japan is mostly a heathen nation today. *“The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;”* Jesus said. (Matt. 9:37)

OLD TESTAMENT MISSIONS

The first recorded missionary was Jonah. He was living in Joppa (modern day Tel Aviv). God told him to sail on the Mediterranean Sea to Nineveh to preach. Instead, he sailed in the opposite direction toward Tarshish. When he finally got right with God, he was delivered by God via a “great fish” to Nineveh. A city-wide revival took place and the entire population was saved (perhaps as many as one million people). God wants to save sinners!

NEW TESTAMENT MISSIONS

How important were missions in the New Testament? The first few years after Jesus’ ascension into heaven, most Christians stayed in Jerusalem, building that great soulwinning church. Because of persecution (Acts 8:1), the church members were scattered preaching the gospel

everywhere. Two thirds of the book of Acts deals with foreign missionary endeavors. The first third deals with home soulwinning missions.

Acts 2:42-47 says: *“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”*

Acts 4:4 says: *“Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.”*

Acts 4:33 says: *“And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.”*

Some examples of foreign missions:

Acts 8:1-4 says: *“And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.”*

Acts 8:5 says: *“Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.”*
(Philip in Samaria)

Acts 8:26 says: *“And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.”*

Acts 11:19-21 says: *“Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.”*

Acts 11:22 says: *“Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.”*

Acts 13:1-5 says: *“Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them*

away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.”

Acts 14:19-28 says: “And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia: And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. And there they abode long time with the disciples.”

Acts 15:22 says: “Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:”

Acts 15:36 says: “And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.”

Acts 16:4-5 says: “And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.”

Acts 17:10-12 says: “And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.”

Acts 17:16-17 says: “Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.”

Acts 18:1 says: “After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;”

Acts 18:18 says: “And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.”

HOW IMPORTANT WERE NEW TESTAMENT MISSIONS?

Every apostle of Jesus became a foreign missionary. Every book in the New Testament was written by a missionary. Every church in the New Testament was started by a missionary.

It is interesting to note that most problems in the New Testament churches were over missionary procedures.

MODERN MISSIONS

How are today's missionaries sent out? There are several steps that missionaries today usually goes through:

1. They must be called. I Tim. 3:1 says: *"This is a true saying. If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work."* A person must have a desire to work for God full time.
2. They must be soulwinners. A Christian who will not win souls in his own country will not do it in a foreign country.
3. They must be sent forth. All missionaries are to have a home church that has checked them out doctrinally and put its stamp of approval on their Christian lives. This is to prevent Christians from having an independent spirit. In Acts, it often talks of the missionaries being sent forth from the church.
4. They raise finances on deputation. Most missionaries on their way to a foreign field arrange to speak in many churches sharing their call and vision for their mission work. Churches who feel led, support them monthly. Once the missionary feels he has adequate support, he goes to the field. Acts 17:1-4 says: *"Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few."*
5. They start indigenous churches. A missionary and a pastor differ in one big respect. The pastor builds the church and stays to pastor the people. A missionary is there to start a church and make it indigenous. That means he is to work himself out of a job and train a national pastor to take the church over so it becomes self-supporting. He then goes to another city and establishes another church. He is never on salary from the church and therefore needs financial assistance from home. Read II Cor. 8 and 9 and you will see how thankful Paul was for financial support. He even raised money to help the new mission churches.
6. From time to time, missionaries come back to their supporting churches to give reports of what God has done on the foreign field. This is what the disciples did.

GREAT MISSIONARIES

There have been many great missionaries in the last two centuries to inspire us.

Adoniram Judson went through incredible hardships on the mission field of Burma. There was no Burmese Bible. He labored a dozen hours per day to learn and write the language. He was there seven years before he saw his first person converted. Afterwards, thousands came to Christ. He once addressed Christians and said, “Don’t ask God if you’re called to go, ask if you’re called to stay.”

David Livingstone went to Africa. He was an explorer, a doctor, a geographer, and a missionary. He opened up the entire continent for mission work. He said, “I’ll go anywhere provided it be forward.” He died upon his knees in his hut, praying for Africa. The natives insisted his heart be buried in Africa while his body was shipped back to England. Notice the words he penned to a song:

LORD SEND ME ANYWHERE

Lord, send me anywhere. Lord, send me anywhere.
I consecrate my life, Lord, to Thee.
Lord, since Thou hast died to give Thyself for me,
No sacrifice could be too great for me to make for Thee.

Lord, send me anywhere, only go with me;
Lay any burden on me, only sustain me.
Sever any tie; save the tie that binds me to Thy heart.
Lord Jesus, my King, I consecrate my life, Lord, to Thee.

I follow Thee, my Lord, and glory in Thy wondrous cross,
I gladly leave the world behind, and count all gain as loss.
Lord, send me anywhere, only go with me;
Lay any burden on me, only sustain me.
Sever any tie; save the tie that binds me to Thy heart.
Lord Jesus, my King, I consecrate my life, Lord, to Thee.

J. Hudson Taylor was a tremendous missionary to China. Taylor founded the Christian Inland Missions.

Bill Borden died as a young man in his twenties only months after arriving on his mission field. He wrote in his Bible upon surrendering: NO RESERVES. When offered his grandfather’s company he wrote: NO RETREATS. A few days before his death he wrote: NO REGRETS. Others were so challenged by his unfinished work that eleven other missionary couples surrendered to take his place on the foreign field.

David Brainard was a missionary to the American Indians. He burnt out his health at age 29. His diary was published and many, just by reading it, surrendered to be missionaries.

GIVING

In Acts 1:8 Christians are commanded to go to Jerusalem (their family), Judea (next door), Samaria (the city), and to the uttermost part of the earth (foreign countries).

Some can go to be foreign missionaries. Most can give. All can pray.

A Biblical New Testament church is a missionary-minded, missionary-supporting church. A very large church in New York, which had nation-wide influence in the 1800's is no longer in existence. One very interesting fact has surfaced: never in their history did they ever support a foreign missionary! They did not fulfill the command in Acts 1:8. Christians are not to win Jerusalem, then Judea, then Samaria, but are to be winning souls all over the world at once. How can this be done? By giving to foreign missions through your local church. You have an investment in every soul a missionary wins, for without your giving they would not go.

CONCLUSION

What can I do?

1. You can surrender your life totally to the Lord to go where He wants you to go.
2. You can begin giving an offering to missions above your tithe.
3. You can be a missionary where you are. You are either a missionary or a mission field.
4. You can pray for the missionaries that your church supports by name and need.
5. You can pray that the Holy Spirit calls out more missionaries to needy countries.

SOURCES:

David Livingstone by George Seaver (Harper)

The Life of Adoniram Judson by Edward Fletcher

REVIEW MISSIONS - STEP 24

1. Missions are the center of the Great _____
2. God has only one Son, and He became a _____
3. Which nation is the most Christian nation? _____
4. What percentage of the world's population is in the USA? _____
5. Most of the world is _____
6. What must we see clearly before we see the importance of missions?

7. Are the heathen lost? _____
8. Give a Scripture reference: _____
9. What two things does God use to reveal Himself to everyone?

10. As people respond to God's light (truth), God _____

11. Give a Scripture reference: _____
12. How many times did you hear the gospel before you accepted the Lord?

13. Who was the first Old Testament missionary? _____
14. The book of Acts deals with _____

15. List two facts that indicate how important missions were in New Testament days:

16. A foreign missionary is to be sent forth out of a _____

17. Explain why a missionary needs to raise financial support:

18. Define indigenous:

19. Explain how Acts 1:8 should apply personally to you:

Jerusalem: _____

Judea: _____

Samaria: _____

Uttermost part of the earth: _____

20. Have you ever totally surrendered your life to the Lord to go and serve anywhere He wants you to go? _____

21. Have you contributed to weekly mission giving? _____