

GREAT COMMISSION

Foundation of the Great Commission: Syllabus

Notes —

CLASS #1:

- I. Course Introduction.
- II. The Theological Foundation of Missions:
 - A. Foundation.
 - B. The Purpose of Life.

CLASS #2:

- II. The Theological Foundation of Missions:
 - B. The Purpose of Life (cont.).
 - C. Making Our Purpose Practical.

CLASS #3:

- II. The Theological Foundation of Missions:
 - D. The “Dual” Purpose of Life.
- III. The Historical Foundation of Missions:
 - A. Why Did God Choose Israel?

CLASS #4:

- III. The Historical Foundation of Missions:
 - A. Why Did God Choose Israel (cont.)?

CLASS #5:

- III. The Historical Foundation of Missions:
 - B. Why Did God Permit the Babylonian Exile.
 - C. Why Did God Send His Son.
 - D. Why Did God Reject the Jews?
 - E. Why Did God Choose the Church?
 - F. Why Did God Choose You?
- IV. Course Conclusion.
 - Exam.

GREAT COMMISSION

Notes —

Foundation of the Great Commission: Exam

Possible 20 Point Questions

- 1) Choose four portions of the Bible to show the “essential biblical thread” that reveals the dual purpose of life (pp. 65-68).
- 2) List and explain three examples given to us by Paul that should be followed by missionaries (p. 75).
- 3) Explain how the Abrahamic covenants a missionary covenant. Use Gen 12:1-3; Gen 28:14, 15; and Mt 28:19, 20 (p. 79).

Possible 10 Point Questions

- 1) Explain the “essential definition” (p. 64).
- 2) List the three most important abilities that are needed in order to learn another language and culture (p. 74).
- 3) Use one Scripture to show how Jesus’ life and teachings reveal the two fold purpose of life (p. 76).
- 4) Use Deut 7:6-8 to show the two reasons God chose Israel (p. 78).
- 5) Using Ps 67:1-7, explain why God chose Israel (p. 81).
- 6) Use two Scriptures other than Jn 3:16 to show the reason God sent His Son (p. 84).

GREAT COMMISSION

I. Course Introduction.

Notes

—

A. The Tragedy of Apathy.

Author's Illustration:

A minister once began a sermon with these words:

Today I want to make three points.

- 1) First, there are millions of people in the world who are going to hell and have not heard the gospel message.
- 2) Second, most of you who are sitting here do not give a DAMN about it.
- 3) Third, you are all more concerned that I said the word “damn” than you are about the millions of people who are going to hell.

This story implies many things about the powerless religious church of our day. It may be very “proper”, but it is often very dead!

Insert Your Illustration:

B. The Plan of Jesus.

Author's Comment:

Jesus has one plan for the evangelization of the world. It has been called historically, ‘the Great Commission.’ The following fictional story illustrates this fact.

GREAT COMMISSION

Notes

Note: 'The Great Commission' is a popular historical name for Christ's redemptive mandate to His disciples. He commissioned them to faithfully reproduce themselves through sharing the Gospel message. The term 'Great Commission,' although not a biblical word, will in this lesson refer to such passages as Mt 28:18-20 ; Mk 16:15.

Author's Illustration:

Jesus ascended to heaven after His mission on earth was completed. Imagine that the angels asked Him if He accomplished His goal. Jesus answered them with a victorious "yes". Then the angels asked Him whether or not the entire world had heard of him yet. Jesus answered "no" to that question. So the angels curiously asked Him what His plan was. Jesus answered with great confidence. He said that He had left 12 men and some other followers to spread the message throughout the whole earth. The angels looked a little concerned. They asked Jesus to tell them what his second plan was. Jesus said that there was no second plan.

The fact that the plan of God is to reach the whole world with the gospel message through YOU AND ME is the essence of the Great Commission. There is no other plan.

Insert Your Illustration:

C. The Contents of This Course.

1. In this course we will establish a basic understanding of the Great Commission. This course can serve as a foundational course for the other missions courses in this series.
2. The course is divided into two major sections:
 - a. The theological foundation of missions.
 - b. The historical (biblical) foundation of missions.

GREAT COMMISSION

II. The Theological Foundation of Missions.

Notes —

A. Foundation.

1. In this section we will provide the basic foundation of the Great Commission.
2. In order to do this, we will propose the most foundational question that someone can ask: “WHY AM I ALIVE?”
 - a. We will discuss the purpose of life. We will see that the Great Commission finds its roots in the biblical purpose of life.
 - b. We will see that the Bible consistently points to a two-fold purpose of life. We will study these two purposes from different perspectives as we seek to better understand the Great Commission.

B. The Purpose of Life.

1. The essential question. Why am I alive? What is my purpose in life? What gives my life meaning?
2. The essential truth.
 - a. This life span lasts only a moment compared to eternity.
 - 1) For the sake of making a calculation, allow us to say that eternity is 8,000,000,000 years long (though after 8,000,000,000 years eternity has only begun). Now let us say that you are blessed with a very long life and you live to be 100 years old.
 - a) Using these numbers, your life compared to eternity would only be a fraction of a second (1/30 of a second).
 - b) Your life would end before you could say “me”.
 - c) These calculations illustrate a significant truth. Our lives are here today and gone tomorrow.
 - b. A second can only find purpose as it positively affects the rest of time. It is not big enough to find purpose in itself.

GREAT COMMISSION

Notes —

- 1) That is, our lives in this world can only find purpose as they positively affect our lives to come. The purpose of our lives must be defined according to eternity.
- 2) If the brief second can be used to move us toward eternity, then, (and only then) does it have a purpose.
3. The essential mystery.
 - a. Purpose is found in eternal life.
 - b. This is a mystery to many people who try to find purpose in temporal things.
 - 1) The frustration of man comes from this misunderstanding of eternal purpose. He tries various ways to find purpose. They are all temporal (money, sex, drugs, alcohol, power, influence, education, etc.).
 - 2) Some of these things are “good” things and some are “bad”. They all fail to provide a lasting sense of fulfillment because they all try to pretend that the “brief second” is longer than it really is.
4. The essential definition.
 - a. If the essential mystery is that purpose is found in eternal life, then the essential definition is the definition of eternal life.
 - b. Eternal life is defined for us by Jesus in very plain terms.
 - 1) Read Jn 17:3.
 - 2) Eternal life is to know God.
5. The essential understanding.
 - a. Why are we alive? - **TO KNOW GOD AND TO MAKE HIM KNOWN.**
 - b. We are alive to live eternal life and to help others to live it also.

GREAT COMMISSION

6. The essential biblical thread.

- a. The Bible reveals this “**DUAL**” purpose of life.
- b. It is revealed in different ways and in many different places in the Bible. We will give one example from each major portion of the Bible.

Discussion Point

The following chart shows how each portion of the Bible reveals the “**DUAL**” purpose of life, which is to know God and to make Him known. Use the chart as a guide for this section of our study.

Dual Purpose of Life

| Portion of the Bible | Know God | Make God Known |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| The Pentateuch | Gen 12:1, 2a | Gen 12:2b-3 |
| The Writings | Eccl 12:13 | Eccl 12:13 |
| The Prophets | Is 43:10 | Is 43: 9-12 |
| The Gospels | Mk 12:30 | Mk 12:31 |
| The letters of Paul | Phil 3:8-10 | Phil 1:21-25 |
| The purpose of Jesus | Jn 17:11, 21-25 | Jn 17:6, 26; Lk 4:43 |
| General references | Rom 8: 28, 29 | Mt 28: 18-20 |

c. The Pentateuch.

- 1) In Gen 12:1-3, we see that there are TWO parts (or purposes) of the Abrahamic covenant.
 - a) In the first half of the covenant we see three privileges that relate to Israel being blessed. Since Abraham’s greatest blessing was to know God, then we can conclude that to know God was the essence of the blessings.

Notes

GREAT COMMISSION

Notes —

- b) In the second half of the covenant we see three responsibilities that relate to Israel being a blessing to others. As we will see later the essence of this responsibility was to make God known.
- 2) In this way we can see the “**DUAL**” purpose of life within the Abrahamic covenant.
- d. The Writings.
 - 1) In Eccl 12:13, we see the conclusion of an author who struggled through 12 chapters with the question of the purpose of life. His conclusion is that there are TWO purposes.
 - a) First, he says that our purpose is to fear God. In the Old Testament the concept of the fear of God is often associated with knowing God (see 2 Chron 6:33; Ps 34:9, 10; Prov 2:5).
 - b) Second, he says that our purpose is to obey God. To make God known is the most important commandment (the “great” commission).
 - 2) In this way we can see the “**DUAL**” purpose of life as it is explained by the author of Ecclesiastes.
- e. The Prophets.
 - 1) The prophet Isaiah explained that Israel (the people of God) has TWO purposes.
 - a) In 43:10 he said that Israel was chosen **IN ORDER THAT** they may **KNOW** God.
 - b) In the same context he said that their other purpose is to be witnesses for God. Other nations are to **HEAR AND SAY, IT IS TRUE** (see vs.-12).
 - 2) In this way we can see the “**DUAL**” purpose of life as it is stated by the prophet Isaiah.

GREAT COMMISSION

f. The Gospels.

- 1) In Mk 12:28 a scribe asked Jesus a question about the greatest commandment. The essence of his question certainly could be seen as applying to the purpose of life. Jesus gave TWO answers.
 - a) First, we are to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. The way to show God your love is to spend time with Him. To love God is to seek Him and know Him.
 - b) Second, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. What greater act of love is there than to share the gospel with someone? To love your neighbor is to make God (who is love) known to him.
- 2) In this way we can see the “**DUAL**” purpose of life, as it is revealed in the TWO greatest commandments.

g. The letters of Paul.

- 1) In the letter to the Philippians Paul spoke very personally about his purposes to live. He reveals TWO purposes for his life.
 - a) In Phil 3:8-10 Paul wrote about purpose in life. He concluded **THAT I MAY KNOW HIM.**
 - b) In Phil 1:21-25 Paul finally decided that he would continue living even though it would be better to die. Why? Because it was **NECESSARY** for the purpose of continuing to make God known among the Philippians.
- 2) In this way we can see the “**DUAL**” purpose of life as it existed in the life of Paul.

h. The purposes of Jesus.

- 1) In Jn 17, Jesus focused on the idea of purpose as He reflected on His life. In His prayer, Jesus pointed to TWO purposes of His life.
 - a) First, he repeated the idea that He was one with the Father. His purpose was to be in perfect relationship with Him. He proclaimed in vs. 25, “I have known thee.”

Notes —

GREAT COMMISSION

Notes —

- b) In vs. 26, He immediately revealed His other purpose when He said, “and I have made your name known to them, and will make it known” (also see vs. 6).

- (1) This second purpose of Jesus is also clearly seen in Lk 4:43.

- (2) He said that He must preach the kingdom of God in other cities because “He was sent for this purpose.”

- 2) In this way we can see the “**DUAL**” purpose of life in the life of Jesus Himself.

- i. General references.

- 1) In regard to purpose in life, we can now refer to TWO well known Scriptures that provide us with general references.

- a) In Rom 8:28, 29, Paul referred directly to God’s PURPOSE for our lives. It is to be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. This is done through relationship with Him. It happens as we spend time in the presence of God. Through knowing God, we can be conformed into the image of His Son. This is His PURPOSE FOR OUR LIVES.

- b) In Mt 28:18-20, we find the final instructions of Jesus to His disciples. These instructions define the purpose of our lives. It is clear that we are supposed to make God known. This is our PURPOSE.

- 2) In this way we can see the **DUAL** purpose of life in these “general” references.

- j. Summary Review.

- 1) We are creations of God. The purposes of the creation must be consistent with the purposes of the Creator, in order to be valid purposes. The creation finds meaning for his existence within the purposes that his Creator has for him. What are the purposes of God?

- a) First, His purpose is to redeem man (see 1 Tim 1:15).

GREAT COMMISSION

(1) That is, it is to transform fallen man into the image of the risen Christ (review Rom 8:28, 29).

(2) Thus, man's purpose is to KNOW GOD.

b) Second, His purpose is to win back the kingdom from Satan (see 1 Jn 3:8; Heb 2:14).

(1) That is, it is to use redeemed man to be the salt and light of the world in order to bring the gospel message to the nations (review Mt 28:18-20).

(2) Thus, man's purpose is to MAKE GOD KNOWN.

2) God's purposes for my life are that he would work IN ME that I can KNOW HIM, and that He would work THROUGH ME that I would MAKE HIM KNOWN.

7. The essential foundations.

a. The kingdom of God.

1) What is your life's foundation? A Christian life should be built on the kingdom of God. That must be our only concern (Mt 6:33).

2) The kingdom of God is present and future.

a) Our lives stand chronologically in the gap. That is, our lives are being lived between the king's first and second coming.

b) Thus, the purpose of my life must be to move from the present to the future. How can I do this?

c) The future Kingdom will come when Jesus returns. Jesus said that He will return when the gospel is preached to all nations (see Mt 24:14). Thus, the purpose of my life should be focused on bringing the gospel to the nations if, indeed, the purpose of my life is to move toward the future Kingdom.

Notes

—

GREAT COMMISSION

Notes —

b. The King.

- 1) If my life is built on the kingdom of God, how much more is it built on the King of that kingdom? Ultimately, we must build our lives on Jesus (see 1 Cor 3:11).
 - a) Since Jesus' purpose was to preach the gospel (Mk 1:14, 38; Lk 4:43), and since it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me (Gal 2:20), then my life will find meaning in the preaching of the gospel (witnessing, being a testimony, teaching the Bible, etc.).
 - b) My life must become the extension of the life of Christ. This is the essence of the book of Acts (it shows the extension of Jesus ministry through his disciples).
- 2) How will His ministry be extended through me? It will happen through relationship with Him. The more intimately I know Him, the more successfully I can make him known.
 - a) I must know Him as Lord. Nothing has meaning apart from Christ. Everything has meaning in Christ. He is Lord. Everything finds its value and meaning as it relates to Him.
 - b) I must know Him as the Word of God. I must make decisions according to the Bible. It directs my life.
 - c) I must know Him as Savior.
 - (1) He is my only hope. The cross represents my salvation.
 - (2) I must build my life on the victory of the cross. I must also accept and follow its method.
 - (3) Thus, my life is built on my death (Mt 16:24, 25).
 - d) I must know Him as my authority.
 - (1) I do not live for myself, I live for Christ. I do not minister in my own authority, I minister in His authority.
 - (2) I am an ambassador. I am a messenger for a king.

GREAT COMMISSION

Notes

—

- (3) My message and my ministry find their validity in His authority.
- (4) Indeed, the Great Commission itself is based on this principle (see Mt 28:18).
- c. Other foundational principles of my life (that give my life purpose).
 - 1) I am chosen by God. My life is based on my understanding of being chosen.
 - a) I am not chosen in the sense that someone else is excluded. I am chosen in order that others can be included.
 - b) This is true because God has chosen to work through vessels. Thus, He must choose someone to work through in order to touch the lives of others.
 - 2) Jesus is the ONLY way (Jn 14:6).
 - a) My life takes direction when I consider the biblical fact that man cannot be saved without the gospel.
 - b) How will men know about the gospel? Who will tell them? (Rom 10:14, 15).
 - 3) Good is the enemy of best.
 - a) There are many “good” things to do in life, but What is the “best”? This depends on the commands of God.
 - b) As we have already seen, the “best” (greatest) commandments are to love God and others.
 - (1) My life must be built on the desire to know and love God.
 - (2) It must also be built on the desire to make Him known.

GREAT COMMISSION

Notes —

d. Our logical conclusion.

1) I could say that my life is built on logic.

a) One translation of Rom 12:1 says that the presentation of our bodies and lives to God is our “logical” service of worship. It is all very logical.

b) There is a logical progression that I must recognize:

(1) If I really believe that Jesus did not lie when He said, “No one comes to the Father but by Me” (Jn 14:6).

(2) If I really believe that the gospel has the “power unto salvation” (Rom 1:16).

(3) If I believe the statistics that show how many people have still not heard the gospel (some missiologists say as many as 11,000 people groups).

(4) If I believe that Jesus will not return until they do hear (Mt 24:14).

(5) If I desire to see Him return to establish His kingdom and desire to see men saved.

(6) THEN I WILL GO or I will send others.

2) Why am I alive?

a) My life finds meaning in **KNOWING GOD** and **MAKING HIM KNOWN**.

b) This understanding is the most basic theological foundation of missions. Every missionary is motivated by this understanding. This compels him to spread the message of Jesus Christ. More importantly, it compels him to spend time with the One whose message he is spreading.

GREAT COMMISSION

C. Making our Purpose Practical.

Notes —

Author's Comment:

This section is concerned mostly with theology, but also provides practical points for application.

1. Knowing God (see Prov 3:5, 6).
 - a. We are to know (acknowledge) God in all of our ways. Our most practical goal is to practice the presence of God continually.
 - 1) Sanctification can be understood in these terms. It is the process of learning how to spend more time with God. It is spending more time with God today than yesterday.
 - 2) Seeking God should be the center of our day. It should not be something we try to fit in if we have time.
 - b. Every missionary must decide to make God his first priority. He cannot let his “work” interrupt his relationship with God.

Author's Comment:

The following suggestion is very helpful if you perceive time from a western perspective. This may not apply, depending on your culture's perspective of time.

GREAT COMMISSION

Notes —

Author's Suggestion:

Two helpful keys for daily living:

1. Plan your life from a daily perspective. Develop daily disciplines related to seeking God (see Mt 6:34).

It has been said: Today is all we have because yesterday is gone and tomorrow may never come.

2. Consider each day as a 24 hour period of time (not just an eight hour work day). Prioritize your goals and discipline yourself by thinking of a day as consisting of three segments of time that consist of eight hours each.

The first segment consists of sleep and exercise.

The second segment consists of the time you work at your job.

The third segment consists of time spent with family, other Christians and God.

This perspective allows you to have at least two or three hours each day of planned time with God. During this time you can discipline yourself to pray, praise and worship, and do structured Bible study.

2. Making God known.

- a. Here we want to give some brief practical insights for doing mission work.
- b. Learning the language and the culture. The most important abilities that are needed in order to learn another language and culture.
 - 1) The ability to be humble (see Gal 2:20, 1 Cor 4:10-13, and Rom 1:11, 12).
 - 2) The ability to be flexible (see 1 Cor 9:19-23 and Acts 16:6-10).
 - 3) The ability to have courage (see Acts 9:28, 29 and 20:22-24).

GREAT COMMISSION

c. Working in teams (“apostolic teams”).

- 1) Missionaries should follow the example of Paul and work with others. Plurality of leadership where unity in diversity is practiced is often an effective situation in the work of church planting (see Eph 4:11-13, Rom 12:4-6, and 1 Cor 12:12-27).
- 2) Missionaries should follow the example of Paul as they multiply their ministries by reproducing themselves and giving leadership of ministry to others so that they are no longer needed for the church to exist (see Acts 14:23).
- 3) Missionaries should follow the example of Paul and be willing to take the risk of giving leadership of the ministry to others (see 1 Cor 1:21-2:3, Phil 1:6, and Gal 5:10).

Notes

—

D. The “DUAL” Purpose of Life as it is Seen in the Gospels.

Author’s Comment:

The following section offers groups of Scriptures that can be used to further study the purpose of life. Read each Scripture in each group and consider how it builds upon the previous Scripture to explain the corresponding point of study.

Within each passage you should be able to find something about knowing God (relationship with God, reference to salvation, loving God, etc.) and/or making Him known (evangelism, witness, reference to “the nations”, etc.).

1. The Bible teaches that there is a “DUAL” purpose of life.
 - a. Mt 22:37-40.
 - b. Lk 10:25-37.
 - c. Lk 2:29-32 (peace and salvation equate to knowing God; all peoples and a light of revelation to the Gentiles equate to making God known).

GREAT COMMISSION

Notes —

2. Jesus life and teachings reveal this “**DUAL**” purpose.
 - a. Mt 11:1 (the disciple’s lives were full of relationship with Jesus and making God known to others).
 - b. Mk 11:17.
 - c. Mt 10:25, 27.
 - d. Mk 10:29 (for my sake equates to knowing God; for the gospel’s sake equates to making Him known).
 - e. Lk 12:1-12 (fear God equates to knowing God; vs. 3, 8, 11, 12 equates to making Him known).
3. There exists a progression within the “**DUAL**” purpose. One purpose follows the other.
 - a. Mt 4:19.
 - b. Mk 3:14.
 - c. Lk 12:1-12 (if you fear or know God then you will make him known).
 - d. Lk 5:16 (in the midst of making God known we must spend time with Him).
 - e. Lk 9:59, 60.
 - f. Mt 25:40 (to help others or to make Him known is connected with helping Jesus or knowing Him).
 - g. Lk 4:18 (the spirit of the Lord being upon me leads to proclaiming the gospel).
 - h. Lk 8:15, 16 (it is useless to have light and not to let it shine; it is useless to know God and not to make Him known).
 - i. Lk 8:21 (relationship with God can be defined in terms of obedience to Him; knowing God can be defined in terms of making Him known).
 - j. Mt 28:17-20 (worship of God leads to being sent by Him; knowing God leads to making Him known).

GREAT COMMISSION

4. Knowing God.

- a. The importance of knowing God (see Lk 10:41, 42; Mk 4:11; Mt 22:8; Mt 25:12).
- b. The process of knowing God (see Mt 13:12; Mk 15:38; Lk 6:46-49; Mt 7:21 Mk 10:14, 15; Mk 4:24, 25; Lk 18:29, 30; Mk 14:71; and Mk 8:33).
- c. The intimate relationship in knowing God (see Lk 10:41, 42; Mt 23:37; Mt 11:28; Mt 12:50).
- d. The cost of knowing God (see Mt 16:24; Mt 26:72; Mt 20:31, 32; Mk 10:48).

5. Making God known.

- a. The process in making God known (see Mk 1:38; Mt 5:13-16; Lk 8:16; Lk 4:18; Mt 24:14).
- b. The importance of making God known (see Lk 10:1, 2; Lk 8:16; Mt 5:13-16; Mt 24:14).
- c. The process of making God known (see Lk 10:16; Lk 10:25-37; Lk 14:23).

Author's Comment:

We have concluded that the theological basis for missions is found in the answer to the question, "WHY AM I ALIVE? or WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF MY LIFE?"

Within this answer we have seen how missions is naturally and necessarily linked with relationship with God.

Notes

—

GREAT COMMISSION

Notes —

III. The Historical (biblical) Foundation of Missions.

Author's Comment:

Why did God choose Israel? Why did God allow the exile of the Jews to Babylon? Why did God send His Son? Why did God reject the Jews? Why did God choose the Church? Why did God choose you?

Study Jn 3:16. The answer to these questions is because God loves the world.

This section presents the biblical history of missions and will answer the preceding questions as we focus on why God chose Israel.

A. Why Did God Choose Israel?

1. God chose Israel because God is love (see Deut 7:6-8). In vs. 8 we find two reasons why God chose Israel.
 - a. One reason is that He loved Israel.
 - b. Another reason is that He kept the Abrahamic covenant that was made with their forefathers. When we understand what that covenant included then we will better understand why God chose Israel.
2. God chose Israel because it would **INCLUDE** others, not **EXCLUDE** others.
 - a. Study of Gen 12:1-3.
 - 1) The covenant that God was referring to in Deut 7:8 when he gave His second reason for choosing Israel is a **MISSIONARY COVENANT** that includes all peoples. It does not exclude them.
 - a) Compare Mt 28:19, 20 with Gen 28:14, 15 (where God repeats the covenant to Jacob).
 - b) Compare Mt 28:19 with Gen 12:1.

GREAT COMMISSION

- 2) The Abrahamic covenant is a missions covenant and has a strong connection with the Great Commission itself.

Notes —

Discussion Point

Use the following diagram to show how Mt 28 compares with the Abrahamic covenant.

| The Great Commission | The Abrahamic Covenant |
|---|---|
| Go (Mt 28:19) | Spread out to the west and to the east, north, and south (Gen 28:14) |
| Make disciples of all the nations (Mt 28:19) | In you shall all the families of the earth be blessed (Gen 28:14) |
| And behold, I am with you always, even until.... (Mt 28:20) | And behold, I am with you...I will not leave you until..... (Gen 28:15) |
| Go (Mt 28:19) | Go (Gen 12:1) |

- 3) Half of the covenant blesses (includes) Israel, and the other half of the covenant blesses (includes) the nations.

Discussion Point

Use the following diagram to show the 2 halves of the covenant.

| Bless (include) Israel | Bless (include) The Nations |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| I will make you a great nation | You shall be a blessing |
| I will bless you | I will bless and curse others |
| I will make your name great | In you all people will be blessed |

GREAT COMMISSION

Notes —

- a) Israel was blessed so that she could bless others. Israel was enabled to know God so that she could make Him known. Israel was given blessings and authorities so that she could fulfill specific responsibilities.
- b) God chose (blessed) Israel so that He could choose (bless) others.
- b. The purpose for Israel being chosen (receiving blessings) is clear throughout the Old Testament. Study the following examples.
 - 1) God made Israel a great nation. Its land was fertile and strategic. Israel was a strong and influential country. Why?
 - a) Read 2 Chron 6:32, 33.
 - b) As vs. 33 says, “In order that all the peoples of the earth may know your (God’s) name and fear you, as do your people Israel.” God chose Israel in order to include others.
 - 2) God blessed Israel. He blessed her people. Why?
 - a) Read Gen 50:20. Why did God bless Joseph? As vs. 20 says, “in order to preserve many people alive.” God chose Israel in order to include others.
 - b) Read 1 Kings 10:1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 13 (note how the great blessings of Solomon affected the Queen of Sheba who then returned to her own land with a great testimony about God).
 - c) Read Dan 6:25-27 (note how the blessings of God upon Daniel affected King Darius who then wrote to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language concerning the greatness of God).
 - (1) In the book of Daniel, God’s missionary purposes are obvious.
 - (2) He blesses His people so that the nations will be blessed with knowing Him.

GREAT COMMISSION

- d) In the following passages from Daniel, consider how a response similar to the one made by King Darius shows God's missionary purposes in blessing His people (see Dan 4:1-3; 4:34-37; 3:28-30; 2:46-49).
- 3) God made Israel's name great. Why? Consider the answer to this question after reviewing 1 Kings 8:41-43 and 10:1.
- c. Study of Ps 67:1-7.
 - 1) Why did God choose Israel?
 - a) Because God loves the world (Jn 3:16).
 - b) God's love did not start in the New Testament. He has always loved the world (Heb 13:8).
 - 2) Thus, he chose to include others through including (choosing) Israel.
 - a) How does He do this?
 - b) He calls Israel to be a **MISSIONARY NATION**.
- 3. God chose Israel to be a missionary nation.
 - a. First, we must understand the concept of "**VESSEL THEOLOGY**".
 - 1) **VESSEL THEOLOGY** is based on the biblical fact that God has chosen to work **THROUGH** a chosen people in order to reach the world.
 - a) The foundation of vessel theology is found in Gal 2:20. It is that Christ lives and works **THROUGH** us.
 - b) Indeed, we can only love because He first loved us (1 Jn 4:19). We are holy because He is holy (Lev 19:2).
 - c) Yes, God's people are His witnesses (Is 43:10). They are His vessels. He makes Himself known **THROUGH** them.

Notes

—

GREAT COMMISSION

Notes —

- 2) Remember, God's mission to the world did not begin in Mt 28:18-20. It began in Gen 3:14, 15 (with the prediction of the redemption of Jesus through His victory on the cross).
 - a) In Gen 1-11, we see the fall of man, the flood, and the increase of evil. Finally, we see the scattering of the nations at Babel.
 - b) Then in Gen 12:1-3 we see the making of the Abrahamic covenant.
 - (1) What happened? Did God become frustrated and abandon His universal plan of redemption referred to in Gen 3:14, 15? Did He become angry with the world and choose a favorite to appease Himself?
 - (2) No! He simply began to use his plan that is based on **VESSEL THEOLOGY**. He chose a missionary nation.
- b. Second, we must understand God's desires and how they relate to His purposes for Israel.
 - 1) God has a great desire to reach the nations (see Ps 117 and Is 45:20-23).
 - 2) God has a great desire to show Himself to the nations (see Ex 9:13-16 and Zech 8:20-23).
 - 3) God has a great desire to provide a light to the nations.
 - a) Consider Is 42:1-9 (remember that the Servant of the Lord can represent Israel as well as Jesus Christ).
 - b) Consider Ex 19:3-6 (note that Israel is a kingdom of priests; that is, they are the people who represent God to the nations).
 - 4) God has a great desire to offer salvation to the nations (see Ps 98:1-3 and Is 52:7-10).
- c. Review Ps 67:1-7.
 - 1) Why did God choose Israel?
 - 2) Because He loves the world, He chose Israel as a missionary nation.

GREAT COMMISSION

B. Why Did God Permit the Babylonian Exile? (because He loves the world).

Notes —

1. First, let us ask, Why did God rescue Israel from their first “exile experience” in Egypt?
 - a. To reveal Himself to the nations(see Ex 9:13-16 and Josh 4:23, 24).
 - b. To continue to use Israel as a missionary nation.
2. Israel rejected their responsibility as a missionary nation. They did not provide a good witness.
 - a. Study Amos 5:26, 27 (note how the mention of the exile is linked to the “God of hosts” which can be translated “God of the nations”).
 - b. If God’s chosen vessels do not obey the missions mandate voluntarily, then God will “help” them (as He did with Jonah) to obey it involuntarily.
 - 1) Israel’s witness of God was actually preventing the missionary plan of God. They were not being a blessing so they stopped being blessed.
 - 2) When they were not willing to go to the nations, then God was able to “send” them by way of the exile, forcing them to function as a missionary nation.
 - a) Jews, who knew God, were exiled to places all over the world. Naturally, this had a great effect.
 - b) For example, consider the missiological results of Daniel’s life in exile.
 - (1) The book of Daniel can be taught as a book of missions.
 - (2) No less than six times we see the Rev 5:9 expression of **PEOPLES, NATIONS, AND TONGUES** (Dan 3:4; 3:7; 4:1; 5:19; 6:25; 7:14).
 - (3) No less than five different times God uses the blessings of His people to motivate the pagan king to declare the glory of God to the nations.

GREAT COMMISSION

Notes —

C. Why Did God Send His Son? (because He loves the world).

1. God sent His Son because He loves the world (Jn 3:16).
2. He wants to bring all men to Himself (Jn 12:32).
3. He desires all men to be saved (1 Tim 2:4) and does not want any to perish (2 Pt 3:9).

D. Why Did God Reject the Jews? (because He loves the world).

1. Study Mt 21:33-43 with Mt 9:37, 38.
 - a. The Jews rejected Christ and their missionary obligation to the nations. Thus, God rejected them.
 - b. In Mt 9:37, 38 we think of the Great Commission when we read the words “workers” and “harvest”.
 - c. In the context of the rejection of the Jews (Mt 21:43), we see the same words.
 - 1) The “vinegrowers” (Mt 21:33, 34) are workers.
 - 2) We also see the word “harvest” (vs. 34) and the idea of “produce” (vs. 34) and “fruit” (vs. 43).
2. God’s plan is to reach the nations because He loves the world. Israel was not in agreement with this plan, so they were rejected.

E. Why Did God Choose the Church? (because He loves the world).

1. The Church became the new Israel.
2. They became the new missionary nation (1 Pt 2:9) that would continue the missionary plan of God (Mt 28:18-20).

GREAT COMMISSION

F. Why Did God Choose You? (because He loves the world).

1. God chose you because He loves you and the world.
2. He wants you to know Him and to make Him known.
3. He wants to transform you into a vessel that He can use for His own glory and for His own missionary purposes.

Notes —

IV. Course Conclusion.

A. It All Started in the Beginning.

1. God has loved the world from the beginning of time. He has had a plan of redemption for all peoples from the beginning.
2. According to Jesus, there were three things that were planned by God long before He said the words of Mt 28:19-20 (see Lk 24:27, 45-49).
 - a. Jesus must die and rise from the dead (Lk 24:46).
 - b. The Spirit must be sent (vs. 49).
 - c. His people (witnesses) must spread the message of salvation to all nations (vs. 47, 48).
3. Therefore, Jesus died, rose from the dead, and was exalted so that the Spirit would be sent (see Jn 16:7).
4. The Spirit was sent to enable God's people to be witnesses to the nations (see Acts 1:8).

GREAT COMMISSION

Notes —

5. We continue to evangelize the world so that Jesus will return (see Mt 24:14).

- a. Does our missions efforts affect the return of Jesus? Yes.
- b. Study 2 Pt 3:9-12.
 - 1) God is patient. In a paradoxical sense we could say that He is waiting. What is He waiting for? Could He be waiting for His chosen vessel (the Church) to fulfill Mt 24:14?
 - 2) Indeed, in vs.11 Peter refers to our “holy conduct and godliness” which in other places is associated with evangelism (see Phil 1:27 with Phil 2:15, 16; 1 Pt 2:12; 3:1, 2; 1 Thes 1:6-8).
 - 3) In vs. 12 Peter says that we should be “hastening the coming of the day of God.”

B. The End will come when the Great Commission is Complete.

- 1. Do you want to see Jesus return? Do you want to hasten His return?
 - a. Then be a part of proclaiming the gospel to the nations. Help bring the name of Jesus where it has not yet been preached (Rom 15:20-21).
 - b. Many have forgotten this in modern missions. That is, many have forgotten that the heart of New Testament missions was to go to unreached locations. We need a new type of missionaries who will be able to say with the apostle Paul, “For this reason I have often been hindered from coming to you” (Rom 15:22).
 - c. We need a missiology that focuses on going to the unreached peoples of the world. Paul did not go to places that already had churches because he was so busy going to places that did not have churches.
- 2. Remember, Jesus saved you so that you could be a blessing to others (see Zech 8:13).
 - a. Do something effective in bringing the gospel to the nations.
 - b. When you get to heaven you can then say that you had a special part to play in the completion of Rev 7:9. At that time God can, say the words of Mt 25:21 to you, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

GREAT COMMISSION

Author's Comment:

Perhaps we can begin to use a new term for those who do the direct work of missions since the term “missionary” has become a very broad and general term.

Let us propose the term “GREAT COMMISSIONARY” to identify those who are bringing the gospel to the unreached. “Great Commisionary” is a missionary who seeks to obey the Great Commission by taking the gospel to unreached people who do not yet have an existing church. We must focus our prayers, resources and attention toward this new army of GREAT COMMISSIONARIES that God will be raising up in these last days (Many people believe the Army will be made up of “native missionaries”).

Notes

—

GREAT COMMISSION

Notes —