FOR THE SAKE OF HIS NAME

The Mission of God and His People

JOÃO MORDOMO

A brief biblical and practical theology of mission

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Introduction

We live in a world of paradoxes. On the one hand, there are the remnants of the age of modernity, which had as its basic assumptions the progress of mankind throughout history, with scientific reason and rational control of our destiny as the primary vehicles of this progress. On the other hand, it is clear to many, that we have entered the postmodern age, which is characterized by confusion and a lack of anything absolute or certain. In man's search for a solid foundation, for a sense of meaning and purpose, some have determined to build that foundation with their own logic and understanding, and in their pride have become hostile toward things spiritual and toward God himself. Others have given up hope and become fatalistic, believing they can make no difference in this world because their lives have no meaning or purpose. It is in the midst of these paradoxes, this mass of humanity longing for and searching for the Truth – and coming up both with thousands of "solutions" and with none at all – that the Church is to serve as the light that shines the Truth, the path that leads to the Truth, and the voice that proclaims the Truth. But to do so, she must understand the purpose of her existence and the nature of her mission. She must know the heart of the Father as revealed in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. She must comprehend God's desire for the redemption of humanity and how He will accomplish His goal, with her as the primary vehicle. God's mission to, and in, the world, must be understood within the context of an orthodox and proper biblical theology of missions.

It is to the Bible we turn in order to lay a foundation for this study. There God has revealed His mission to His Church, and He has called her to participate with Him in fulfilling it. His mission must become her mission, the fire that consumes her, and she must understand it well and seek to fulfill it by the power God grants her through the Holy Spirit.

It is not my intention to undertake here a purely academic exercise of constructing a biblical theology of mission/s to compete with, or even compliment, the numerous outstanding works that already exist.[1] My desire is to develop a brief biblical and practical theology of mission/s for everyone. One which is accessible, useful and effective to provide the biblical foundation for the redemptive activity of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit throughout history. In so doing, this brief biblical theology of mission will serve as the biblical and theological foundation for the Church, providing a clear and proper understanding of the mission of God, the mission of His people, the message to proclaim, the motivations to participate, and the means of participation.

The Mission of God

There is a common misconception today among many Evangelicals that since God seems to have behaved differently in the Old Testament than in the New Testament, He must have had a different mission and used completely different methodology in the Old Testament, *if* He even had missionary objectives in the Old Testament. Because of this many Christians do not perceive God as a missionary God until the New Testament. But a proper biblical theology of missions can set their thinking straight, helping them see that God has *always* been a missionary God. In fact, the most significant arguments for missions do not come from any passage of Scripture but rather from the very character of God as revealed in Scripture. He cannot, in light of Scripture, be seen in any other way.

[1] A small sampling of outstanding works that fall within this general category, from a Protestant perspective, includes *The Mission of God* (Christopher J. H. Wright), *Missions: The Biblical Motive and Aim* (John M. L. Young), *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Lesslie Newbigin), *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (George W. Peters), *Down to Earth: A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Frampton F. Fox), *What is Mission? Theological Explorations* (J. Andrew Kirk), *Announcing the Kingdom: The Story of God's Mission in the Bible* (Arthur F. Glasser et al.), and *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective* (J. Herbert Kane). For a Charismatic perspective, see Andrew Lord's *Spirit-Shaped Mission: A Holistic Charismatic Missiology*. From a Catholic standpoint, Stephen B. Bevans, SVD and Roger Schroeder, SVD, have written *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (whose first section treats theology of mission biblically and theologically, while the rest of the book deals with theology of mission in a looser sense). Archbishop Anastasios' compendium called *Mission in Christ's Way* (borrowing a title from Anglican Bishop Lesslie Newbigin) approaches an "Orthodox understanding of mission" and contains significant biblical and theological material.

He is a missionary God by nature and He always acts in a manner consistent within His being and nature, throughout Scripture and history (Heb. 13:8; 2 Tim. 2:13). This means that the idea of missions spans the length of the Bible. God is on a mission – He is the initiator of mission (*missio Dei*) – and this is where a proper and practical biblical theology of mission/s must begin, with the unified redemption activities – the mission – of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (Mark 12:29). In the words of Jurgen Moltmann, "It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church."[2]

The Mission of God the Father

The grand mission of God is to glorify Himself. God's passion is that He be glorified. He is egocentric, but not in the sense of humanity's tainted and ungodly egocentrism. Rather, He knows that His own glory is the one thing infinitely worthy of upholding, so He is zealous for that glory (Isa. 48:9-11). He also knows that His creation is most satisfied in Him when He is most glorified in them.[3] So God's mission, for the sake of His glory and of His creation, is to be honored, worshiped, glorified. Everything He does is intended to bring glory to His Name (cf. Isa. 43:6-7; Jer. 13:11; Ps. 106:7-8, Eph. 1:4-6, etc.).

> The final and ultimate goal of missions, according to Voetius, is the glorification and manifestation of divine grace (gloria et manifestatio gratiae divinae). God is not only the first cause but also the ultimate goal of missions. The highest purpose is therefore not the salvation of sinners (Eph. 1:10) but the honor of God (Eph. 3:10-11; Rom. 11:32).[4]

This is not to say that He is not deeply concerned with humanity and the salvation of many. To the contrary, to be truly and fully glorified, He desires to be glorified *among all the nations* (Ps. 67; Ps. 96). He desires individual worshippers from every tribe and tongue and nation (Rev. 5:9). In order for this mission to be

[2] *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 64.

[3] An expression popularized by pastor/theologian John Piper.

[4] Jongeneel, J A B. "The Missiology of Gisbertus Voetius: the First Comprehensive Protestant Theology of Missions." *Calvin Theological Journal* 26:1 (April 1991), 47-79.

fulfilled, therefore, the knowledge of His glory must fill the earth, as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14). In other words, His kingdom must be established in the hearts of men.

God's mission, then, is to receive *worship* from representatives from *all peoples* as His *Kingdom* marches forth through history claiming the "territory" of men's hearts.

Worship

Worship is central to a biblical theology of mission/s for Christians because it is the ultimate goal of missions. As John Piper states, "we simply aim to bring the nations into the white hot enjoyment of God's glory. The goal of missions is the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of God. "The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!" (Ps. 97:1). "Let the peoples praise thee, O God; let all the peoples praise thee! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy!" (Ps. 67:3-4). He is the most glorified and people are the most joyful when they are worshipping Him."[5] John gives us a vision of what true worship is like in Rev. 4:8-11 and 19:1-7. It is the white hot and unceasing worship of the redeemed at the throne of God.

The Nations

Who are these redeemed? A proper biblical theology of missions makes clear God's heart for *the nations*. God's goal, and therefore our goal in missions, isn't merely to have the highest absolute number of people, from the most responsive regions of the world, worshipping before His throne. Rather it is to have people *from every tribe and tongue and language* worshipping Him (Rev. 5:9). This flies in the face of numerous mission strategies, but it is the desire of the Lord as seen in Scripture, for He knows that His glory "increases in proportion to the diversity of those who recognize its beauty."[6]

We know from the language Jesus used that the Great Commission of Mat. 28:18-20 is still valid for us today. We can also gather, again from His choice of words – *panta ta ethne* ("all the nations") – that His intention is for people

[5] Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad,* 11.

[6] Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad,* 216.

groups, not just random individuals, to hear the glorious news of His Gospel's salvation. This concept is affirmed throughout Scripture. In the New Testament, the word *ethne* usually refers to a nation (for example, Acts 13:19; Rev. 11:9), or people group, and the word *ethnos* (singular of *ethne*) *always* does (for example, Matt. 24:7; Acts 2:5; Rev. 5:9).

In the Old Testament, God's heart for the nations is also revealed, and nowhere more clearly than in Gen. 12:3, in what is known as the Abrahamic Covenant. Here God expresses His desire that all the *families* of the earth be blessed. The Hebrew word used here (*mishpahot*) implies that God intends to bless fairly small groupings of people. These groups are perhaps best defined by the word "clan." So we learn from Scripture that God's heart is to redeem not merely individuals from anywhere, and not merely political nations, but rather fairly small groups ("nations," "peoples," "tribes," "clans").

God's heart for the nations is further seen throughout the Old Testament in four categories identified by John Piper as: 1) *exhortations* to declare His glory among the nations (for example, Ps. 9:11; 96:3; 105:1; and Isa. 12:4 and 34:1), 2) *promises* that the nations will one day worship Him (for example, Ps. 2:8; 86:9; Isa. 25:6-7; 51:5), 3) *prayers* that God be praised among the nations (for example, Ps. 67:1-5 and 72:17) and 4) *personal plans* to make God's greatness known (for example, Ps. 18:49 and 108:3).[7]

The Kingdom of God

So throughout Scripture we see that God's desire is to receive glory from men and women from all nations by reigning in their hearts. The Bible calls this reign the Kingdom of God. We understand two meanings of this kingdom. First, we learn from the Hebrew word *malkuth* that the primary meaning is God's authority or reign or sovereignty – his universal rule (Ps. 103:19; 145:11) – as opposed to his *realm*, which is the second meaning. We see this same first meaning in the use of the Greek work *basileia* found in Luke 19:11-12. God's reign is in the hearts of men and it is everlasting.

The realm of God, the second meaning of the Kingdom of God, is in heaven and earth. This was the hope of Israel, a day when God's anointed One would rule

[7] Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 181-188.

the world from the throne of David and there would be peace in the world with the unrighteous banished forever. Not just humanity, but all of creation, would be restored. The prophets foretold of this day (Isa. 2:4; 11:6-10) and Jesus Himself announced that the establishment of this realm was at hand (Mt. 4:17). The mission of the Father is to receive glory from representatives of all peoples – for His Kingdom to *reign* in their hearts (Mark 10:15) – as they worship Him as members of his *realm* – His Kingdom – in earth and in heaven. This mission is not merely that of the Father, for He tasked first Israel, then the Church, with the same mission. (The concept of the Kingdom of God will therefore be developed further when we examine the mission of Israel and of the Church.)

The Mission of God the Son

In fact, the Bible tells us of yet another who was on mission, One who both perfectly fulfilled the mission of the Father and perfectly served as a model for Israel and the Church. It was the Son of God, the Messiah, Jesus. God isn't simply "up there" somewhere, controlling His soldiers to advance His causes yet remaining aloof from the activity. Rather, he emptied Himself (*ekenosen;* Phil. 2:6-12) and became a man in order to personally participate in fulfilling the mission.

God the Son has several crucial roles in the mission to redeem mankind, none of which is more clearly seen than His role as the Suffering Servant. It was He – Jesus, the Messiah – about whom Isaiah spoke in Isa. 53. In this role, rather than as the conquering political hero that most Jews expected and hoped for, Jesus advanced the Father's mission in two ways. First, He was a model for both Israel (by way of the prophets' – most notably Isaiah's – messages) and the Church (Jn. 17:18; 20:21) in their co-mission with God to serve as conduits for His redemption. God intended Israel to endure whatever suffering was necessary in order to be a blessing to the nations. In the same way, the Church is to suffer for the glory of His name among the nations (Phil. 1:29; 2 Tim. 3:12).

Secondly, and most importantly, it was Jesus, the Suffering Servant, who underwent the wrath of God by taking the sins of humanity upon Himself and dying an agonizing death. It was this perfect offering that opened the way for men and women from all nations to be reconciled to the Father and give Him

the glory due His name. It was because Jesus perfectly fulfilled the mission the Father gave Him (Heb. 10:4-10), creating the means by which the redeemed look forward to an eternity of joyful satisfaction in the presence of God as they worship before His throne.

In completing His mission, Jesus offers a salvation that effects not just our eternity, but also every dimension of our lives in this world. The salvation that He offers is holistic, because He cares about the total well-being of His children. Jesus demonstrated this concern on a daily basis. It is true that His priority was the spiritual, but not to the utter neglect of the physical. It was not uncommon for Jesus to heal the blind (Mt. 9:27-30), the crippled (Lk. 13:11-12), the sick (Lk. 7:1-10), raise people from the dead (Jn. 11) and cast out demons (Mt. 8:28-32). He fed people when they were hungry (Mt. 14:15-21). Jesus showed tremendous compassion for the physical needs of people and, in fulfilling His mission in such a way, acted as an example for His followers to model. Our biblical theology of missions cannot overlook the need for compassion and for ministering to the physical needs of people in order to ultimately (or perhaps better, simultaneously) minister to their spiritual needs.

The Mission of God the Holy Spirit

Yet as any Christian will attest, meeting the needs of people can be difficult, painful and frustrating! Participating with God in mission is not easy. What do you do with someone who doesn't want what you have to offer, or doesn't believe it, or just doesn't care? Mercifully, God has not left us to our own devices to fulfill His mission. He has provided us everything we need to serve Him well (2 Pet. 1:3). That provision and power comes in the person of God the Holy Spirit. He, too, has specific roles in fulfilling the mission of God. He teaches (John 14:26), guides (Rom. 8:14), intercedes (Rom. 8:26), comforts (John 16:7), and does much more. He is very present in the Old Testament as well. He is seen as a wind (Exod. 14:21), a force (Hos. 13:15), and a power (1 Kings 18:45). It was in this role that Jesus said He would come to the early Church, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you..." (Acts 1:8). It could be argued that this is His primary role - to provide power to complete the Father's mission.

From the rebellion of Satan and his angels (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:4) to the rebellion of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:1-6) to the rebellion at the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9) to Elijah's encounter with the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:21-39), and throughout the history or Israel and of humanity, men and angels are found striving in opposition to the will of God. It is the role of the Holy Spirit to stand against this sort of opposition, either personally or by empowering the servants of the Lord. Today we call this type of encounter a power encounter,[8] and it is an essential element in our biblical theology of missions, because it is something that the Church will face until the end of time.

Satan uses various ploys to challenge the will of God and to seal the fate of billions of men and women. He deceives them (Jn. 8:44) with false religions such as Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. He deceives them with various worldly and ungodly belief systems such as materialism, hedonism, humanism and atheism. He imprisons them with oppressive governments. And there is often only one appropriate response, only one thing that can turn those lost hearts to God, a power encounter. A display of godly power so grand and awful and potent that no witness could deny the existence and the saving power of the One True God. Power encounter is the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit in helping His people – Israel of old or the Church of today – fulfill His mission.

The Mission of God's People

If the Triune God is on mission, He is not alone. For in His economy, in His grand scheme which is often unfathomable to us, He has chosen to use frail men to help fulfill His goal of redeeming people from all nations and being worshipped by them for now and eternity. He has always used human representatives to shine forth His light and proclaim His truth in order to establish His kingdom.

[8] See Kraft, Charles H., "Power Encounter," in Moreau, A. Scott, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 774-775.

The Mission of Israel

After the fall of man in the Garden, God still had the same goal in mind that He has always had – unbroken fellowship with His creation. Only now, He would use a different strategy, and this strategy was birthed in one man, Abraham. God called Abraham and his descendants and gave them a mission. God initiated a covenant relationship with Abraham and Abraham responded in faith. It was through him that God intended all other peoples – all other families of the earth – to be "blessed" (Gal. 3:8). In Gen. 12:1-3, what we might call the Great Commission of the Old Testament, we see clearly that Abraham (and thus Israel) was both called and sent on a mission. There is no doubt that Israel understood her calling when we look at, for example, the numerous Psalms, such as Psalm 67 or 96, which demonstrate a certain concern for the nations. But how, specifically, was Israel to "bless" the nations? How was she to fulfill her mission? This is crucial for us to understand as we consider our biblical theology of missions.

We find Israel's mission clearly spelled out in Ex. 19:4-6. She was to serve as a treasured possession of God, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. By fulfilling these roles, she would be a light to the Gentiles (Isa. 42:6). First, as God's treasured possession among all the nations, it is significant to note that the Hebrew word in Exod. 19:5, *s^{e}gûllâh*, translated "special," "treasured," or "peculiar," denotes any kind of moveable treasure. The emphasis is on portability.[9] The message which Israel possessed was not to remain within her ranks, but rather be taken to the nations through various means. Second, as kingly priests, she was to function in a mediatorial role between the nations and God. Third, as a holy nation, it was her mission to demonstrate to the watching world what it means to be a nation wholly committed to the Lord. She was to reflect the grace of God. She was to show that living in obedience to God leads to prosperity for the nation and the individuals in that nation, not to mention eternal redemption. (This is to fulfill what is variously called the Cultural

[9] This aspect of portability is often missing in theological treatments of this word. Walter Kaiser has been a strong proponent and popularizer of "portability" as a key component of the word. See *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 105-107; and *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel As a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 22.

Mandate or the First Commission – being the kingdom people of God and reflecting His glory – which will be examined in more detail later.)

Israel's posture as she fulfilled her roles was to be that of a servant. She was to follow, and moreover, to emulate, the Servant of Isa. 53, sharing in His redemptive mission. This is how she was to fulfill her destiny to bless the nations. This necessarily entailed suffering for the cause. And perhaps it was for this very reason that Israel never really became a missionary people, for while they accepted converts, they rarely sought them. It was this aversion to the idea of suffering for the mission of Yahweh that caused her rather to suffer as a result of her disobedience. For this type of suffering she received no reward (1 Pet. 2:20).

It was not that Israel was ill equipped to suffer or to fulfill her mission. On the contrary, God had sent them to the world's first and best "missionary training school," that being the experience of their exodus from the throes of Egypt and their experience in the wilderness of Sinai. In order for them to demonstrate to the nations that Yahweh was Lord, they first had to know Him well and learn to trust Him to overcome the obstacles they would face in the mission. Their flight from Pharaoh and forty years in the wilderness served to accomplish this preparation. They came to know and trust God as the faithful and powerful provider for the needs of their lives and mission.

It is amazing, then, that such a people could somehow fail to take the news of this God to the ends of the earth. After all, weren't they liberated from captivity in order to help liberate the other spiritually captive nations? Didn't they know this? Hadn't they seen God raise up a leader for them (Exod. 3), plague His (and their) enemy (Exod. 8-12), deliver them from that enemy (Exod. 7:5), part a sea (Exod. 14:21,22), guide them personally (Exod. 13:21,22), and provide for them daily (Exod. 16:9-35)? Unhappily, it is part of fallen human nature to fail to live in gratitude and obedience to the One who gives us everything and wants to be our everything. And Israel lived more in accordance with this nature than in obedience and gratitude to Yahweh. Thus she failed to fulfill her role in establishing God's kingdom. For this reason, and because God's plans could not be thwarted, He passed the flame of truth - and the responsibility to bless the peoples of the world - to another group of people, the Church (Gal. 3:29).

The Mission of the Church

It was upon the completed mission of Jesus Christ at Calvary (Jn. 19:30) that His Church was built. His Church consists of those who profess Him as Lord (Mt. 16:15-18) and serves to advance the kingdom of God. Just as Israel was not the kingdom, neither is the Church. Rather, she fits into God's grand plan as His chosen means of fulfilling His mission. It has been said that the Church does not have a mission, rather, the mission has a Church.

It is important to note the meaning of the Greek word for church (*ekklesia*), which is "called out." As Israel had been set apart to fulfill God's mission, so is the Church. In fact, the mission of the Church is very similar to that of Israel, according to 1 Pet. 2:9 (NIV): "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." The primary mission of the Church is to declare the wonderful truth about the risen Lord Jesus Christ to every people group everywhere (Jn. 17:18; Acts 1:8). (This is variously called the Evangelistic Mandate or the Great Commission - declaring the glory of God - and will be examined in more detail later.) She is to do so wearing the mantle of the suffering servant (Philip. 2:1-11, note v. 4), ready to sacrifice everything so that God may receive glory from among all the nations.

In each of the following sections our biblical theology of missions will continue to be shaped as we further develop various practical dimensions of the Church's mission. We will begin by considering the biblical motivations for participating in God's mission. In light of the great cost involved and the fact that our human nature tends to divert us from God's task, there must be reasons for participation which are both crystal clear and rock solid, reasons that will rivet our attention on fulfilling the task that God has given.

The Motivations to Participate

While there are many more good reasons for the Church to participate with God in His mission than can be examined here, it will help to see that her motivations emanate from two key relationships. Her primary motivation comes from her

relationship with the Lord. Her secondary motivation comes from her relationship with the lost.

The Incomparable Glory of the Lord

The Church of Jesus Christ has experienced something that no one else has. Something of incomparable worth and glory. She has experienced the knowledge and the presence and the power and the provision of God. Her members have the privilege of daily entering into worship of the One who is truly worthy of worship. As John Piper has powerfully and convincingly argued,[10] worship serves both as the goal and the fuel of missions. It is "the goal of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white-hot enjoyment of God's glory. The goal of missions is the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of of God."[11] "Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy!" (Ps. 67:3-4b; ESV). Worship is also the fuel for missions, for how can one experience the One True God and not feel compelled to lead other people and peoples to experience that same joy and peace and power? How can one not joyfully and whole-heartedly press toward the marvelous goal of seeing representatives from all tribes and tongues and nations worshipping before the throne of God? His worth demands it. His Church must not selfishly keep the joy of knowing God to herself as Israel often did. God's incomparable worth and majesty must serve as a motivation for missions. This is called the doxological motivation[12] for missions and all other motivations pale in comparison.

The Commissions of the Lord

The emotions of worshipping God, however, cannot alone serve as the sole motivation for missions, for emotions are fickle. They cannot sustain Christians on their mission. There must be something more, something rock solid, in their relationship with the Lord that serves to motivate them to help fulfill His goal of redeeming humanity. And there is, in the form of His commissions.

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[10] Piper, John, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 17-43.

[11] Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 17.

[12] See section 2.8.2.

The "First Commission," also know as the Cultural Mandate, tasks us with being the kingdom people of God. Israel was, and now the Church is, to live as a holy nation *demonstrating* the glory of God to those around. As such, the First Commission is non-redemptive.

The essence of this commission is found in Gen. 1:26-30 and in Gen. 2:15. God placed all of His marvelous creation into the care of man! The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it (Deut. 10:14; 1 Chr. 29:11; Acts 4:24), yet we are the stewards or managers! We have been given the responsibility to govern this world wisely, because God cares about His creation (Ps. 8). By fulfilling this mandate, the Church acts as a preservative in a fallen world (Matt. 5:13).

Because God has placed man at the center of his creation, and because He values his creation so highly – especially humans, whom He loves sacrificially – our primary responsibility in stewardship becomes participating with Him to redeem people. He desires that we use our abilities, our positions and influence, our money and our time, as means to joyfully share the wonderful news about salvation with those peoples and people who have yet to hear. So while we are responsible to govern all of creation wisely, we are primarily responsible to help in the process of redemption. This is the true fulfillment of the First Commission and is where the First and Great Commissions meet.

The second commission of the Lord that serves to motivate us to participate in world evangelization is called the Great Commission, or the Evangelistic Mandate. It compels us to use various means to *declare* the glory of God to those who have not yet heard or responded. As such, the Great Commission is redemptive.

This Great Commission is given to us in Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-18, Luke 24:45-49, John 17:18; 20:21-23, and Acts 1:4-8. There are seven key words which comprise the commission: Receive (the Holy Spirit)! Go! Witness! Proclaim! Disciple! Baptize! Train! Each of these aspects is key to the Church fulfilling her mission. All are crucial in order to adequately make disciples of all nations.

Yet there is a danger that we will respond pragmatically and systematically and dutifully to these commissions without the kind of compassion that Jesus always demonstrated toward the lost (Matt. 9:36). It is

therefore important to balance our first and primary motivation - our relationship with the Lord, with our secondary motivation - our relationship with the lost.

The Cry of the Lost

While the cry of the lost is epitomized in Acts 16:23-31 by the Philippian jailer, it is not always this obvious. The cry of the lost is manifest in numerous ways including pride, selfishness, guilt, insecurity, lack of purpose, fear, addictions, lusts, depravity, and so on. It is seen also in spiritual hunger which is sometimes diminished, but usually enhanced – and never satisfied – by belief in false religions or pursuit of material possessions and sensual pleasures. Some people are aware of God and their need for Him, while many are not. Many are unaware of the desire of the enemy of their souls to destroy them, both in this life and for eternity (Jn. 10:10; 1 Pet. 5:8), and yet they have a deep-seeded, even subconscious, need for, and drive toward God, who has "set eternity in the hearts of men" (Ecc. 3:11).[13] Blaise Pascal explains it thus:

> What is it then that this desire and this inability proclaim to us, but that there was once in man a true happiness of which there now remain to him only the mark and empty trace, which he in vain tries to fill from all his surroundings, seeking from things absent the help he does not obtain in things present? But these are all inadequate, because the infinite abyss can only be filled by an infinite and immutable object, that is to say, only by God Himself.[14]

[13] It is not my intention to examine the merits of Calvinism, Molinism and Arminianism in this brief section. Suffice it to say that all three systems recognize in different ways and to differing degrees the presence of human free agency – i.e. the ability to perceive the reality of God and one's separation from Him – in the salvation process. As leading Calvinist J. I. Packer has written, "Free agency is a mark of human beings as such. All humans are free agents in the sense that they make their own decisions as to what they will do, choosing as they please in the light of their sense of right and wrong and the inclinations they feel." (Packer, J. I., *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993), 85.)

[14] Pascal, Blaise, *Pascal's Pensées* (NY: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1958), pensée 425, 113. Available as a Project Gutenberg eBook at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/18269/18269-h/18269-h.htm>. Many will recognize this as the source of the popular affirmation that "There is a God-shaped vacuum in all of us," incorrectly attributed to Pascal.

The Church around the globe has the answer, but she must have the spiritual ears to hear the cry, and she must respond with the compassion of Christ as she participates in the mission of Christ. For there is a great cost for those people and peoples (Mt. 25:31-48) who remain lost, separated from Christ.

The Cost for the Lost

John 3:16-18, 36 (NIV) explains in no uncertain terms the eternal spiritual condition of those who die physically while separated from God spiritually. They stand condemned as subjects of God's wrath forever. Their fate is sealed, with no hope for any other. It is a sad but true reality that some within Evangelical ranks hold to the unbiblical doctrine called annihilationism.[15] That is to say that either Hell is not a place, but an event of annihilation (the punishment being the denial of the joy of eternity with God rather than eternal conscious torment), or that after a certain period of time in Hell, after experiencing an amount of suffering tantamount to the sin they committed while physically alive, souls will simply cease to exist. But again the Bible is unambiguous. Both John the Baptist and Jesus referred to Hell as an "unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:12; Mk. 9:43-48). John writes that the torment lasts "forever and ever" (Rev. 14:10). Sadly, many annihilationists choose to argue against the eternal nature of Hell based on their moral repugnance to the thought of a God who would condemn people to an *eternity* of suffering as punishment for a *limited* lifetime of sinning. However, their reasoning is deficient, for God's standard and punishment is not on the basis of the *duration* of the sinning but rather the worth and holiness of the One offended. Certainly this must serve as a motivation for the Church to make the most of every opportunity and resource in order to reach a lost and dying world.

[15] If not unbiblical, then extremely tenuous at best. For an able rebuttal of annihilationism and other challenges to the biblical and historically orthodox teaching on Hell, see Dixon, Larry, *The Other Side of the Good News: Confronting the Contemporary Challenges to Jesus' Teaching on Hell* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2003). Gregory Boyd has made a laudable attempt to reconcile the two positions in his book *Satan and the Problem of Evil* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001): "I will attempt to move beyond the impasse of the traditional and annihilationist understandings of eternal punishment and construct a model of hell that allows us to affirm the essence of both perspectives" (339). But I am of John Piper's mindset and "not persuaded that Boyd's complex and paradoxical 'model' can survive close scrutiny." (<http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/greg-boyd-on-the-the-eternal-suffering-of-agents-who-have-been-annihilated>. Accessed on January 17, 2014.)

Compassion and Love

Biblically and historically, two of the most compelling motivations for engaging in evangelism and missions have been those of compassion and love. Believers share the sentiments of Jesus, who "when he saw the crowds, ...had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." (Matt. 9:36) Additionally, they recognize that "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8) His love was so great, in fact, that He "so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) And in the way of Christ believers seek to demonstrate God's compassion and love to the world around them, both locally and globally, monoculturally and cross-culturally, among the reached and especially the unreached people and peoples of the world, in free countries and in creative-access nations.

So the Church's primary motivation for missions, as stated above, is doxological,[16] based upon her relationship with the God of glory, and her secondary motivation is her relationship with the lost.[17] And on this latter subject we must be absolutely certain. For if eternal separation from God is as horrible as the Bible teaches, then Christ-followers must know their message well and they must know its value, for they will inevitably be challenged, even from within the Church, on the essence of their message.

The Message to Proclaim

It is generally agreed among Christians that we must "preach Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 1:23). Unfortunately, there are differences of opinion as to what this means. Therefore our brief biblical theology of missions must be able to answer unequivocally two sets of poignant questions: 1) Is the work of Christ

[16] See 3.1.3.1.

[17] One of the few works that skillfully unites both divine and human motives with respect to missionary activities within a specific segment of Church history is Johannes Van den Berg's 1956 publication of his Dutch doctoral thesis, *Constrained by Jesus' Love: An Inquiry into the Motives of the Missionary Awakening in Great Britain in the Period Between 1698 and 1815* (Kampen, Netherlands: J. H. Kok N.V., 1956).

necessary for salvation? Is He really man's only hope? 2) Is *conscious* faith in Christ necessary for salvation? Must someone hear the name of Christ and respond to His claims in order to be saved? If we cannot answer these questions, the very foundation of our mission could be shaken.

In response to the first category of questions, Jesus Himself gave perhaps the best answer of all when He said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Paul echoes this truth in 1 Tim. 2:5-6 when he says, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men – the testimony given in its proper time." It is only through the atoning work of Christ that men can be saved, therefore it is crucial that His work be announced to all the nations (Luke 24:46-47).

While the above response is generally accepted by Evangelical scholars, there is more discrepancy in response to the second set of questions. Some would argue that yes, it is based on the atoning work of Christ that men must be saved, but those who never hear about it nonetheless have the possibility of salvation by relying on the grace of God whom they know through natural revelation (Rom. 1:20). So we must determine whether or not people must *hear* the name of Christ in order to be saved.

Again we turn to Jesus as our authority. In Lk. 24:46-47 He said, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached *in his name* to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." The crucial point here is that it is the name of Jesus which must be preached. Paul understood this when he wrote that salvation only comes through the *confession* of Jesus as Lord (Rom. 10:9) and that by calling on the name of the Lord one can be saved (Rom. 10:13). One cannot confess the name or call on the name of One about whom he or she has never heard (Rom. 10:14)! So again the mission of the Church is confirmed. She must preach to the nations the message of the atoning work of Jesus through His death at Calvary.

In light of the incredible weight of this truth, the question now becomes, How does the Church most effectively propagate this message? How does she participate with God in His mission of redemption, of making disciples?

The Means of Participation

There are innumerable activities and ministries that the Church can undertake to reveal the King and His kingdom. Some members may serve as mobilizers. Others as senders. Some may become cross-cultural missionaries. However, the goal is always the same: to catalyze the planting of multiplying churches. This is the methodology established in the New Testament.

Church Planting

Church planting as methodology for fulfilling Christ's Great Commission was demonstrated in the life of the early Church, and modeled particularly well in the life of the apostle Paul. He is seen planting churches throughout the Roman Empire and then leaving them in the care of others as he moved on. He was a church-planter with the goal of making disciples. While the purpose of this section is not to lay out a detailed strategy for church-planting, it nonetheless must be understood what it means for a local church to make disciples. In what types of ministries must a local church engage in order to accomplish her goal? This question can best be answered by examining five target groups of people and four tactics to impact their lives, because discipleship is a lifetime process and men and women can be found at all points of the spectrum.

Before identifying the target groups and tactics, it is worth noting that no local church alone can fulfill the Great Commission. Nor can any para-church mission organization. However, by working together in strategic partnerships, in the spirit of John 17:22-23, the goal can be reached.

The first target group for any local church or church-planting team is that of non-Christians, whose profile is clearly seen in Gal. 5:19-21. The tactic used to reach them is *evangelizing*. When someone responds to the gospel, he becomes a convert (2 Cor. 5:17), the second target group. He needs to be grounded in the faith. The tactic of a local church here is *establishing*. Once a convert is firmly established in the faith, he enters the third target group, that of the disciple. He may be best described by Gal. 5:22-23. His or her primary need is to be trained how to serve God well. The tactic the church uses here is *equipping*. At this point the person segues into various positions of responsibility within the church and can

be classified as a worker or leader, the fourth target group. Whereas a convert needs to be fed and a disciple feeds himself, the worker/leader feeds others. During this period of growth, the one who was once a non-Christian and is now a worker/leader has been catching God's heart for the nations. In our ideal process of church-planting, many members will reach the point where we can utilize our fourth tactic, that of *extending*. This is where the church-planting movement reproduces itself, because the church is (ideally) full of our fifth group of people, world Christians.

Going / Sending

While the completion of the Great Commission is, according to Scripture, the responsibility of all Christians (Mt. 22:36-40; 28:18-20), the burden rests squarely on the shoulders of those who are referred to as world Christians. A world Christian is a Christian who has taken personal responsibility for finishing the task of world evangelization (Col. 1:28-29; Acts 20:24). This does not necessarily mean that he is a missionary. In fact, there are three primary roles that world Christians fill. Perhaps the most crucial is that of the missionary, or the goer. The role of the missionary derives from the Greek *apostolos*, or "sent one." A missionary is someone called by God and sent by a local church (often via a parachurch organization) to cross geographic and/or cultural boundaries in order to help fulfill the Great Commission. He usually serves full-time, but sometimes he may serve as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3). It is important to note that while every Christian has a responsibility to share his faith and to be a world Christian, every Christian is not a missionary by definition.

The second role a world Christian may fill is that of the sender. A sender gives sacrificially of his money and his time, particularly in prayer, in order to support missionaries and mission endeavors both materially and spiritually. Let us address briefly the role of prayer in our biblical theology of missions. Without adequate prayer the Church cannot possibly complete her task in a manner that glorifies the Father. Prayer is what plugs the Church into the power source. It engages us in the battle in the true sense, for the true battle is not physical but spiritual. Paul makes this very clear throughout his writings. He tells Timothy on two occasions to "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 1:18; 6:12). He uses the picture of a soldier and his equipment to describe the battle, and concludes with the charge to "pray

in the Spirit on *all* occasions" (Eph. 6:10-18). "All occasions" because he knew that there is not a warfare part of life and a non-warfare part of life, not for Christians and not for the Church. Life in this world – for those who are fulfilling God's mandates - means a life of war. Prayer keeps them in touch with their headquarters, with their weapons, and with the will of their Commander in Chief. It brings grace to them and glory to their God. As someone has said, "You can do more than pray after you have prayed but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed."[18]

Receiving

The power of globalization and the presence of diaspora communities[19] of unreached people groups around the globe have ushered in unprecedented opportunities for participating in *missio Dei*. Rather than sending exclusively, the global Church increasingly has opportunities to *receive* people from around the world and, through the use of hospitality and evangelism, share the message and love of Christ with them. Most countries in "Christian" North America, Europe and elsewhere, have received significant numbers of immigrants, refugees and international students, and continue to do so. These people often come from unreached people groups and/or nations which restrict the proclamation of the Gospel, thus providing tremendous and strategic Gospel opportunities.[20]

Mobilizing

Finally, a world Christian may serve in the role of a mobilizer. That is, he or she invests a significant amount of time in developing his or her understanding of the biblical mandate for missions, in keeping abreast of the latest developments in the world of missions, and in reading, researching and understanding the various needs of unreached peoples, missionaries and mission organizations, all in

[18] This quotation is commonly attributed to John Bunyan and Adoniram Judson Gordon.

[19] For a thorough treatment of diaspora missiology, see Wan, Enoch Y., *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice* (Portland, OR: Institute of Diaspora Studies: Western Seminary, 2011).

[20] An outstanding resource on this subject is J.D. Payne's *Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration, and Mission* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2012).

order to encourage, challenge and motivate others to go to the nations as missionaries (or to serve as senders or mobilizers).

Your Mission (Should You Choose to Accept It)

God is on mission. His mission is to receive the glory that He desires and deserves from among all ethnic groups, all over the globe. It's the storyline of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation! "Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods." (Ps. 96:3-4) And He created His Church – and that includes YOU – to be on mission with Him. You exist to live doxologically and missionally. You *exist* "for the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:12), *in all areas of your life*, *and* – through your life – *among all peoples of the world*. That's your mission. May you accept it by God's grace and fulfill it for His glory!

Next Steps

If God is stirring something in you, don't let this little book be the end of the journey. Take the next step. Learn more, pray more intentionally, expose yourself to the needs of the world, and begin asking how your life can be more fully aligned with God's global mission.

Here are six good places to begin:

1. **Read *Let the Nations Be Glad!* by John Piper.**
   This modern missions classic provides a biblical and theological foundation for understanding why the glory of God and the worship of the nations are at the heart of Christian mission. (If you didn't notice already, it changed my life!)
   Find it on Amazon →

2. **Listen to John Piper: "I May Be Called to Missions — Where Do I Start?"**
   In this short podcast episode, Piper offers practical counsel for anyone beginning to wonder whether God may be leading them toward missionary service.
   Listen at Desiring God →

3. Read Darren Carlson's "7 Steps from Student to Missionary."

Although written especially with students in mind, Carlson's seven practical steps are useful for anyone seeking to move from interest in missions toward intentional preparation and action.

Read at The Gospel Coalition →

4. Take the Perspectives course.

Perspectives on the World Christian Movement is one of the best ways to develop a deeper biblical, historical, cultural, and strategic understanding of God's global mission, and to begin discerning your own place in it. (I'm such a fan that the organization I led for many years in Brazil helped develop and launch Perspectives in Brazil, and I contributed a chapter to the Brazilian edition of the book.)

Learn more at Perspectives.org →

5. Get familiar with Joshua Project.

Joshua Project will introduce you to the world's peoples and places where access to the gospel remains limited. Explore the data, learn about unreached people groups, and let what you discover shape your prayers and perhaps even the direction of your life.

Explore Joshua Project →

6. If you are involved in business, or planning to be, consider Business as Mission (BAM).

Business can be more than a career or a way to make a living. It can become a platform for creating value, serving people, advancing the gospel, and contributing to God's purposes in the world. Business as Mission, often called BAM, brings business and mission together intentionally. I've dedicated the "third quarter" of my life and ministry to helping develop and promote BAM all over the globe. Even if business is "not your thing," I hope you'll check out BAM anyway, and recommend it to your business friends who "wish they could do more for God."

Start here →

You do not need to know today exactly where God may lead you. But you can begin today to become the kind of person who is available to Him: informed, prayerful, obedient, and ready to go wherever He sends you, whether across the street or across the world.

João Mordomo

Since meeting Christ at age 16, João's driving passion and calling has been to see the Lord Jesus glorified in all areas of his life, all spheres of society, and all peoples of the world. To that end, for nearly four decades, he has worked at the intersection of global mission, leadership, and enterprise. He co-founded (at age 20) and co-led (for 35 years) what is now a global church planting organization that has planted nearly 8,000 churches among unreached peoples. Today João serves as founding associate and Executive Director of BAM Global, and Catalyst for Business as Mission with the Lausanne Movement. With doctorates in Intercultural Studies (DIS) and Religious Studies (PhD, with emphasis in Christian Leadership), and work and ministry experience in over 60 countries, he also teaches and equips established and emerging leaders and organizations through his university teaching roles, writing, conferences, coaching, and consulting. You can reach out to him at www.mordomo.org.

