Discovering the Biblical View of Missions

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DISCOVERING THE HEART OF MISSIONS

I admit it. I'm soft on missions! After twenty-three years of missionary service in Africa, tears still flow when I hear songs like "People Need the Lord" (Steve Green). A sense of mission still wells up when I see the parade of missionary flag-bearers march in during our general conference missions' service. Globes, and maps of the world—more especially of the African continent—serve as interior decorations in my office; signifying, as well, the interior décor of my heart. They constantly remind me of my destiny in life.

I confess that I'm still touched by the sights and sounds of missions etched in life's memories. Consider the little village of Tumbudu, in Sierra Leone. Three hundred precious souls were burned alive, in one building, during the civil war. Today, the house has been rebuilt. Some of the charred bodily remains have been kept as a monument. Last year we planted a church in that village where there was only one Methodist church; yet many mosques. Testimonies of miraculous healings and conversions have taken place. Over one hundred saints gather each Sunday to worship the One True God; the God of missions. One lady walks four miles, from another village, to attend services in Tumbudu. She is the only Christian in her village. Another friend, a church planter in the Gambia, walks forty-eight miles, through nine villages and asks, "Do you know Jesus?" The response is often, "No, I don't know Jesus. Are you Jesus?" This reminds me that the task of reaching our world is undone.

It's odd! When one is so deeply entrenched in missions, consideration is seldom given to the questions: What does God have to say about missions? Why missions? Is there a biblical theology of missions? Where did missions begin?

Everyone knows that the divine mandate for missions began with the Great Commission; or did it? I have often presumed that, almost as an afterthought—at the conclusion of His ministry—Jesus revealed His famous last words setting the stage for world evangelism. "And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). Was I in for a surprise! This was not the first time that God gave the "all nations" emphasis. The truth is, the stage was set, and the drama started way before that. In studying the biblical theology of missions, I've read many pages with my heart in my throat. I've been shocked that the journey of missions began in the beginning; in the Book of Genesis. My passion for missions—more specifically the mission—has been rekindled. Let me explain what has revitalized my vision. My journey begins with an understanding of what is meant by the biblical theology of missions.

The Biblical Theology of Missions

The foundation of the biblical theology of missions concerns what God says about missions throughout His Word. John Stott once said, "Our mandate for world evangelization, therefore, is the whole Bible." Many missions-loving people and churches expect very little from the Old Testament when it comes to a God who loves the world, and has been actively involved in its redemption throughout time. (McQuilkin 1999, 34-35) John Bright informs us that "every Old Testament text, if rightly heard, has a word for us today" (Glasser 2003, 20) Arthur F. Glasser contends that each and every section of the Bible, if permitted to speak for itself, will expose lines or arteries of truth. This conviction allowed Paul to affirm that "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). All Scripture must be consulted to determine its contribution to our understanding of missions. God's mission is revealed from Genesis to Revelation. It reveals God's purpose, vision, and action throughout human history. Ralph Winter said, "The Bible actually begins with missions, maintains missions as its central theme throughout, and then climaxes in the Apocalypse with spontaneous outbursts of joy because the missionary mandate has been fulfilled!" (Richardson 1984, 153)

"Missions can go forward only if based on an adequate biblical and theological foundation." (Hesselgrave 2005, 344) George Peters felt that missionary theology should move up until it finds its position in theology. It cannot be separated. (Peters, 1972, 25) The Wise man said, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do" (Proverbs 4:23). We must guard the heart of missions—our biblical theology—because it greatly affects our success or failure. What, then, is meant by "biblical theology" and more precisely "biblical theology of missions?"

Biblical theology in our context (a) looks at the entire Bible to discern the larger themes used; (b) studies historical events and their circumstances to reveal God's purpose; (c) describes the Bible's message in the words and ideas of the writers involved; (d) looks at the larger, broader picture; (e) recognizes the partnership between God and man in bringing salvation to the lost; (f) allows us to see the world through God's eyes and with His agenda in mind. (Steyne 1999, 20; 68); (g) seeks unifying themes of Scripture; (h) believes all parts of the Bible become relevant to each other; (i) traces themes historically rather than looking at discreet topics logically; (j) assumes that the main theological lines of the biblical narrative is discernable, and we are called by God to learn, teach and apply them in our churches and lives; (k) looks at the way God reveals Himself and His purpose; (*9Marks*) (l) lets the Bible speak for itself and to us today; (m) views doctrine in its historical context; (n) takes the historico-

grammatical approach to hermeneutics; (o) studies what writers said, thought, and regarded as truth; (p) takes into consideration that stages of development as themes are revealed progressively; (q) assumes that revelation is embodied in biblical history; (r) unlocks the Bible for the present generation; (s) assumes that the Bible is inerrant, inspired, and relevant; (t) contains eternal truths and serves as a basis for right doctrine; (u) looks at the acts of God throughout history and the subsequent interpretation of these acts; (v) concerned with the reason why something is written; (w) relates the different biblical parts that it is consistent to the total content of the Bible. (Ryrie 1959, 11-24)

Biblical theology of missions encompasses many (if not all) of the statements mentioned above. However, it looks (a) closely at the relationship between God and the nations in light of the gospel; (b) studies the missions, Missio Dei, and kingdom themes used throughout God's Word; (c) and develops an appropriate foundation for mission's theology, while discerning how it fits with theology as a whole.

When Jesus issued His Great Commission, it did not come as a total shocker to His listeners. They understood that its origin went back into history to Genesis, and a covenant that God made with Abraham. The Old Testament was the only Bible that the early church had. Many New Testament Scriptures are unfathomable without an understanding of the Old Testament. "It is impossible…to understand missions properly in the New Testament without seeing the roots of missions in the Old Testament." (Greenway 1999, 29) The Scriptural basis for missions can be compared to a pyramid. It is not a pyramid that is built upside down with its point on one or two isolated verses in the New Testament from which we build the large structure called "missions." Instead, the pyramid is built right side up with its frame running from Genesis to Revelation. "All of Scripture forms the outreach of the gospel to the whole world." (Howard 1976, 31) Dawson Trotman, the founder of the Navigators, cast his world vision through a carefully laid foundation from the Word of God. He believed, "a challenge with any lesser authority would soon evaporate and become a forgotten emotion." (Borthwick 1987, 39) Philip M. Steyne in his book *In Step with the God of the Nations* wrote, "If this worldwide missions movement is to sustain its momentum and maintain its vitality, it must be anchored in Scripture. Nothing will sink the movement faster, or detract it from its sharp focus, than a sub-biblical outlook."

Discovering the Heart of Missions

The starting place of missions is the very heart of God. (York 2005, 15) God expresses His missionary vision throughout the Bible, and expects that it will become our motivation for ministry. He gives us the responsibility for reaching our world.

"Missio Dei" is Latin for "Mission of God." Its central or core idea is that God starts, sustains and promotes mission. (Moreau, McGee, 2004, 17) This refers to anything and everything that God does in relation to the salvation of mankind, and all that the church is commissioned to do on earth. In Genesis 3:8-9 we see our Creator as a missionary God when He called to Adam, "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9) George F. Vicedom said, "The Bible in its entirety ascribes only one intention to God—to save mankind." George Peters tells us that "sin" is written in big letters across the pages of God's Word. Only Genesis 1-2; and Revelation 21-22 are exempt of its harmful stain. The remainder is a record of human sin and divine intervention bringing about salvation. (Peters 1972, 15)

Blessed with a Strong Heartbeat

Genesis 1:26-28 marks the beginning of revealing man's privilege, responsibility, and obligation to His world. He was to till the ground; trim the trees, name the animals, multiply, and have dominion over the earth. The Scripture says, "God *blessed them* and said to them" (Genesis 1:28; emphasis mine) What follows is the first commandment of the Bible.

"From the outset a worldwide plan was set in motion and a fascinating formula was introduced. God blessed His servants so that they in turn might be a blessing in all the earth. God's simple plan of "blessing to be a blessing" is the foundation of missions. This "great commission" is found in the very first chapter of the Bible…Blessed to be a blessing was God's plan with Adam and Eve. It is the heartbeat of our mission to this day." (Blue 2001, 12)

Salvation is God's gift to us, and what we become is our gift to God. John D. Rockefeller Jr., said "I believe that every right implies a responsibility; every opportunity an obligation; every possession, a duty." A New Testament writer confirms this thinking: "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:48). Unfortunately, Adam and Eve, the parents of all creation, overlooked their blessings, turned away from God, and failed to take Him at His Word. Along came curses and consequences.

Remedy for Heart Problems

Genesis 3:15 is considered to be the remedy; the mother of all mission's promises, and is often termed "protoevangelium." It is the first promise of salvation and of the Redeemer that would be (a) born of a woman; (b) wounded; and (c) would crush evil.

God kept renewing this promise century after century as the Old Testament pointed to the coming Messiah.

By the close of Genesis 3 the main characters entered life's drama. They included: God, humanity, the accuser, and a Savior. A man with a promise would soon enter in preparation for God to redeem His people. (Moreau, 2004, 37) Three setbacks mark the bleak introduction to the Genesis story: (a) the fall; (b) the flood; (c) and the failure at Babel. With each setback came judgment, mercy, and a promise of worldwide blessings.

Abraham—a Man with a Heart for Missions

Abraham is the patriarchal pioneer of missions, and received a cross-cultural missionary call. In Genesis 12:1-3 we find the words that uncover in a nutshell God's plan and purpose. Understanding the promise contained here is vital to an understanding of the Bible and missions. The promise to Abraham referred to the promise already announced to Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15) and enlarged to Shem (Genesis 9:27). It reveals God's heart—past, present, and future. The key word—the same given to Adam—is "bless" or "blessing." Five times in three verses we read about it. God promises (a) I will make you a great nation; (b) I will bless you; (c) I will make your name great. And God has a purpose for it all in mind. His plan was established before the foundation of the world. God wants Abraham (and his descendants) to be a blessing. Abraham is blessed to be a blessing. George Peters said, "It is great to receive a blessing but it is greater to dispense the blessing." (Peters 1972, 110) God bound His promise with an oath.

> "Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that… we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (Hebrews 6:17-19).

There are over 300 declarative passages in the Old Testament that magnify God's promise to bless all nations. "May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, Selah, that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations" (Psalms 67:2). This Psalm is often called the "Missionary Psalm" because of its worldwide perspective on God's blessings. Isaiah said, "I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6). The Psalmist promised, "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession" (Psalms 2:8).

Genesis 12:1-3 remains the formative theology, and organizing principle of missions and God's desire to bring salvation to all people groups. "Indeed, here is where missions really begins. Here is the first Great Commission mandate of the Bible. It is the thesis that dominates the strategy, theology, and mission of the Old Testament." (Kaiser 2004, 13)

The Heartbeat Changes in the New Testament – Or Does It?

After the Day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter continued to identify the pulse of the Old Testament. "And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed'" (Acts 3:25-26).

The promise remains. All nations will be blessed through Abraham's seed. He became the heir of the world (Romans 4:13); the father of many nations (Romans 4:17); and the father of all who follow Christ (Galatians 3:29). In one chapter—Galatians 3—Paul reveals—not once but five times—the longstanding connection between the gospel and the Abrahamic covenant. This covenant is the heart of the Bible. We are Abraham's seed, and the earth will be blessed, if we go to them and proclaim the gospel. Paul revealed, "The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." (Galatians 3:7-8).

The Heartbeat Continues

The blessings promised to Abraham come to us through Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:14-16). But the cycle doesn't stop. It continues. God's heart doesn't skip a beat. We are blessed to be a blessing. Reaching the world is still God's plan. We should be touched with the things that touch the heart of God. This arrangement ends with great results. "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9). It is a recorded fact. It will happen. There is a four thousand year old connection, promise, and oath. Abraham's blessings are mine, and yours. We are blessed to be a blessing! I think I hear someone singing, "You are worthy…because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9-10).

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DISCOVERING THE KING OF MISSIONS

What in the Word are you preaching? Robertson McQuilkin tells the story of ministering at a mission's conference in a dynamic, missions-oriented mega-church. He was surprised when the senior pastor, Brent, told him they had met before and their first meeting had been "ministry-transforming." The pastor attended a seminary where McQuilkin ministered for their missions' week. He spoke each day in chapel services sharing the story of God's love for the world—and His mandate for missions—from Genesis to Revelation. Brent volunteered to take him to the airport. Apparently he had not been in those meetings. As the two sat drinking coffee at an airport cafe, McQuilkin asked the young man about his ministry. Brent said that he preached the Word (meaning expository preaching). McQuilkin then inquired about the missions program of his church, and Brent admitted they didn't have one. "And what word is it you're preaching?" asked the older man. That simple statement caused Brent's life and ministry to be transformed." (Robinson and Larson 2005, 49)

"Christian missions is the announcement, embodiment and extension of Christ's reign in the world." (Engel and Dyrness 2000, 26) God had always planned for His people to have a king and to be part of a kingdom. God had promised Abraham in Genesis 17:6-8: "I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you." Dying Jacob prophesied, "The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his" (Genesis 49:10). Jacob saw that from the royal tribe of Judah, a scepter or "staff of authority" would remain. This was fulfilled in David. Till the captivity the scepter was in Judah, and the governors of Judea were from that tribe. (PC Study Bible, 1999) Jacob also looked far ahead to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who was a descendant from the royal line of David, and would be king. "When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us," be sure to appoint over you the king the LORD your God chooses" (Deuteronomy 17:14-15). As is often the case, people got ahead of God, rather than stay synchronized with His purpose and timing. They demanded for a king. The problem was not with their request, but their motivation. They wanted to be like other nations (1 Samuel 8:20); and to conform to their environment around them instead of bringing transformation. Samuel was old; his sons crooked; and the Israelites assumed their God was powerless. They were looking for a human solution to their multiplied problems. God concluded: "They have rejected me as their king" (1 Samuel 8:7). So, God gave

them a king, Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin. He eventually proved rebellious, disobedient, and a total failure. Samuel's judgment from God revealed, "Your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command" (1 Samuel 13:13-14). God had something better—and someone better—in mind. This would be David, a man after God's own heart. In contrast, Saul had only desired to build a monument to himself (1 Samuel 15:12). David's heart's desire was to build a house for God (2 Samuel 7:1). David was kingdom-minded. Saul was other-minded (Philippians 3:15). Saul's kingdom was temporary, but David's would prove eternal (2 Samuel 7:13; 16; 24-25; 26; 29).

God established an everlasting covenant with David (2 Samuel 23:5), and promised him an everlasting kingdom:

"He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son…Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever'" (2 Samuel 7:13-14; 16).

David's kingdom provided a glimpse of God's future rule on the earth, and served as a model to all other nations pointing them toward His future kingdom. It forecasted the coming of the Messiah, the anointed King that would bring salvation and deliverance to the nations.

Of particular interest in the Davidic covenant is that the kingdom will be forever. This goes far beyond future kings of Judah right down to the throne of Christ. "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:32-33).

> "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Note also "I will set up your seed after you" (2 Samuel 7:12, *NKJV*). Of course, this refers to David's son, Solomon, and other descendants but does not stop there. "I will be his father, and he will be my son" (2 Samuel 7:14).Look at Jesus' pedigree: "A

record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1). Sixteen times in the New Testament Jesus is referred to as the "Son of David." Matthew's gospel focused on the Jews, and proved that Jesus Christ was King, the royal son of David. Seven times in Matthew we read of the "son of David" (1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9; 22:42). Matthew convinced the Jews that Jesus was the "King of the Jews" (27:29; 37). His genealogy begins with Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation. It follows the lineage through King David, with everyone listed being of royal descent, providing evidence of the royal bloodline of Jesus. (Stark Church of Christ 2006) Biblical genealogies listed only men unless there were noble, notable women. Jesus' family tree included two Gentile women: Rahab and Ruth. Luke confirms Jesus' royal descent and His being the Son of David: "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign…forever; his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:32-33, *NIV*).

The writer of Hebrews puts it this way: "For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"?" (Hebrews 1:5). Peter referred directly to this: "Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne" (Acts 2:30, *NKJV*). Peter was well versed in Jesus' kingdom thinking. Jesus had given him the "keys to the kingdom" (Matthew 16:19).

Psalms is acclaimed by George Peters and others to be one of the greatest missionary books. Nearly half of the Psalms were written by David and give a birds-eye view of his perception of God's promises to both him and Israel. It contains over 175 references to the nations of the world. Peters shows how entire psalms provide a missionary message (Psalms 2; 33; 66; 72; 98; 117; 145), bring hope of salvation to the nations, and is "missionary preaching par excellence." (Peters 1972, 116) Psalms 89 is a detailed commentary on the Davidic covenant of 2 Samuel 7. A sampling of some of my favorite references from Psalms, on this subject, includes:

TABLE 1

SCRIPTURAL REFERENCE	**QUOTATION**
Psalms 2:8-9	"Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter."
Psalms 22:27-28	"All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the

	LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations."
Psalms 89:3-4	"You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant, 'I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations.'"
Psalms 67:1-2	"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, Selah that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations."
Psalms 72:17	"May his name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun. All nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed."
Psalms 97:1	"The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice."
Psalms 98:2	"The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations."
Psalms 98:3	"The whole earth has seen the salvation of our God" (*NLT*).

Even though the kingdom eventually was divided, and the Israelites were taken captive the major and minor prophets persisted in calling God's people to be a witness and light to the nations. "They refused to let the people forget the reason for their existence." In Exile, a remnant continued to be a shining light. They continued as "expressions of His character, extensions of His presence, and exhibits of His power." (Steyne 1999, 182-183). Such faithful witness by people like Daniel and the three Hebrew children caused King Nebuchadnezzar to testify, "How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation" (Daniel 4:3). The prophets abound with confirmations about a king; kingdom; Messiah; witness; and light to the nations. A sampling includes:

TABLE 2

SCRIPTURAL REFERENCE	**QUOTATION**	**COMMENT**
Isaiah 9:6-7	"Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's	

	throne and over his kingdom."	
Isaiah 42:6 (See also Isaiah 43:10,12)	"I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness."	George Peters counts Isaiah as the great evangel prophet of the Old Testament. (Peters 1972, 122)
Isaiah 42:1	"I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations"	
Isaiah 49:6	"I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (RSV).	See Acts 1:8.
Isaiah 52:10	"The ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God."	
Jeremiah 31:31-33	"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."	
Ezekiel 36:26	"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."	
Jeremiah 23:5-6	"The days are coming," declares the LORD "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the	

	name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness."	
Isaiah 11:1-3. See also Isaiah 60:21	"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him — the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD…"	
Isaiah 53:2. See also Zechariah 3:8; 6:12	"He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground."	
Ezekiel 47:1-12; 48		Israel would be a river of blessings to the nations.
Malachi 1:11	"My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun."	
Daniel 6:26	"For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end."	
Daniel 7:13-14	"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His	

	dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."	
Amos 9:11-13	"In that day I will restore David's fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name," declares the LORD , who will do these things. "The days are coming," declares the LORD."	
Zechariah 2:11-12	"Many nations will be joined with the LORD in that day and will become my people. I will live among you and you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me to you."	Some refer to verse 12 as a repeat of the charter for humanity of 2 Samuel 7:19.
Micah 4:1-2	"In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come."	This is the depiction of nations flowing toward the mountain of the Lord.
Zechariah 8:20-23	"This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Many peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come, and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, 'Let us go	

	at once to entreat the LORD and seek the LORD Almighty. I myself am going.' And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD Almighty and to entreat him."	
Joel 2:28	"And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people"	
Hosea 3:5	"Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days."	

The situation looked disastrous. Jerusalem lay in ruins. The temple was destroyed. It appeared that David's kingdom had forever ended. God's people were in captivity in Babylon—nine hundred miles from home. After seventy years 15,000 Israelites returned home. Many others remained behind or settled in other countries. This prepared the platform for the expansion of the church throughout the first century. A new King would appear; the Messiah. A root from Jesse would spring forth. Jesus is looked at as the: (a) "true light that gives light to every man coming into the world" (John 1:9); (b) "light of the world." (John 8:12); (c) "another king, one called Jesus" (Acts 17:7-8); (d) "hope of Israel" (Acts 28:20); (e) "king who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Luke 19:38); (f) "Son of God…King of Israel" (John 1:49); (g) "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelation 19:16); (h) "THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Matthew 27:37); (i) "King of Israel!" (Matthew 27:42); (j) "Jesus Christ…descended from David" (2 Timothy 2:8). And what did Jesus say about Himself? "Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied" (Matthew 27:11).

The Apostle Paul interpreted his calling in line with Old Testament promises that all nations would be reached and that the church would be a light to the Gentiles.

> "Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "'I have made you a light for

the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.' When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed" (Acts 13:46-48).

Paul's ministry of reaching Gentiles (without asking them to be circumcised) brought upheaval to the church. James, a distinguished leader, quoted Amos during the Jerusalem Council:

> "Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself. The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: "'After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will build and I will restore it, that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things' that have been known for ages. "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God" (Acts 15:14-20).

Paul refused to retreat. ""Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!" …Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 28:28-31).

The Lord backed Paul, and continues to back anyone who endeavors to be a light to the nations, and to bring lost souls into His kingdom. "But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it" (2 Timothy 4:17).

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DISCOVERING THE FIRE STILL FALLS

The Fire Falls at Pentecost

The Bantu title for the Acts of the Apostles is, "Words Concerning Deeds." A brief survey of this book unveils the deeds the Lord continued to do, through the Holy Spirit (primarily) and His disciples (secondarily). The *Full Life Study Bible* states, "Acts records what the church must be and do in any generation as it continues Jesus' ministry in the Pentecostal power of the Holy Spirit." It is a book of action. It breathes ''advance' on every page! The Old Testament, followed by the Gospels, gives the theological basis for the inclusion of Gentiles in the church. The Book of Acts provides not only the theological, theoretical basis, but also the experiential, practical proof. Even the fact that Luke's gospel and the Book of Acts were written to Theophilus—probably a Gentile—shows that God's plan was for the truth to go beyond the Jews; to the nations. Acts has a single message. God is interested in the expansion of His church to the ends of the earth. The word "witness" is the key word in Acts. It is mentioned thirty-nine times. "A non-witnessing church is a sick church." (York 2002, 102) Acts is a missiological book. The proof is in the pudding! Tradition reveals that most apostles became martyrs while serving on missionary fields.

John the Baptist prophesied, "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matthew 3:11). That is exactly what happens in Acts—the fire falls!

At Pentecost people from every part of the known world—more than fifteen regions—assembled. They were from "every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5) and were a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people" (Joel 2:28). How fitting for the Holy Spirit to be poured out now. Pentecost was (and is) the Feast of First-fruits; a harvest festival. "Harvest" is a metaphor used in Scripture to speak of the end-times and the urgency of evangelism. Jesus had earlier said—as masses of Samaritans moved toward Him, "Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest" (John 4:35). Every farmer knows the importance of bringing in the harvest. An elderly, pioneer preacher was sitting beside a young pastor in a church service, when John 4:35 was mentioned. With his huge hand, he slapped the young man on the leg and said in a loud voice, "Young man, do you understand what that scripture means? I'll tell you. The crop is so ripe that unless someone gets to it immediately, it will spoil." So, Pentecost was the first-fruits of millions of others that would follow. It was more than a

Jewish festival. It marked the commencement of a universal spiritual harvest and outpouring of God's Spirit. God is the "Lord of the Harvest" (Matthew 9:38). He is still sending forth laborers to gather the global harvest.

From its birth, the church has had a vision as "big as the world." Acts 1:8 is the Church's vision statement. Direction is of primary importance. "Beginning from where you are, take the message of Christ outward, like ripples caused by a pebble thrown into a pond, not stopping at just your city or state but moving on beyond regional influence to the very 'ends' of the earth. In other words, reach it *all*!" (Barton 1999, 10) Robert Coleman adds, "Evangelism is not an optional accessory to our life. It is the heartbeat of all that we are called to be and do. It is the commission of the Church which gives meaning to all else that is undertaken in the name of Christ." (Coleman 1999, 103) Throughout the Book of Acts we clearly see the heart of our God; and His vision for the Church. It becomes our passion, purpose, and mission—reach the world at any cost.

The sights and sounds of Pentecost drew thousands of curious seekers—the sound as of a rushing mighty wind and tongues like fire. Each person heard someone from the Upper Room ensemble speak in "his own language"—one's heart language remains the best vehicle of the gospel (Acts 2:6). Peter stood, with the eleven, to use his keys to open wide the door to the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16:18). He had the knowledge that allowed entrance into the kingdom possible. He reaped a great harvest of 3,000 souls in one day. Pentecost was a multi-phased event and Peter would use the keys again and again.

TABLE 1

CHURCH STARTED	JEWISH PENTECOST	ACTS 2	ACTS 1- 7	JERUSALEM	
Church Scattered	Samaritan Pentecost	Acts 8	Acts 8	Judea and Samaria	Samaritans were detestable. They had blood mixed blood.

Church Sent (Blue 2001, 69)	Gentile Pentecost	Acts 10	Acts 10 -28	Ends of the earth	Considered by Jews to be "dogs."

"Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you and to your children, and *even to the Gentiles — all who have been called by the Lord our God*" (Acts 2:38-39, *NLT*, italics mine). I smile when I read those words, "even to the Gentiles." It sounds pretty simple to me. However, Jewish hearers were surprised, didn't understand it, and made little effort to proclaim it. That will not be the only time we read those simple globe-encompassing words or that anyone will be surprised. "The Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers…were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out *even on the Gentiles*" (Acts 10:44-45, italics mine).

The Fire Falls on the Gentiles

In Acts 9 Saul, a persecutor of Christians was knocked down on the Road to Damascus. Saul's call as a "chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles" (Acts 9:15) resurfaces valid questions, "Did God's plan include Gentiles? Could Gentiles be included in the Church?" Perhaps, it would be good to pause and take a quick look at what Jesus and the Gospel writers had to say on this subject. The following references will set the stage for what God is going to do in Acts 10.

TABLE 2

REFERENCE	QUOTATION
Matthew 8:10-11	Direct response to the centurion: "When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I *have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith*. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."
Matthew 10:18	"On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as *witnesses to them and to the Gentiles*."
Matthew 12:41-42	"The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with

	this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here." (Nineveh was a Gentile city.)
Matthew 21:43	"Therefore I tell you that the *kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people* who will produce its fruit."
Matthew 28:19	"Therefore go and *make disciples of all nations*…"
Mark 7:24-30	"Then he told her, 'For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.' She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone."
Mark 11:17	"And as he taught them, he said, 'Is it not written: 'My house will be called a *house of prayer for all nations*'? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"
Mark 13:10	"And the gospel must first be *preached to all nations*."
Mark 14:9	"I tell you the truth, wherever the *gospel is preached throughout the wor*ld, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."
Mark 16:15	"He said to them, 'Go into all the world and *preach the good news to all creation*.'"
Luke 4:24-26	"I tell you the truth," he continued, 'no prophet is accepted in his hometown. I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed-only Naaman the Syrian.' All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this."
Luke 24:47-48	"And repentance and forgiveness of sins *will be preached in his name to all nations*, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."
John 1:8-13	"He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light *to every man* was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. *Yet to all who received him*, to those

	who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."
John 3:16-17	"For God *so loved the world* that he gave his one and only Son, that *whoever believes in him shall not perish* but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."
John 12:32	"But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, *will draw all men* to myself."

The story of the Gentile Pentecost is one of the longest in Acts: seventy-seven verses. This indicates the significance of this paramount step in fulfilling God's plan. In Acts 10 Peter unlocks the door for the Gentiles to come to God. Peter received a vision from the Lord—three times. Cornelius, a God-fearer only had to receive a vision once. Peter's vision of unclean animals was symbolic of human beings. It caused him to move out of his comfort zone and have a paradigm shift. Arriving at Cornelius' house Peter preached his first cross-cultural Bible study repeating his speech given at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit fell on them as Peter was preaching. And what word can we find to describe the Jew's response? Excited? Thrilled? No, try "astonished!" (Acts 10:45). But, like Peter said, "Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:17, *KJV*). Lloyd Oglivie once quipped, "You cannot administrate Pentecost! 'The wind blows where it wills.'" God made it clear in Acts that His plan for evangelism included everyone. Remember, Acts is a book of action, and in Acts God's actions speak louder than words. We will not, however, base theology on action alone but on God's Word.

TABLE 3

REFERENCE	QUOTATION
Acts 1:8	"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
Acts 2:17	"In the last days, God says, *I will pour out my Spirit on all* people."
Acts 2:39	"This promise is to you and to your children, and *even to the Gentiles* — all who have been called by the Lord our God" (*NLT*).
Acts 2:21	"And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."
Acts 3:24-25	"And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God

	made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring *all peoples on earth will be blessed.*"
Acts 9:15	"But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! *This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles* and their kings and before the people of Israel."
Acts 10:45-47	"The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were *astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles*. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, 'Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.' So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ."
Acts 11:18	"When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, *God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life*."
Acts 13:46-48	"Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us: '*I have made you a light for the Gentiles*, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.' When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.
Acts 14:27	"On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had *opened the door of faith to the Gentiles*."
Acts 18:6	"But when the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. *From now on I will go to the Gentiles.*'"
Acts 21:19	"Paul greeted them and reported in detail *what God had done among the Gentiles* through his ministry."
Acts 22:21	"Then the Lord said to me, 'Go; *I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'* The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, "Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!"
Acts 26:17-18	"I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. *I am sending you to them* to open their eyes and turn

	them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'"
Acts 26:22-23	"But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen- that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, *would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles*."
Acts 28:28	"Therefore I want you to know that *God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles*, and they will listen!"

The stage is set for the ends of the earth to be reached. Paul and Barnabas walked through the open door. Paul became the apostle to the uncircumcised (Acts 9:15; 22:14; 26:16-18; Galatians 2:8).

The Fire Falls Because of the Gentiles

The Gentile fire-fall in Acts 10, followed by missionaries reaching the Gentile world brought on a different type of fire—red-hot anger. Some Jewish Christians felt the only way Gentiles could truly be saved and part of the Church would be if they were circumcised and followed the letter of the Law. Paul contended—and rightfully so—that circumcision was not a necessary condition for salvation. "Gentiles do not have to enter the house of Christianity through the doors of Judaism." Peter, Paul, Barnabas and James seem to be the key speakers in the open forum commonly referred to as the Jerusalem Council. I like the emphasis placed on God.

TABLE 4

	REFERENCE	QUOTATION
God made the choice.	Acts 15:7	"God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe."
God accepted Gentiles based on their heart.	Acts 15:8	"God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just

		as he did to us."
God makes no distinction between Jews and Gentiles.	Acts 15:9	"He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith."
God's grace saves us.	Acts 15:11	"No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that we are saved, just as they are."
God worked miracles among the Gentiles.	Acts 15:12	"They listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles…"
God is taking out a people for His name.	Acts 15:13	"God at first showed His concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself."
God's Word is the final test of truth.	Acts 15:15-18	"The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written…"

James the Just was well-known as a man of prayer and wisdom. Tradition says that he was referred to as "Camel Knees" because of his prayer life. God had already made His plan plain. God visited the Gentiles, and took a people for Himself. He opened the door of faith for them (Acts 14:27). No-one can shut it! "See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut" (Revelation 3:8).

The Fire Falls in the 20th Century

The church plunged into the dark ages. For centuries the fire seemingly had been extinguished. The first day of the twentieth century marked the birth of the modern Pentecostal movement. That evening Agnes Ozman received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. A few days later, Charles Parham, his wife, and twelve of his students received their personal Pentecost. Parham had been leading a small group of students into a study of the *Acts of Apostles*. They started out studying Acts, but ended up living it. The doctrine of the first church was restored as a step was made toward the Book of Acts. (Poitras 2006) Later, a spark ignited in the hearts of a small group of fifteen people (including children) when they started a prayer meeting in Los Angeles. On April 9,

1906 the fire fell as people began to speak with other tongues. For three years the fire blazed in the lives of thousands of people, from around the globe, as they visited "the heart of revival." By December 1906 the Azusa Street Mission sent out (at least) thirteen missionaries to Africa. The church "grew with unparalleled speed" and "was aggressively evangelistic." They believed that God was pouring out the "latter rain," a term taken from Joel 2:23. The "early rain" had fallen on the Day of Pentecost. Charles F. Parham claimed that those who received the Spirit—speaking in tongues—were being equipped to "carry out God's end-time global missionary mandate." He believed that the tongues they spoke when they were baptized in the Spirit would direct them to the country they were to go as a missionary. They thought that their new speech would be used in missionary ministry. What a disappointment when missionaries went forth to the regions beyond, only to learn that they still had to learn the local language, but at least they went! "The number of missionaries who…were sent out from Los Angeles during the first three years of the mission's existence is simply staggering." The Azusa Street mission's program was a "one way ticket" plan because they believed that the Lord would come before their missionaries needed to come home. Several of the missionaries indeed only required a "one way ticket." They died within several weeks of arrival, but their seeds planted the birth of the global Pentecostal missions program. "They may not seem to have accomplished much in those early years, but the results stand before us today in the millions of people worldwide affected by the movement. The Pentecostal/Charismatic movement that sprang forth from this humble congregation is truly *global* in scope." (Robeck, M, 2006, 5, 7, 240, 314)

The Fire Still Falls

"The new kids on the block hardly seem like new kids anymore. Pentecostalism, which by most accounts was birthed in America only a century ago, is now basking in its own Golden Era." (Shaull and Cesar 2000, 1) C. Peter Wagner wrote a book about Pentecostalism entitled *Look Out! The Pentecostals Are Coming*. "The Pentecostals are not just coming. They have arrived! More than that, they are going places…Martin Marty predicted Pentecostalism would become the major form of Christianity in the Third World." He turned out to be a good prophet! (Hesselgrave 1988, 121) Twenty-five percent of the world's Christians are Pentecostal or charismatic with a world growth rate of about 19,000,000 per year. (*Christianity Today,* 1998, 1). C. Peter Wagner in another book *Prayer Shield*, stated, "The most massive growth of churches is found in Pentecostal/ Charismatic traditions." (Poitras, 2006, 34) Estimates show that there are between 400 and 600 million Pentecostals worldwide—a half billion or more—not bad for a group once ostracized and considered to be on the wrong side of the religious track. During the UPCI's "The Fire Still Falls" program at Azusa Street, in April 2006, 1305 received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in three nights and two days. (*Azusa Street*

Centennial 2006, 1). The *Los Angeles Times* reported that over one weekend 31,000 Christian celebrated the centennial from 113 nations.

Dr. Gary McGee, Professor of Church History and Pentecostal Studies, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri stated, "The heart of Azusa Street was about evangelizing the world in the last days…and the sense at the turn of the 20th century that time was running out. So, the Spirit was empowering people to go overseas and preach the gospel." Kim Lawton referred to this as the "evangelistic urgency." (Religion & Ethics 2006, 2-3) As we move deeper into the 21st century, "urgency" heightens to a state of emergency. Red Alert—we are constantly moving closer to the coming of the Lord. "Urgency" is the "pressure of necessity." It refers to a burning importance requiring swift action. "Necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16, *NKJV*). "But if I say, 'I will not mention him or speak any more in his name,' his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones" (Jeremiah 20:9). The purging, cleansing, empowering fire of Pentecost has been ignited, is spreading around the globe, and is alive and well. As missionaries, preachers, and global Christians traverse the four corners of the earth, the fire still falls!

The Fire Still Falls

"We say, 'People don't want God
People don't care
We try and we try
They don't notice we're there!'

"We stand fast in God's compassion
And the love He came to prove.
Yet fall short of believing
That He can still move.

"Arise, oh believer!
Lift up your head
The voice of truth calls you
God is not dead!

"People are searching
Won't you show the way?
Remember to love them
Remember to pray.

"For across the great distance
God still softly calls
The war is still raging
The fire still falls." (Melinda Poitras 2006)

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DISCOVERING THE WALL HAS BEEN TORN DOWN

The mission of the Church can never be separated from the mission of Jesus Christ. Answering the question, "What did Jesus come to do?" provides ample direction for what the Church should continue to do. The response clearly defines the mission of the Church. Agenda determines actions. Actions expose passion. We are the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:12) and continue His post-resurrection ministry. Jesus came to "seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10); "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10); and to build His church (Matthew 16:18). The "lost" includes everyone; regardless of race, sex, wealth, education, or social status (Galatians 3:28). We are to be witnesses "to all men" (Acts 22:15). Why? All are sinners (Romans 3:23); (b) all are unrighteous (Romans 3:10); (c) all are condemned (Romans 5:16-18); and (d) all deserve death (Romans 6:23); and all are in need of a Savior.

The Gospel is for everyone and anyone that believes (Romans 10:11); and calls on the Lord (Romans 10:13). The Lord is "not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9, *KJV*). The Wheaton Declaration on the Nature and Mission of the Church states: "The mission of the church is inseparable from that of Christ who bought the church with his own blood." (Sumithra 2002 Revised, 52) John the Revelator wrote, "With your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9) It is His desire that "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:6, *KJV*). That was, is, and shall be the vision of the church that is in touch with God.

The apostles and early Christians actively pursued the spread of the Gospel. Sometimes their progress was slow, and their vision blurred. Sometimes they sat on the truth, but were kicked into action through persecution. Unfortunately, racial and religious prejudice caused some to endeavor to be exclusive with who could be a part of the church.

The Epistle to the Galatians was written to those that experienced freedom in Christ but were being pressured and persuaded to return to the slavery of religious rules, regulations, and legalism. (Barton 2001, 755) Some were trying to sway the new babes in Christ toward circumcision and food laws. They were easy prey for false teachers. Paul, their founder and leader was trying to rescue them from these traps.

Today, it is a no-brainer to assume that Gentiles can be part of the Church. However, the ugly head of religious and racial prejudice still surfaces. We can be thankful for the heritage that men like Paul and Barnabas battled for many years ago. The Jews of their day viewed Gentiles as heathen, impure, and any contact with them left one spiritually corrupt. Even when a Gentile agreed to the antique rite or covenant of circumcision he was never fully accepted. Once an outsider; always an outsider.

Some Jews, taking pride in being God's chosen people, and the apple of His eye, felt they had exclusive rights to Christianity. They went so far as to demand that Gentiles, turning to Christ, must be circumcised to be truly saved. They did not understand (or maybe didn't even care) that it had always been in God's plan to save both Jew and Gentile (Genesis 12:3; Isaiah 42:6; 66:19). Circumcision dated back to Abraham. Interestingly, Abraham received his promise (Genesis 12:2-3) before the covenant of circumcision was instituted. He was to become the "father of many nations" (Genesis 17:2-4) and the entire world would be blessed through him (Genesis 12:3; Romans 4:17-18).

All men are created equal. This was affirmed in the 1776 American Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights…" Abraham Lincoln in the Gettysburg Address added, "Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." Martin Luther King, Jr. said in his famous speech, "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal." (*Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia*) Americans fought so that slavery and its barriers could be abolished.

Graffiti on the Berlin Wall once read, "Eventually every wall falls." For twenty-eight years the wall served as "a long separation barrier" between West Berlin and East Germany. The Berlin Wall started to crumble as borders were opened on November 9, 1989 and East and West Germans were permitted to reunite. People called "wall woodpeckers" used sledgehammers in order to chip off souvenirs from the wall. I like that: "Eventually every wall falls." (Wekipedia, 2006). Every partition that hinders the spread of the gospel will also fall. The United Pentecostal Church International designates one Sunday each year as "All Nations Sunday." The goal is for each church to evangelize and to recognize every culture or language group in North America and invite them to church. They suggest possible themes as: (a) Building Bridges; (b) Crossing Borders; (c) Tearing down Walls; (d) Dissolving Differences; and (e) Unity in

Diversity. (Home Missions Division, UPCI) These themes drive home my point that walls do exist and barriers must be pulled down for the Gospel to go to all people.

For centuries a barricade of antagonism existed between the Jews and Gentiles. Jesus "destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations" (Ephesians 2:14). He reconciled "both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility" (Ephesians 2:25). The cross built a bridge for both Jews and Gentiles to pass from sin to salvation. The wall of hostility was broken down. Before that Gentiles were confined to the Court of the Gentiles and could not enter into the Temple proper. The New Testament world was clearly divided between "us" and "them." A new dividing line was established; those that are "in Christ" and those that are "not in Christ." Now a Jew that believes in Christ is no different than a Gentile that does. Both are equal.

TABLE 1

EQUAL position before God as sinners.	Romans 1:18 – 3:20; Ephesians 2:1-3
EQUAL condemnation.	Romans 8:3
EQUAL in their guilt in God's sight.	Romans 3:9; 3:23; 6:23
EQUAL standing in Christ.	
EQUAL access to salvation.	Romans 10:11-12; Ephesians 2:8-9
EQUAL value to God.	
EQUAL members of the body of Christ.	Galatians 3:28
EQUAL status in the church.	1 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 3:26-29
EQUAL relationship with God.	Ephesians 2:19; Romans 8:15
EQUAL sharing of privileges.	Ephesians 3:6; Romans 8:17

Each epistle reiterates that God wants "all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). "And as the waters fill the sea, so the earth will be filled with people who know the LORD" (Isaiah 11:9, *NLT*). World Missions is the theme that runs from cover to cover; from Genesis to Revelation. (Blue 2001, 99). "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). Global evangelism still should be the highest priority of the church. Look at our final destination and take another peep at the universal goal of the Lord of the Harvest: "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9). God retains a universal reach right to the end of human history.

TABLE 2

Scope of God's mission and purpose is universal.	Revelation 7:9
God's wrath is universal (on those that disobey the truth).	Romans 1:18; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9
Gospel of Christ is universal.	Romans 1:16-18
God's desire to save mankind is universal.	2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4
Christ's atoning power is universal.	1 John 2:2; Colossians 1:20
God's love is universal.	John 3:16

A brief cross-section of Scriptures adequately defends the place of the Gentiles in the Church, and their role in a biblical theology of missions.

TABLE 3

Romans 1:16	"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."
Romans 2:8-11	"There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism."
Romans 3:29-31	"Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith."
Romans 5:8	"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
Romans 10:11-15	"As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile-the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"
Romans 10:19-20	"But did the people of Israel really understand? Yes, they did,

	for even in the time of Moses, God had said, "I will rouse your jealousy by blessing other nations. I will make you angry by blessing the foolish Gentiles." And later Isaiah spoke boldly for God: "I was found by people who were not looking for me. I showed myself to those who were not asking for me" (*NLT*).
Romans 11:13-15	"I am saying all of this especially for you Gentiles. God has appointed me as the apostle to the Gentiles. I lay great stress on this, for I want to find a way to make the Jews want what you Gentiles have, and in that way I might save some of them" (*NLT*).
Romans 16:25-27	"Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him- to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen."
1 Corinthians 1:2	"We are writing to the church of God in Corinth, you who have been called by God to be his own holy people. He made you holy by means of Christ Jesus, just as he did all Christians everywhere — whoever calls upon the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and theirs" (*NLT*).
1 Corinthians 1:21-25	"For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."
2 Corinthians 5:19	"That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation."
Galatians 1:16	"Then he revealed his Son to me so that I could proclaim the Good News about Jesus to the Gentiles" (*NLT*).
Galatians 2:2-3	"While I was there I talked privately with the leaders of the church. I wanted them to understand what I had been preaching to the Gentiles. I wanted to make sure they did not disagree, or my ministry would have been useless. And they did agree. They did not even demand that my companion Titus be circumcised,

	though he was a Gentile." (*NLT*).
Galatians 2:8	"For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles."
Galatians 3:26-29	"And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have been made like him. There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. For you are all Christians — you are one in Christ Jesus. And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham" (*NLT*).
Ephesians 2:11-13	"Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men) - remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. *But now* in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ."
Ephesians 2:14-15	"For Christ himself has made peace between us Jews and you Gentiles by making us all one people. He has broken down the wall of hostility that used to separate us. By his death he ended the whole system of Jewish law that excluded the Gentiles" (*NLT*).
Ephesians 2:17-19	"He has brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and to us Jews who were near. Now all of us, both Jews and Gentiles, may come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us. So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners" (*NLT*).
Colossians 1:6	"All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth."
Colossians 1:23	"If you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant."
Colossians 3:11	"In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us" (*NLT*).
1 Timothy 2:3-7	"This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to

	be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 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. And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle-I am telling the truth, I am not lying-and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles."

Paul fulfilled his destiny as the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13; Galatians 2:8). "For this is what the Lord has commanded us: 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13: 47). He gave his blood, sweat, tears, and prayers that they might be saved. In fact, he didn't stop with the Gentiles, but "became all things to all men so that by all possible means" he would be able to save some (1 Corinthians 9:22). At the end of twenty-five years of ministry he was able to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

The Great Commission is a great promise. It will come to pass (Revelation 5:9-10; 7:9). It provides the heavenly vision and mandate: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47, *KJV*). "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). So, let us tear down the walls and take the Gospel to every people group, language, and nation until Jesus comes!

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DISCOVERING OUR ROLE IN KEEPING WITH GOD'S HEARTBEAT

"What is the central theme of the Bible?" is the questioned I posed my trusty helper: http://www.google.com. To my surprise, I received the opportunity to search 6,600,000 sites for the details. I did venture through eighty of them and opted to stop there.

I wasn't the only one looking for the answer. On one site, someone (identified as "happy person") asked, "I have a question for all you Bible scholars. What is the theme of the Bible…?" One responder commented, "Seeking to know the theme of the Bible is rather like asking a librarian what the theme of his library is." That post sparked Fred's curiosity. He called the local library, read the person's post, and asked, "What is the theme of your library?" The librarian answered, "It's obvious. The theme is collecting published knowledge, the bigger the library the more successful collecting." Fred elaborated, "So it dawned on me. The Bible's theme is knowledge of and about God." (Arcura 2003) Jesus probably would have said, Fred, "You are not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12:34).

Many believe that the Bible does provide a central theme, or several unifying themes, but there is a diversity of opinion on what that theme actually is. According to my research, the top ten (not in any order) include: (a) redemption (buying man back); (b) covenants; (c) kingdom of God; (d) spiritual unfaithfulness (sin); (e) plan of salvation; (f) God's healing love; (g) God's love; (h) God's gift in Jesus Christ; (i) God's master plan; and (j) God always maintains His side of the relationship. Which is correct? Are any correct? Are all correct? Are these partly correct and partly incorrect? Perhaps, they *are* partly correct. The major theme of the Bible includes most, if not all these and may even encompass more.

It reminds me of the old story of the six blind men and the elephant. Once upon a time there lived six blind men in a village. One day they were told, "An elephant is in the village today!"

They had no idea what an elephant was. Even though they could not see it, they decided to feel it. Each blind man touched a different part.

"An elephant is like a wall," said the first man that touched the elephant's side.

"On no, the elephant is like a rope," said the second man that touched the tail.

"No, the elephant is like a snake," said the third man that touched the long, wiggly trunk.

"Excuse me. But, the elephant is like a big fan," said the fourth man that touched the elephant's ears.

"It is like a tree," said the fifth man that touched the elephant's rough, hard legs.

"Oh, you are all wrong. The elephant is like a spear," said the sixth man who touched the smooth, sharp tusks.

The six blind men started to argue. It's like a wall. It's like a spear. It's like a rope. They did not agree. The king had been watching and listening. He said, "You only touched part of the elephant. You did not feel the whole animal."

The men continued. A little girl heard them and said, "Each of you is right, but all of you are wrong." (Adapted from "The Blind Men and the Elephant" by John Godfrey Saxe.)

There are various versions of this story. However, the point remains the same. Each one touched a different part; but only one part. The elephant did have all of the features that each of the blind men said. Each of the themes mentioned above are a part, but only a part of the larger picture, the superseding, central theme in God's Word. Each is right, but all are wrong!

The Bible maintains internal harmony around a central theme. It comprises sixty-six books, with over forty writers, and took sixteen centuries to complete; yet every part follows the same theme. The Bible is not disjointed. It fits together as one entire story. One book starts where the previous one stops. It is a complete revelation of God. As with biblical theology all parts of the Bible are relevant to each other, and look at how God reveals Himself and His purpose.

So, what is the central theme of the Bible? It's not a secret. God's Word wastes no time in exposing it. Go back to the book of beginnings: Genesis. "In the beginning God…" (Genesis 1:1). The Bible is all about God: His creation; His desire to fellowship with mankind; His distaste for sin; His master plan of redemption; His activities on the earth; His revealing or unfolding of Himself throughout history; His kingdom; His love; His personality or attributes; and His relationship with man. Apart from the Bible it is difficult to know God. Apart from God it is difficult to know the Bible. The two are undividable.

Professor Charles van Engen of Fuller explains the central theme of the Bible using a simple illustration. He compares it to a rug with the threads going from one side to the other, and from one end to the other. The different threads express the aspects of God's mission. They go throughout the Word of God. The entire rug is God's mission. (Teague, 2006, 6)

Since July 1952 *Missio Dei* has become the most wisely used metaphor reflecting God's nature. This term is always mentioned in reference to the Willigen Conference of the International Missionary Council. However, the expression was never mentioned during the conference. It was later used to summarize the main findings in the closing remarks of the conference. *Missio Dei* is Latin for "God's Mission" or "the mission of God." As used in other languages, like Dutch, it is translated, "the missionary activity of God." The mission is the primary work of God and we are able to participate in what He is doing. It is ongoing. God created the world. He robed Himself in flesh to save us from our sins, providing us redemption through His death, burial, and resurrection. God *established* the mission. In Jesus, He *embodied* the mission. Through the Holy Spirit, He provides the power for us to evangelize the world (Acts 1:8) and therefore, *empowered* the mission. As the church we are the "called out ones" and are sent into the world to fulfill the Great Commission. *Missio Dei* identifies God's purpose and plan to rescue, redeem, and restore mankind. "We do not define God's mission. It defines us. It tells us who we are, what our mission is, how we are to do…evangelism." (Webber 2006)

Like any other book, the Bible has a main character—God. He is the focal point. In fact, before the end of Genesis 3 we are introduced to all the major characters in the Bible: God, mankind, the enemy, and the Savior.

Remember, John Stott said, "our mandate for world evangelization, therefore, is the whole Bible." Arthur F. Glasser added that each and every section of the Bible, if permitted to speak for itself, will expose lines of truth. George Vicedom confirmed, "The Bible in its entirety ascribes only one intention to God—to save mankind." Ralph Winter said, "The Bible actually begins with missions, maintains missions as its central theme throughout, and then climaxes…with spontaneous outbursts of joy because the missionary mandate has been fulfilled!" (Poitras 2006, 3-4) Ron Blue claimed that world missions is found in the Bible from cover to cover; from Genesis to Revelation. God is a missionary God. We should be a missions-minded church. Please see "Appendix A" for a comprehensive list of Scriptures that are considered to be missionary texts in the Bible.

God has a master plan. The Bible is His revealed blueprint, or as Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. said, "the successive folds of a road map." (Kaiser 1978, Paperback Edition 1991, 22) God does things decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40). W. Graham Scroggie in his book *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption* takes readers on a journey through over four hundred pages studying God's plan for salvation in the Old and New Testaments. He said, "We should know the Bible as a whole, and should be familiar with the parts that make the whole; for here is Divine progressive revelation." (Scroogie 1994, 17) He also stated, "Through the ages one increasing purpose runs." Running through the entire Bible is the saving purpose—the *Missio Dei*. A brief look at the following Scriptures show that God did—and does—have a plan: "But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD; they do not understand his plan" (Micah 4:12). "But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations" (Psalms 33:11). Consider the words of the evangel prophet of the Old Testament: "I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God. Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come — yes, let him foretell what will come" (Isaiah 44:6-7). The *New Living Translation* puts a portion of it this way: "Have I not proclaimed from ages past what my purposes are for you?" "Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please" (Isaiah 46:9-10).

> "His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure. God's secret plan has now been revealed to us; it is a plan centered on Christ, designed long ago according to his good pleasure. d this is his plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ — everything in heaven and on earth" (Ephesians 1:5,9-11, *NLT*).

Genesis 1:26-28 discloses the cultural mandate for Adam and his descendents. Only Genesis 1-2 and Revelation 21-22 remain unmarked by sin. In Genesis 3 we sadly find the fall of man but there is a glimpse of hope. In Genesis 3:15 God reveals His plan to save mankind from their sin, and the stage is set for the rest of human history. This verse is referred to as *protoevangelium*. In Genesis 12 a covenant is established with Abraham to become the father of many nations. Through his seed all the nations of the world would be blessed. In 2 Samuel 7:12-13, 16 God made another covenant with David and His descendents. An eternal kingdom would be established and a king—one Jesus. Over 300 Old Testament Scriptures declare God's desire to bless the nations. Psalms is considered to be a great missionary book. Literally hundreds of prophecies

scatter the pages of the Old Testament prophets concerning the coming Messiah. The Gospels show how Jesus was a fulfillment of Old Testament promises. The Old Testament points forward to a Savior saying: "He's coming." The New Testament gladly proclaimed about the Savior: "He is here." Acts shows how He continued to work through His Spirit and the early church. Gentiles were added. The remaining books of the Bible shout: "He's coming again. Be ready. Get other's ready!" The last book of the Bible gives reason for all of us to rejoice:

> "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:9-10).

A pivotal point in *Missio Dei* today can be summed up in the words of Jesus, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21).

Completing the Task: Whatcha Gonna Do?

Our growing world includes 6,576,334,215 people with 2,133,806,000 claiming some form of Christianity (1,118,991,000 are Catholic). The Southern Baptists report that there are 3,312,242,850 people in our world that do not have adequate opportunity to hear the Gospel. Let's bring that down to simpler terms: one soul.

A missionary, traveling on deputation in North America, accompanied a pastor and his wife to a local restaurant. Finding a seat they passed a man who called out, "Are you a Christian?" The missionary quickly confirmed he was indeed a believer. The man responded, "I am a sinner. Whatcha gonna do about it?" He went on, "I see you are here with your friends. You probably have come for a good time. Just remember. I am a sinner. I am lost. Whatcha gonna do about it?" The missionary sat down with the man, listening intently to him as he rehearsed his life, and then shared the gospel with him. That grim reality is common throughout the world; across the street or across the seas. The helpless beggar on the streets of Calcutta or the lonely businessman in New York City share the same testimony, "I am lost. I am a sinner. Whatcha gonna do about it?" (Howell 2005) A response is required from the church on every level: (a) globally; (b) regionally; (c) nationally; (d) locally; and (e) individually.

Completing the Task: A Church Response

Our primary task as a church and as Christians on the earth is—and always will be—world evangelism. The *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* reveals that

Christians make up about thirty-three percent of the world's population. There are over 38,000 denominations and 4,410 foreign-mission sending agencies involved in completing the assignment of global evangelism. Working with them is 448,000 missionaries and 5,409,000 Christian workers. Combined they spend 210 billion hours in evangelism per year; attract 2,465,000,000 listeners to their radio programs per month; and distribute 5,957,000 different book titles; and over 45,000 types of Christian periodicals. There are still over 6,000 unreached people groups; 4500 metropolises with populations exceeding 100,000 each; and 450 mega-cities with populations above 1,000,000 each that need to be reached. (Barrett, 1)

Progress is being made. I will spend the majority of time discussing what the UPCI is doing, and should be doing to accomplish the unfinished task.

United Pentecostal Church International

In 1945 two Pentecostal organizations joined to form the United Pentecostal Church International. One of the key objectives in the merger, and in forming the Foreign Missions Division, is to proclaim the whole gospel to the whole world in obedience to the Great Commission. The purpose as stated in the "Forward" of the *United Pentecostal Church Manual* is "to preach the gospel of Christ Jesus; to publish and distribute religious literature; to establish new churches; to send forth missionaries…" It is further the purpose of the UPCI "to seek out and to carry the Gospel to the whole world, and to help establish self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating national churches." (United Pentecostal 2006, 62)

At the time of the merger, UPCI had forty missionaries working in nine countries. Today, the sun never sets on the UPCI with churches in 183 nations, and plans to reach into every nation by 2010. Approximately 652 North American missionaries and nineteen regional missionaries serve 1,599,747 constituents in 20,876 churches. (Foreign Missions Division 2006, 7)We rejoice in growth but recognize this is a mere drop in the bucket based on the overall need.

The Foreign Missions Division of the UPCI operates a training ministry in 106 fulltime Bible colleges with 5409 students enrolled. Another 38,000 receive training through correspondence programs and over 25,000 attend one of 400 seminars offered per year. The literature arm of the ministry produces over 6,500,000 books, tracts, and other pieces of literature each year in over seventy languages. (Howell 2006) Radio ministries and vernacular broadcasts are used throughout the world. Internationally, PenteCom has a vision to broadcast the gospel worldwide by means of radio twenty-four hours a day. (Young 2006, 32) The UPCI also operates a separate department from

their World Evangelism Center designed for Media Missions (http://www.thereishopefortoday.com). Their purpose statement makes their intentions clear:

> "In view of the world's unprecedented population explosion, and with deep conviction that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ must be preached to all people; sensing the urgency of this hour and the opportunity offered by information technology to minister to more people for each dollar invested 'There is Hope for Today' is established to 'reach every nation with Bible salvation…'" (Media Missions Division, 2006)

Increasing the North American based work force. The General Director of Foreign Missions and the Director of Associates in Missions (short-term missionary program) acknowledge 281 short-term missionaries and project recruiting 1,000 workers. Recently the Next Step program has been established. This offers young people opportunity to spend a couple of months overseas (three weeks of intense training; five weeks of hands-on ministry) during the summer with resident missionaries. It is an incremental experience toward a career mission's assignment. (Burk 2005, 36) In 2007 this program will be hosted in Ghana. The Youth Department, and several North American districts, organizes Youth on Mission trips on a yearly basis. The overseas regions organize their own evangelistic and training initiatives involving as many North American pastors, local churches, and teams as possible.

Compassion Services International expresses the love of Christ to a needy world. They are involved in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, providing shelter for the homeless, emergency response due to natural disasters and wars, and medical treatment. An emergency response network has been organized and springs into action when tragedy strikes somewhere in the world. (See http://www.compassionservices.com (Mercy Medical Network (http://mercymedicalnetwork.org) sends out medical teams. MMN came to Ghana in 2006 working in two locations. A total of 1,888 patients were seen in three or four days, with each person being taught a Bible study. Medical professionals are making a difference through an outstretched hand of "love in action" demonstrating God's love and alleviating suffering especially during disaster.

Expanding the Global Work Force. Our North American missionary force cannot and is not meeting the demands of finishing the task. All hands must be on deck for the job to get done. The Great Commission is given to the global church. Missionaries from national churches, on the four corners of the globe, must be mobilized and sent forth. Christians in our national churches need to be encouraged to give and to go. My

brother, Henry, often says that we are to teach them to win them; and then teach them to send them. That translates something like this:

TABLE 1

Reach	Reached for Christ.	Go into the entire world; baptize them.
Root	Rooted in Christ.	Disciple them.
Ready	Readied for further outreach.	Teach them to obey all things Christ commanded. (Matthew 28:19-20)

Long-time UPCI General Superintendent, Rev. Nathaniel A. Urshan used to say, "The whole Gospel to the whole world, by the whole church." The global church must be involved! This is one of the reasons for the Global Council of the UPCI. It meets every five years and recently brought together leaders from 110 nations representing 171 languages. The goals of the Global Council are to maintain doctrinal purity, and to seek ways and strategies for collaborating to reach the world. Former General Director of Foreign Missions, Rev. H. E. Scism explained that the heart of the Global Council is a manmade structure designed to serve as an avenue to communicate the gospel. He asked, "Why do we need the Global Council?" The only answer is "souls." United effort is needed to rescue the perishing. A natural offshoot has been the Regional Missionary Program and the Global and Regional Commissions for Missions. Each nation can be involved in sending and supporting missionaries. Admittedly, this program is off to a slow start but it is a step in the right direction. As indicated in the following table/chart the per-constituent giving is merely a few pennies; and the number of missionaries sent out compared to the number of ministers available in the region is embarrassing. We have a long way to go but we are moving; even if it is at a snail's pace.

TABLE 2

Region	Constituents	Number of Churches; Preaching Points	Number of Ministers	Number of Regional Missionaries	Money Given to Missions in Fiscal Year
Africa	283,305	3,463	3,140	2	$16,382.17
Asia	244,518	3,626	2,114	0	$3000.00
Central	379,874	3,124	2,498	6	$7414.52

America/Caribbean					
Europe/Middle East	24,266	511	458	2	$3.250.00
Pacific	361,595	5,694	3,255	2	$3,000.00
South American	306,189	4,458	3,300	5	$21,996.29

Regional or national missionaries are not a new phenomenon in our world. It is an increasing trend. I chuckle at what Sunday Aigbe said about avoiding trends: "It is like suggesting that we wait for a heart attack to strike before we visit a doctor or cut down on our cholesterol." (Aigbe 1991, 178) An emerging missionary movement from the majority world "is about to eclipse centuries of Western-dominated Protestant missions." (Moll 2006, 1) That day has quickly arrived. It is here to stay. It is picking up speed. It cannot be ignored. Robert Moll, in his article "Missions Incredible" looks specifically at the growing missionary movement in South Korea. They send one missionary per 4.2 congregations. They rank number eleven in the world. Surprisingly, the United States does not even rank in the top ten mission's sending nations. Now, there are more than 103,000 non-Western missionaries. The Nigeria Evangelical Mission Association formed by ninety missionary agencies and denominations has 3800 missionaries in 38 countries. Other regions have such organizations. Mott quotes Scott Moreau, "The days of Western missionary dominance is over…because the rest of the world has caught the vision and is engaged and energized…Missions is a two-way street on every continent." As a missionary to Africa it is encouraging to know that there are over 25,000 missionaries from Africa (discouraging to notice that only a few come from within the UPCI). Vision: engaged and energized. I like that. Welcome to the family!

William Taylor expresses my dream for involvement in national and regional missions. He tells of Michael Maileau, a spiritual leader from the Solomon Islands. At a South Pacific Prayer Assembly Michael called his brothers and sisters from Papua New Guinea to the front. They faced the audience. He then called people from Australia and New Zealand forward. Everyone knelt and Michael started praying,

> "We thank God that He used the white people to bring us the gospel, for through them we came to a knowledge of the true and living God…We are responsible for the advance of the gospel. So now, we from PNG and the Solomons, want to share the torch of the missionary gospel with you. Take the baton with us, may we partner, let us run together, we need each other." (Taylor 1995, 1)

In order for this dream to come to fruition, and to effectively facilitate a paradigm shift from missionary fields to missionary forces several things are needed: missions (a) awareness; (b) mobilization; (c) proper ecclesiology; (d) prioritization; (e) partnerships; and (f) education.

Missions Awareness. With this expanding work force, missionaries and agencies from North America will, by necessity, need to refigure ways of "talking about the global scene" and their role in participating in it. Bethany International has projected that in the next few years the number of non-Western missionaries could exceed 400,000. They have identified a need for solid training for these new workers. Presently, training in cross-cultural ministry is lacking in many countries. They envision developing national missionary training schools and sending agencies so that national workers can be multiplied and mobilized to evangelize.

Jeff Korum, a missionary with Bethany, but also working under the umbrella of GlobeServe Ministries International, has noted that the task is not always easy. The mission's infrastructure in Ghana is too weak to sustain more than a handful of long-term cross-cultural workers. I suspect this is also the case elsewhere. What can be done? Jeff Korum, and his partners, organizes eight-week lecture series called "Awaken to the World." Two levels have already been conducted, with a third starting in October 2006. Top denominational and ministry leaders are used in teaching and the focus is on mission's awareness and mobilization. Before the first program they were cautioned not to expect a large attendance since missions is not a huge "draw." Over 300 have attended the first two programs and a local accredited university has agreed to give credit for those attending the course.

Missions Mobilization. W. E. McCumber said, "Sometimes people are doing nothing because no one has asked them to do something."

"He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' 'Because no one has hired us,' they answered. He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard'" (Matthew 20:6-7).

We reap what we sow. We get what we ask for. A missionary vision must be sown. As missionaries and leaders we need to teach that each individual is responsible to participate in missions. We need to become "active cheerleaders towards the development of national missions." (Walz 1994, 5)

Why are national churches in developing nations not eagerly involved in missions? In the past missions, has been perceived as "straight line" with Westerners

being sent to the mission field. This approach has yielded a small harvest when compared to the overall potential. Christian population and converts have shifted to the majority world. It is logical that the work force can also be expected to come from there. Seventy per cent of all believers live in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This is amazing since one hundred years ago ninety-five percent of Christians lived in the West. Twenty-five percent of Africa was Christian in 1950. In 2001, forty-eight percent were Christian, and this increases to sixty percent if you are looking at sub-Sahara Africa only.

Missions Ecclesiology. C. Peter Wagner in *On the Crest of the Wave* reveals the full circle model of developing world missions. He does not see mission as a "straight line" having a starting and an end; but a circle. In fact, Wagner argues that the indigenous church principles advocated by many (including the UPCI) are incomplete. Such principles, as outlined by Melvin Hodges, call for the national church to be self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. These three important steps bring the church to maturity as an indigenous church but do not make it an indigenous mission. The national church is capable of keeping itself alive, but also needs to be sending out missionaries to other nations.

TABLE 3

90-degree	Missionary sent out; church is planted.
180-degree	Church grows; missionary still under control.
270-degree	Church is autonomous; missionary leaves or stays and becomes a partner.
360-degree	Church becomes missions-minded generating churches in other cultures. The church is either sending or supporting missionaries in other nations.

I remain a strong proponent of indigenous church concepts. Indigenous refers to "born from within, local innate, or native to culture." Perhaps, a better phrase would be "building responsible churches." These refer to churches that have grown in maturity in Christ. "The baby has now become a vigorous, maturing and responsible adult." (Engel 2000, 20) Some national churches want the privilege of doing things on their own but not the responsibilities that come with it.

When churches are started there is a high level of *dependence* on outside support and supervision. Eventually, the church moves toward *independence*; having the ability to stand on its own. Our ultimate goal "is not an independent church, but a church able

to become a full participant in propagating the Gospel to the nations." (Brant, 2004) At this point, the missionary is no longer needed. Right? Wrong. The missionary now becomes a partner in global evangelism. A sense of *inter-dependence* is created. Some missionaries may need to become back seat participants, learning to trust someone else driving the vehicle, and selecting the road to take. Perhaps, what is needed from such missionaries is to enable, empower, encourage, and educate the next generation of ministers and missionaries. Skills and giftings need to be offered that cannot or are not readily available among our nationals. The role of western missionaries, or any missionary for that matter, is constantly being redefined and changing. We should perform functions and roles that require our unique services. We should avoid taking on responsibilities that can be more adequately done by others.

Missions Prioritization. The Right Reverend Yaw Frimpong-Manso, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, in his lecture "Developing a Missions Strategy" suggests that missions is holistic and should provide for the total well being of man. He contends that missions is the total activity of the church: spiritual, social, political, economical, and emotional. He feels that missionary enterprise should address the total life of people: anything involved in enhancing the life of an individual should be part of the preaching of the Gospel. (Frimpong 2006) Such thinking sounds foreign, or at best, off-balance in light of the Great Commission. Let's take a closer look!

Missions has been reevaluated and redefined for years. Liberals tend to speak of "*shalom*" and advocate "*social harmony*." John R. W. Stott claimed evangelism and social action were two sides of the same coin or two wings of a bird—they must work together. He became a key player in the change of direction abandoning his former and more traditional view that gave preeminence to the Great Commission. He concluded that social action and evangelism were equal partners in the Christian mission. (Hesselgrave 1999, 1) Stott argued for a new definition "Mission describes…everything the church is sent into the world to do." "Mission" becomes "holistic mission." The Great Commission establishes the priority for missions. However, "holistic mission" comes into the picture in obeying the Great Commandment. It is an important part of the Christian life and duty (1 John 3:17; Matthew 25:35-40; James 1:27). There is a seamless integration of loving God and loving neighbor throughout God's Word.

Basically, the views concerning socio-humanitarian needs and fulfilling the global evangelism mandate are outlined as follows:

TABLE 4

Radical	Liberation Theology	Mission to promote justice and encourage Shalom in society.
Revisionist	Holism Theology	Minister to society and individuals to both the physical and spiritual; body and soul/spirit.
Restrained	Holism Theology	Mission to minister to society and individuals socially and spiritually; giving priority to evangelism.
Traditional	Prioritism Theology	Mission to make disciples everywhere. Other Christian ministries are good but secondary and supportive. (Hesselgrave 2005, 122)

I find my own view aligned with the prioritism theology. Christopher Little in scrutinizing "holism" believes that there are priorities in missions and that priority is reconciling lost humanity with their Creator. The Lausanne Covenant states "in the church's mission of sacrificial service, evangelism is primary." This is still being debated. (Little 2006, 1) Paul stood firmly that his mission was to turn people from darkness to light (Acts 26:18). Advocates of "holism" often refer to Luke 4:18-19 for their "mission statement" for what defined Jesus' agenda and what should also define ours. This is a great Scripture. From a Pentecostal perspective, it shows the balance between the truth encounter and power encounter; a clear declaration of the Gospel coupled with a demonstration of God's power in deliverance, healing, etc. "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:32-33). "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). The need for Christians to reach out to those in need is well grounded in Scripture—no debate about that—but this should be secondary to proclaiming the Gospel. Paul spoke of two social action programs in his writings: tending to widows and taking an offering for relief of the poor in Jerusalem. This specifies or alludes to our Christian obligation. It also indicates a love for mankind (and specifically for those in the household of faith). Bill Gates, Oprah, the United Nations, USAID all provides humanitarian assistance to Africa. I'm not sure any of them do it under the umbrella of Christian missions. "The Church is called upon to do what the world cannot and will not do—evangelize the lost!"

Some view that the main and only task of the Church is to rescue lost souls from a perishing world. That is our priority, our beginning, but not our end. Compassion ministries and social action programs minister to felt and real needs but should not be confused with our primary mandate. There are three perspectives with how social transformation can be integrated with evangelism: (a) *consequence* of evangelism; (b) *bridge* to evangelism; and (c) *full partner* with evangelism. (Engel and Dyrness 2000, 93) To me, compassion is a characteristic of the Christian life, represents our Christian duty, and could be a bridge to evangelism. It is not a full partner with global evangelism or the Great Commission. Samuel Moffett in "Evangelism: the Leading Partner" advised that we should not confuse evangelism with Christian service. What makes the Christian mission different from other attempts to improve man's condition? Our *vertical relationship* with God comes first and is priority. Our *horizontal* relationship with others is very important. Nevertheless, it still comes second. Love God. Love your neighbor (Matthew 22:36-38). Moffett concluded, "The supreme task of the Church, then, now and for the future, is evangelism. It was the supreme task for the Church of the New Testament. It is also the supreme challenge facing the Church today." (Moffett 1999, 576) To that, I say, "Amen!"

Missions Partnerships. We must engage missions as equals. Two problems surface. We work with those that "have" and those that "have not." We also struggle with "us" and "them" thinking. Admittedly, I'm not sure if my reference to "western" or "non-western" missionaries reinforces this thinking (but these are the terms that have often surfaced in research). Howard Brant asks, "What keeps us from letting 'them' into 'our' club?" He goes on to say,

> "We sometimes act as if we can do missions without God or the Holy Spirit. After all, we have plans and plenty of money. They bring an empty hand—but a huge dependence upon a mighty God. In fact, they do missions the way it has been from the beginning— the way our forefathers did it." (Brant 2004)

We need to accept non-western missionaries as co-workers on international teams. Building trust is important. Daniel Rickett of Partners International outlines seven mistakes partnerships should avoid: (1) assuming you think alike; (2) promising more than you deliver; (3) starting the trip without a map; (4) underestimating cultural differences; (5) taking shortcuts; (6) forgetting to develop self-reliance; and (7) running the race with no end. (Rickett 2001, 308-317)

Care needs to be taken not to foster dependency when partnering with non-western missionaries or agencies.

"The African Church will not grow into maturity if it continues to be funded by Western partners. It will remain an infant who has not learned to walk on his or her own feet." (Bishop Zablon Nthamburi, Methodist Church of Kenya, 1999) Traditionally, the western missionary movement in Africa has tended toward being paternalistic. Perhaps, it is this way in other areas of the world. Care must be exercised to secure that we are not maintaining parental directives and influence instead of partnership. Someone has said, "How who pays the piper calls for the tune!" This should never be said of our missions partnerships. "If money becomes the driving force, the golden rule takes hold—the one with the gold rules." "Money is one form of power, and in international relationships, it has proven to be most problematic. When one ministry relies solely on another for financial support, the balance of power leans heavily toward the funding source." (Rickett 2000, 1-6)

Some fear that partnership with non-western missionaries will take away from support for western missionaries and eventually do away with the later. A wise Indian leader commented:

> "If Americans want to send funds to non-western missionaries, that may be fine in some cases. But do not rob us of the joy and responsibility to support our own people. And I fear that if Americans send now only their dollars and not their sons and daughters, the next step will be to send neither their dollars nor their sons and daughters. There is a non-biblical extreme to be wary of. Biblical partnership means sending and supporting your own flesh and blood." (Taylor 1995, 2)

Wade Coggins said, "If our churches give only their money, and not their sons and daughters, our missionary vision will be dead in a generation. We can't substitute money for flesh and blood." (Coggins 1993)

Solomon Aryeetey in his article "The Road to Self-sufficiency in Africa's Missionary Development" outlines several roles for western missionaries. These include: (a) partnering with us to train missionaries, not simply pastors; (b) preaching missionary sermons on the field, not just on furlough; (c) discerning what God is about to do in Africa; (d) not merely giving us fish but teaching us how to fish. (Arteeyey 1997) It is easy to rationalize that the West has the money and the Rest has the manpower. "We" can supply the money and "they" can supply the men.

> "Some have chosen to find a solution to this dilemma (of sustaining long term missions programs) by way of a simple equation: Western missionary dollars + African availability and zeal = missionary enterprise…This model

> is simplistic. It attempts to address the problem, but in the process it has the potential of killing the very same African initiative that it purports to bring about. For us, it is of the utmost importance that this enterprise be truly indigenous…The African church must be prepared to shoulder the bulk of the resource needs if indeed this African initiative is to be truly indigenous. If we have come of age as we say we have, then we must own every aspect of the vision." (Aryeetey 1997)

Balance is needed. There is healthy and unhealthy dependency. We are all part of the body of Christ and are interdependent. In healthy relationships all partners recognize their responsibilities. In areas of giving, needs must be defined and boundaries set. There is the need for shared ownership, responsibility, accountability, and vision. This can be done through: (a) matching funds; (b) one-time support; (c) initial support with time limits; (d) partial support; (e) support capital investments (property, buildings, equipment) without providing personal support to missionaries.

Missions education. Larry Pate in his chapter entitled "Pentecostal Missions from the Two-thirds World" does an excellent job of showing the slow start by western missionaries in engaging their national counterparts in world evangelism. Western missionaries, he contends, rarely challenged churches to carry the gospel into cultures that were not their own. He feels they sent an unspoken message, "You evangelize your people. We will be the missionaries." Dominant in the mindset of many developing world Christians is in the image that the missionary comes from "abroad" and that the missionary task is for the church from "abroad." Of course, this erroneous thinking also translates to the tools and resources for carrying out the Great Commission also comes from "abroad." (Ezemadu 2006, 1) How did this happen? Curricula in overseas Bible schools were patterned after that of the West. Strangely enough, the multiple missions courses being taught in the West were not reproduced in the non-western environment. What resulted was minor missionary activity on the part of western-related churches working in the majority world. It is not too late to make changes. Courses in cross-cultural strategies, communications, missions, and biblical theology of missions need to be incorporated into our Bible schools. We need to teach on these subjects at pastors' conferences, and include lesson material on missions in our Sunday school curriculum. It is common knowledge that missionaries come from missions-minded churches with missions-minded pastors. Both need to be developed.

I like this testimony, "Some of the Asian students had almost no ideas about mission when they first came to APTS. But in the course of their study they developed a strong mission's commitment and eventually became career missionaries." (Ma 2005, 27)

Larry Pate identifies that there is a dearth of training for non-western missionaries. "Sending a missionary without training is like commissioning a carpenter without tools." He feels there is a direct relationship between the quality and amount of training a missionary receives and his long-term effectiveness. When we involve ourselves in mission's education we are preparing for the future of world missions. (Pate 1991, 242-258).

Conclusion

I will not leave my world without a witness; without making an impact. "None of us has a long time here on planet earth. It's our split second in eternity when we have an opportunity to invest our lives to help fulfill what our Lord came into this world to do." (Bill Bright) I plan to use "my split second in eternity" doing my part in finishing the task of preparing men and women for eternity. Erma Bombeck once said, "When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left, and could say, 'I used everything you gave me.'" What about you?

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APPENDIX 1

MISSIONARY TEXTS IN THE BIBLE

The following is examples of missionary texts founds throughout the Bible. This is not meant to be an all-encompassing list; merely a sampling.

- Genesis 12:1-3 (repeated in Gen. 18:18, 22:17-18, 26:24 and 28:12-14)
- Exodus 9:14-16 -- purpose of the plagues
- Exodus 19:6 -- Israel was to be a "kingdom of priests"
- Numbers 14:21 -- glory of Lord fills the whole earth
- Deuteronomy 4:6-8 -- show your understanding to the nations
- Deuteronomy 10:19 -- "You are to love those who are aliens"
- Deuteronomy 28:10 -- "all the peoples on the earth will see that you are called by the name of the Lord"
- Deuteronomy 32:1 - "Hear, O earth, the words of my mouth."
- Joshua 4:24 -- "so that all the peoples of the earth might know"
- 1 Samuel 2:10 -- "The LORD will judge the ends of the earth."
- 1 Samuel 17:46 -- "the whole world will know there is a God in Israel"
- 1 Kings 8:41-43, 59-60 (also in 2 Chronicles 6:32-33) -- "so that all peoples of the earth may know your name" (Solomon's prayer at dedication of Temple)
- 2 Kings 19:15 -- "Hezekiah prayed . . . : O LORD, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth.'"
- 1 Chronicles 16:31 "Let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, The Lord reigns!'"
- 1 Chronicles 16:24 -- "Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples"
- 2 Chronicles 6:33 -- "so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you"
- Psalm 2:7-10 -- "You are my Son . . . I will make the nations your inheritance"
- Psalm 7:7-8 -- "Let the Lord judge the peoples"
- Psalm 8:9 -- "How majestic is your name in all the earth!"
- Psalm 18:49 -- "I will praise you among the nations"
- Psalm 22:26-28 -- "all the families of the nations will bow down"
- Psalm 19:1-4 -- "their words to the ends of the world"
- Psalm 22:27 -- "All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord"
- Psalm 24 -- "The earth is the Lord's"
- Psalm 33 -- "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord"
- Psalm 45:17 -- "The nations will praise you for ever and ever"
- Psalm 46:10 -- "I will be exalted among the nations"

- Psalm 47 -- "God reigns over the nations"
- Psalm 48:10 -- "Like your name, O God, your praise reaches to the ends of the earth"
- Psalm 49:1 -- "Hear this, all you peoples; listen, all who live in this world"
- Psalm 50 -- "From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets"
- Psalm 57 -- "I will sing of you among the peoples"
- Psalm 59:13 -- "It will be known to the ends of the earth that God rules over Jacob."
- Psalm 65:5-8 -- "the hope of all the ends of the earth . . . where morning dawns and evening fades you call forth songs of joy"
- Psalm 66 -- "All the earth bows down to you . . . Praise our God, O peoples"
- Psalm 67 -- "your salvation among all peoples"
- Psalm 68:32 -- "Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth"
- Psalm 72 -- "all nations will serve him"
- Psalm 72:9 -- "the desert tribes will bow before him"
- Psalm 72:17, 19 -- "All nations will be blessed through him . . . May the whole earth be filled with his glory"
- Psalm 77:14 -- "you display your power among the peoples"
- Psalm 82 -- "all the nations are your inheritance"
- Psalm 83:18 -- "You alone are the Most High over all the earth."
- Psalm 86:8-13 -- all nations will come and worship
- Psalm 87 -- the register of the peoples
- Psalm 96 -- "sing to the Lord, all the earth . . . Declare his glory among the nations"
- Psalm 97 -- "The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice"
- Psalm 98:3 -- "All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God."
- Psalm 98:9 -- "He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity."
- Psalm 99:1-3 -- "He is exalted over all the nations. Let them praise your great and awesome name"
- Psalm 102:15 -- "The nations will fear the name of the LORD, all the kings of the earth will revere your glory."
- Psalm 102:22 -- "when the peoples and the kingdoms assemble to worship the Lord"
- Psalm 105:1 -- "make known among the nations what He has done"
- Psalm 106:8 -- reason for dividing the Red Sea
- Psalm 108:3 -- "I will sing of you among the peoples"
- Psalm 108:5 -- "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let your glory be over all the earth."
- Psalm 110:6 -- "He will judge the nations,"

- Psalm 113:3 -- "From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised"
- Psalm 117 -- "Praise the Lord, all you nations"
- Psalm 126 -- "it was said among the nations"
- Psalm 135 -- "our Lord is greater than all gods"
- Psalm 138:4 -- "may all the kings of the earth praise you, O Lord"
- Isaiah 2:3 -- "Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob.
- Isaiah 6:3 -- "They were calling to one another: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.'"
- Isaiah 11:9 -- "fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord"
- Isaiah 11:10 -- "in that day a Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples, the nations . . ."
- Isaiah 12:4 -- "Make known among the nations what He has done"
- Isaiah 24:16 -- "From the ends of the earth we hear singing: Glory to the Righteous One.'"
- Isaiah 25:6 -- "the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples"
- Isaiah 42:4 -- "in His law the islands will put their hope"
- Isaiah 42:6 -- "I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles."
- Isaiah 34:1 -- "Come near, you nations, and listen; pay attention, you peoples!"
- Isaiah 37:16 -- "O Lord Almighty . . . , you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth."
- Isaiah 42:4 -- "He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope."
- Isaiah 43:6 -- "I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.'"
- Isaiah 45:6 -- "from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides me."
- Isaiah 45:22 -- "Turn to me . . . all you ends of the earth"
- Isaiah 49:1-6 -- "I will make you a light for the Gentiles"
- Isaiah 49:22 -- "The Sovereign Lord says: "See, I will beckon to the Gentiles, I will lift up my banner to the peoples."
- Isaiah 52:10 -- "The Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God."
- Isaiah 56:7 -- "my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations"
- Isaiah 59:19 -- "From the west, men will fear the name of the Lord, and from the rising of the sun, they will revere His glory."
- Isaiah 60:3 -- "Nations will come to your light"

- Isaiah 62:11 -- "The Lord has made proclamation to the ends of the earth"
- Isaiah 66:19 -- "They will proclaim my glory among the nations"
- Jeremiah 3:17 -- "All nations will gather in Jerusalem to honor the name of the Lord"
- Jeremiah 16:19 To you the nations will come from the ends of the earth and say, "Our fathers possessed nothing but false gods, worthless idols that did them no good."
- Ezekiel 36:22-23 -- "The nations will know I am the Lord"
- Daniel 2:47; 4:1-2; 6:25 -- "Surely your God is the God of gods"
- Daniel 7:13, 14 -- "all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him"
- Jonah's story -- the missionary book of the Old Testament
- Micah 1:2 -- "Hear, O peoples, all of you, listen, O earth and all who are in it."
- Micah 4:2 -- "Many nations will come"
- Micah 5:4 -- "His greatness will reach to the ends of the earth."
- Habbakuk 2:14 -- "The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the water cover the sea"
- Zephaniah 2:11 -- "Nations on every shore will worship him"
- Zephaniah 3:9 -- "Then will I purify the lips of the peoples, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord."
- Haggai 2:7 -- "Desire of all nations"
- Zechariah 2:11 -- "Many nations will be joined with the Lord in that day and will become my people"
- Zechariah 8:20-23 -- "Many peoples and inhabitants of many cities will come"
- Zechariah 9:10 -- "He will proclaim peace to the nations"
- Zechariah 14:9 -- "The Lord will be king over the whole earth."
- Malachi 1:10-11 -- "My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun"

New Testament and missions

- Matthew 4:8-11 -- Temptation of Jesus
- Matthew 6:9-10 -- The Lord's prayer
- Matthew 10:18 -- "On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles."
- Matthew 13 (Ezekiel 17:23) -- parables of sower, weeds, mustard seed, fishing net
- Matthew 24:14 -- the gospel will be preached in the whole world
- Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15 - The Great Commission *(which many say is a re-statement of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12)*
- Mark 11:17 (Isaiah 56:7) -- a house of prayer for all nations

- Mark 13:10 -- "the gospel must first be preached to all nations"
- Mark 16:15 (see Matthew 28:19-20)
- Luke 2:32 -- "a light for revelation to the Gentiles"
- Luke 10:2 -- "harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few"
- Luke 10:27 -- "love your neighbor as yourself"
- John 3:16
- John 12:32 -- "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."
- John 21:4-14 -- some Biblical commentators have said the 153 fish equals the number of all the tribes and nations which the ancients thought existed on earth
- Acts 1:8; 2:5-12 13:47 (Isaiah 49:6) -- witnesses in all the earth
- Acts 3:25 -- "He said to Abraham, Through your offspring, all peoples on earth will be blessed.'"
- Acts 9:15 "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings."
- Acts 11:18 -- "They praised God, saying, So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life.'"
- Acts 13:47 -- "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." (Isaiah 49:6)
- Acts 14:27 -- "They reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles."
- Acts 28:28 -- "Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!"
- Romans 1:5 -- "We received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to obedience."
- Romans 3:29 -- "Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too."
- Romans 10:12-15 -- "How can they hear?"
- Romans 15:10 "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." (Deuteronomy 32:43]
- Romans 15:11 "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples." (Psalm 117:1)
- Romans 16:26 -- So that all nations might believe
- 2 Corinthians 4:15 -- "grace that is reaching more and more people"
- Galatians 3:8 -- "The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: All nations will be blessed through you.'" (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18)
- Galatians 3:14 -- "He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles."
- Ephesians 1:10 -- "To bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ."
- Ephesians 2:11-19 -- "you are no longer foreigners and aliens"

- Philippians 2:10 -- Every knee shall bow
- 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16 -- "to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved"
- Hebrews 6:13-14 -- God's promise to Abraham
- 2 Peter 3:9, 12 -- "not wanting anyone to perish"
- 1 John 2:2 -- "He is the atoning sacrifice . . . for the sins of the whole world"
- Revelation 5:9 -- "you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation"
- Revelation 7:9 -- Every tribe, tongue, people and nation
- Revelation 14:6 -- "The angel had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth -- to every nation, tribe, language and people."
- Revelation 15:4 -- "all nations will come and worship before you"
- Revelation 21:23-24 -- "The Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light" (Culbertson 2006)