

Biblical Missions

Part I : The great Commission (Apostolic Commission)

by Elder Claude McKee, as Printed in The Christian Baptist,
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Many of God's people accept false teachings on this subject. Familiar scriptures that are used to lead God's children astray are "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15) or "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:20). . These verses like John 3:16 have been misapplied and driven into the minds of God's children, over and over, until a false understanding of the verse is gained by the false teachers.

Usually those that believe these verses are the great commission to evangelize and convert the world also believe these verses were directed to the church and not to the Apostles. The scriptures quoted above were given directly to the apostles as a commandment. The commandment was "Go ye", not send ye ,nor establish as a church function the spread of the Gospel. Today's ministers are not individually charged by these commandments to 'go into all the world' or 'teach all nations', neither are the churches. Although, the above commandments, along with the following companion scriptures do embrace and in essence pass on to God called ministers the duty of preaching to God's children anywhere they are lead by the Spirit to do so. "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The Apostles that were given these commandments did not try and go to all geographical nations. Their field of labor was basically in the regions of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. God called and fitted another (Paul) for the furtherance of the Gospel to the gentile nations beyond the region, just as He still calls, prepares and sends ministers today. "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? (Rom 10:15).

None of the verses quoted thus far give today's ministers freedom to go to any and all people without the evidence and guidance of the Spirit. we have no right to do that when we have been endued with power from the church ,the mission board, by the influence of other ministers or any other source; but only when we are endued with power from on high and when sufficient evidence of the Spirit is in the matter. "And ,behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high". (Lk. 24:49)

The evidence that one is endowed with power from on high is to witness his preaching of the truth in power and demonstration of the Spirit and watch him stand for and walk in the biblical practices of the church. If you need to conform the church to a movement [started by men] ,then the work is not of the Lord. Any one that starts or joins in with a movement to spread the Gospel which has money generating schemes such as: book sales, frequent teachings on giving (intended to gain financial support) and frequent solicitations for help is not endowed with power from on high. We should be greatly alarmed when any among us use the first two quoted verses to teach that the church and today's ministers are commissioned by those verses to go and evangelize the world.

The Apostle Paul was called of God to be the Apostle to the Gentiles and the link between the mother Church at Jerusalem and succeeding churches in other nations. The authority we have to extend arms to other brethren (establish churches) was conveyed by Paul in verses such as: (Titus 1:5) "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:" and (II Tim 2) "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." The spread of the Gospel and planting of churches was by the direct influence of the Spirit of God and the Apostle Paul was obedient to the spirit and stayed within the area and places he was lead by the spirit. He did not take upon himself the work of spreading the Gospel without being impressed by and seeing the spirit at work.

In conjunction with the verses called the great commission, Mark 16:20 is sometimes incorrectly used to indicate that the Apostles went forth and preached everywhere (all places). "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them ,he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God and they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen." But Luke 24: says they returned to Jerusalem! "And he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. and it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. and they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:". They either went every where in Jerusalem and preached or the account given in Mark refers to some other place and time. Either way the phrase "preached every where" should not be construed to be all places and to all people; because later scripture will disprove that. The scripture reads "..THEY (Apostles) went every where.."-- not that all ministers following them should go everywhere! This everywhere spoken of in mark 16:20 was not to all Geographical locations (nations) and people. This can be verified by studying the scriptures to see what the Apostles did following these commandments.

In the Book of Acts chapter 8 verse 1 reads "there was great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem: and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles". Verse 4 further states "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." Notice that the Apostles were still in Jerusalem and only THEY , meaning someone other than the Apostles ,were scattered abroad and THEY went every where preaching the word. Care should be taken to not be deceived by those who want this scripture to falsely teach world evangelism and go anywhere freedom. The scriptures will confirm that the THEY, who preached the word, DID NOT preach to any and everyone they came in contact with as some among the old Baptist are erroneously teaching. Acts Chapter 11 verse 19 nullifies that false teaching. "Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only." It was not an evangelistic effort to spread the Gospel to the world but was restricted to the Jews only .

The people that were scattered to the surrounding areas of Jerusalem had need of God called (ordained) ministers to ministered unto them, so God endued someone with power to go to them. Acts 8 verse 5 "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them." The them refers to the ones that were scattered abroad. He wasn't sent to spread the Gospel to the Samaritans but he was sent to preach to them who were scattered abroad. However it is clear that there were new converts in the city of Samaria and Philip's preaching was not hidden from them but it is also clear that his initial mission was not to the Samaritan region as a whole but it was to them that were scattered. A very important distinction!

The Apostles were obedient to Christ's commands and preached to all nations under heaven. This was in large part accomplished at the day of Pentecost because the Apostles preached to people of all nations under heaven "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven." (Acts 2:5). And in following days they also preached to those same ones that were scattered abroad. In the letter to the Colossians The Apostle Paul speaks of this in the past tense. " If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;" (Col. 1:23). A careful study of the travels of the true followers of Christ down to the present time in history, will reveal how that God called ministers have carried the word to the world as they were led by the Spirit to do so. The ideal of forming societies or gathering moneys or teaching that we as a body should carry on the work of evangelizing the whole world is a relatively new invention among the Baptist It was in large

part started by Andrew Fuller and William Carey in the late 1700's. It was not part of the Baptist denomination for almost 1800 years. That fact in itself should cause any honest thinking person to question whether it is scriptural.

God still calls, prepares and sends his ministers by the Holy Spirit to the places it pleases the Spirit to give liberty "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (2 Cor 3:17) . The Lord did not turn over to the Church nor to ministers the calling, preparing and sending of Gospel preachers. We are clearly taught that the world knoweth us not and we are to come out from the world and be a separate people. Those that are leading the present movement are causing many of God's children to cast their pearls before swine and will surely cause the precious truth to be trampled and his children to be rended.

Part II: Early church missions

**by Elder Claude McKee, as Printed in The Christian Baptist,
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The book of Acts gives us a record of some of the early happenings of the church . It provides us with the necessary information we need to rightly divide the word of truth on the topic of Missions.

The book of Joel contains a Prophecy which was fulfilled at the day of Pentecost as recorded in the second chapter of Acts. The Galilaeans were filled with the spirit and spake in tongues as the spirit gave them utterance. This was observed by men out of every nation under heaven (Acts 2:8,11). The list of people and nations mentioned were: Parthians, Medes, Elamites, dwellers of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, Cyrene, Rome, Jews and Proselytes. From this outpouring of the Spirit it states that 3000 were added to the church.. In chapter four its says there were five thousand men that believed and in chapter five its states "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:14). If only some of them joined the church , then the church quickly grew to several thousand people. We don't know for sure the exact number that became members. Regardless of the number it was a show of the great power and work of the Spirit of God. "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:33). You may ask yourself whose great power? The Apostles? I think not!. But they were blessed with the Spirit to witness in power and demonstration of the spirit.

The early church experienced persecution at Jerusalem and it was severe enough that in Chapter eight it records that they were scattered abroad. It would be reasonable to assume that some of the ones scattered were from the places mentioned

above(Acts 2). More than likely some went back to their home places to escape the persecution. Examine a map of the areas mentioned and you will find that it was the same places that the Apostle Paul later traveled to. You can start to see the need for biblical missions. True biblical missions have never been directed to the world in general but have always been to those God is pleased to enlighten. The scriptures say "Where- fore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing;and I will receive you," (II Cor. 6:17). There is no way you can do this and at the same time attempt to evangelize the world .

Prior to the travels of Paul, there are several examples in the Book of Acts which show the manner in which God is pleased to spread his word. Each of these: Philip at Samaria, Philip and the Eunuch, Peter and Cornelius, Paul and Ananias are good examples of true missions. Each of these cases show the true nature of Biblical Missions and gives us the information to judge any mission plans of today . Each example was under direct influence of the Spirit. The God of Heaven was evident on both ends of the mission. No works of man, no church societies, no money supporting schemes and no glory for the Apostles.

In the book of Acts there are five trips or missions that Paul undertook. It is clearly recorded as to the intent and purpose of each of those trips. The first trip he was sent by the church, the second trip he was sent by the Spirit and the third and fourth trips were visitation trips to places he had already been. The fifth trip he was under guard and was carried to Rome to appear before Caesar's court.

The first trip was a mission to send relief to the Saints at Jerusalem (Acts 11:28,30). The saints at Jerusalem were in need of temporal things due to a dearth and the church at Anitoch chose and sent Barnabas and Saul to convey the things given by the Brethren at Anitoch. This was a humanitarian mission carried out by the Church at Jerusalem and gives us an example that we may follow in like circumstances. I might add that I don't believe that it authorizes us to add charitable organizations to the make up of our churches for the purpose of outreaches to the world in general. Although it is a good work for any person to assist charitable organizations and be free hearted in giving to deserving people in need. The example under consideration was a work of the church to their own brethren of like faith and sets no precedence for us to have organizations attached to the church.

The second trip or mission undertaken by Paul is recorded in the book of Acts chapter 13. I believe this is a record of Paul being set aside as a minister of the Word. It is recorded that they lay hands on Paul and Barnabas and sent them away. To get a clear picture of who did the calling and who did the sending examine Act 13:2,4 " 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 (church) had fasted and prayed , and laid their (ministers) 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.

This mission was a particular work (trip or mission) that the Spirit had called Paul to do. It was not an ongoing endeavor by Paul to carrying out the great commission. The conclusion and fulfillment of this mission by Paul is recorded in Acts 14:26. "And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled."

The third trip or mission was for the purpose of visiting the places Paul had traveled to on his second mission. " 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 15:36). During this revisiting of the churches and Brethren they also delivered decrees from the church at Jerusalem and it was said that the churches were established and increased in number daily. Even during this visit the spirit was very active in directing Paul's travels. The Spirit hindered him from going into Asia but gave him a vision of going into Macedonia. The important point to understand here is that the intent of Paul going on this third trip or mission was to visit and strengthen the brethren in every city that he had previously preached . It was not a mission to spread the Gospel or implement the great commission to all nations and people.

The fourth trip or mission was for the same reason as the third one. It was to visit and strengthen the disciples they had already preached to. "And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples." (Acts 18:23)

The fifth trip or mission as mentioned was due to Paul appealing to Caesar. He didn't just decide to further the Spread of the Gospel in Rome. He was carried there under arrest! But the Lord used the situation Paul was in to minister to the brethren in Rome also. It was not just a coincidence that in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, there were people from all nations including Rome. It becomes clear that Paul was not about the business of fulfilling the Great Commission as some would have you believe but he preached where the Spirit led him.

In each of these trips it is plainly shown that Paul was guided by the Spirit in every contact that he endeavored to make. It is also clear that his trips were not intended to be evangelizing efforts as it is now taught by the world and some among us

also are beginning to teach. The term Evangelist means "a preacher of the Gospel". It does not mean one that makes disciples of the world. Every called preacher should do the work of an evangelist as Paul exhorted Timothy to do. If we are blessed to preach the Gospel in power and demonstration of the spirit in every place directed by the Spirit then we are doing the work of an Evangelist. It just simply means one is preaching the Gospel. It does not mean one must be reaching out to the world and trying to make disciples in order to be doing the work of an evangelist.

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