



“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work” . . . II Thessalonians 2:7.

World Wide Missions Urgent

Lesson Aim: The study of Article 16. 16. World wide missions according to the Great Commission which Christ gave His church (Matthew 28:19-20).

L333. Date: November 1964. **Text:** Matthew 24:4-14; I Corinthians 15:1-4.
Topic: Great Commission; Missions.

INTRODUCTION—“**Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,**” Mark 16:15. “Into all the world,” what a challenge! “To every creature,” what a congregation! “Preach the gospel,”—what a message! Yet, this is the responsibility committed by the Lord Jesus to His churches.

New Testament churches have no greater business than missionary-evangelism. All the church does is to be related to this task. She witnesses, teaches, enlists, supports, and prays for the conversion of the lost in her home community and around the world. Only in this manner can she fulfill the ministry left her of the Lord.

Many New Testament churches have joined in cooperative efforts in education, benevolence, missions and evangelism. These organizations are commonly called “a denomination.” It was for this purpose that the North American Baptist Association [now *Baptist Missionary Association of America*] was organized in 1950. The missionary end of this organization of churches is being realized by the presence of missionaries in the United States, Mexico, British West Indies, Portugal, Cape Verde Islands, Costa Rico, Guatemala, Brazil, Formosa, France and Japan. Contributing churches support all this work plus educational benevolent institutions.

Today’s study should stir churches to renewed efforts in the Lord’s missionary command. The churches must prove that they are “missionary” in practice. This means she seeks to win the unsaved to Jesus in her own

community, elsewhere in her state, in other states of her nation, and in foreign countries. It means she prays, preaches, and gives her money to support this type of missionary evangelism. It is the grossest hypocrisy to boast a name of “missionary” and fail in the performance of the task. Everyone can do something to promote missions. **“World Wide Missions (Are) Urgent.”**

EXPOSITION

I. COMING DISTRESS, Matthew 24:4-14.

The Bible says a time of great distress is coming upon the world. All who believe the Bible are expecting it. Unbelievers refuse to believe it, but declare man will save his world by his own ability. The coming distress challenges the Christian to work while it is day, John 9:4.

1. False religions, verses 5, 11. The decline of Biblical Christianity, with attendant unbelief regarding the Scriptures, will prepare the way for the introduction of false religions. Men will be increasingly gullible and subject to such propaganda. In the last days (in which we are now living) there will come many false prophets (preachers) and some even claiming to be Christ. Those who have rejected the Bible will be led away. One has only to read a book like Jan Karel van Baalen's, **The Chaos of Cults**, to see how remarkable this prophecy has been fulfilled today. Many people have started their own religions system and most of the founders have grown very wealthy as a result of their “religion.” Thousands of people in the United States of America are already led away by the vain doctrines of “Christian” (?) cults. Many others are being reached each year. Jesus said it would come “in the last days,” and now it is being seen!

2. International distress, verses 6-8. Man has drifted from God in an age when he most desperately needed God. Recent advances in scientific knowledge demands renewed dedication to God that the powers discovered may be controlled and used for good. Each year sees the relationship between nations becoming increasingly complicated. International distress is a direct result of religious apostasy. When men forget God there is no political force in the universe which can preserve peace. The rise of false religions, with desertion of the true religion by many, will bring great distress. The increase of wars, rumors of wars, famines, pestilence, earthquakes, and like calamities, will limit the freedom to witness to the world concerning the Gospel. The Lord's churches must arise and do mission work while there is opportunity. Days of international crisis will seriously

handicap missionary outreach.

3. Religious persecution, verses 9-10. Persecution of the people of God by the zealots of a false religion is nothing new. Jesus warns, however, that in the last days, religious persecution will grow increasingly severe. Hatred, afflictions and martyrdom await many of God's faithful witnesses. Even within the Christian flock some members will turn away and betray their brethren into the hands of persecutors.

Persecution has never stamped out the truth. It hinders freedom in witnessing, closes doors of nations against missionaries, prohibits freedom of assembly, stops religious presses from publication, and often imprisons or kills the witnesses. It is unable to stamp out the Gospel for though witnesses are bound, the Word of God is not bound. God's people are challenged today to enter every country open to missionaries and get the Gospel planted. Then, if persecution drives the missionaries away, the influence of the Gospel will continue to work.

4. Great apostasy, verses 12-13. The prevalence of unspiritual religion, the open opposition to the truth of God's Word, and the vengeance meted out upon Christian witnesses will cause some to forsake the faith. The prevalence of iniquity (sometimes under the cloak of religion) will cause the love of many to grow cold. This will result in lessening support of the church. Consequently, her program will lag and mission work will suffer from loss of support. The Lord's churches had better be busy today!

This is God's challenge to "strike while the iron is hot" and major on missions now. That day of falling away may be near at hand or far off. We do not know. It is enough for us to know God has given this day as a day when witnessing is possible. Make the most of it! The businessman who can purchase a greatly needed article today, knowing it will not be available later, makes the purchase even if he must borrow money to do it. How much more zealous and alert must the Lord's people be regarding missions.

5. World-wide witness, verse 14. Persecution, apostasy, or any other sort of trouble cannot stop the onward progress of the Gospel. **"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come,"** verse 14. All the world will hear the gospel! The "gates of hell" shall not prevail against the church, Matthew 10:18. How wonderful to work today with the assurance that we are one part of the witness which will be worldwide before the end comes. Thank God, He has given us the opportunity of having a part in this blessed task. Thank God for the faithful missionaries who are serving. Thank God for all his faithful saints who support them. Thank God for radio, television, and the printed page by which the Gospel is spread. Thank God especially

for His assurance that this work is not in vain.

II. IMPORTANT MESSAGE, I Corinthians 15:1-4.

I. Divinely revealed, verse 1. In response to man's need, God gave a revelation of Himself. This revelation sets forth truths which are to be shared with others. The truth the Christian bears comes from God, tells of God, and brings into communion with God. It is not invention of men nor could it have been known by men except by divine revelation. The Bible is the record of this revelation and the authoritative statement of the truths maintained therein. This Book is now in our hands. We must tell the good news over and over, until the last person has heard, for it is “good tidings of great joy which shall be to **all** people.” God's message has been entrusted to men as a great treasurer in earthen vessels. Oh, share the good news with someone today!

2. Saving, verse 2. The gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ is “the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes,” Romans 1:16. No other power is able to bring salvation, Acts 4:12. Every person who has ever been saved has received salvation by believing the truth of this message, Galatians 3:26.

Every man is affected by sin and needs to hear this message. At the cross the Lord receives the low and high, rich and poor, good and bad, black and white, Galatians 3:28. The Gospel is taken to every nation with the assurance that it is meant for them. No people are too backward, uncultured, nor are any too advanced, for the Gospel to be the answer to a basic need—forgiveness of sins and communion in peace with God through Jesus Christ.

3. Sacrifice, verse 2. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus are the very heart of the Gospel message. Through this sacrifice, men are brought to God, I Peter 3:28. A certain preacher recently remarked to his congregation, “If Baptists expect to be popular and increase their standing in our generation, they must not talk so much about the blood of Jesus.” But he who preaches a “bloodless gospel” (that is, leaves out the substitutionary death of Jesus) had as well not preach at all. If we have redemption at all, it is through the blood of Jesus, Ephesus 1:7. Remove this truth from the Gospel and it is not “good news” at all. Remove this and Christianity suddenly becomes a hollow, meaningless religion. Paul knew this and kept the cross of Jesus at the center of his preaching. Christians can afford to do no less today.

III. SIN'S DESTRUCTION

It has been estimated that only one out of every four people who die in the world has ever heard the gospel! Yet all men are in sin and doomed to hell until they believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ. How busy God's people must be in spreading the good tidings!

1. Sin blinds, II Corinthians 4:3-4. Unserved people are blind to understanding the seriousness of their plight and the offer of Jesus. Satan has blinded them. This makes it the more urgent that someone who knows Jesus should witness to the lost. If a man blind physically is looked upon with patience, sympathy, and a willingness to help, how much more should those blind spiritually be aided by those who see.

2. Sin binds, Romans 6:16. The sinner is a bondsman to sin, though he may consider himself free to do as he pleases. His helplessness is evident in his inability to break his habits and quit sin's practices. Deliverance from sin comes only through Jesus, Romans 7:24-25. Yet, He so delivers that one is in no danger of being overcome by sin and being condemned, John 5:24. **"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed,"** John 8:36.

3. Sin condemns, John 3:18-19. The man who has not trusted Jesus as Saviour is dead in trespasses and sins. The guilt of sin resting upon his soul has cut him off from fellowship with God and left him with a guilt which deserves God's judgment. Such a man is "condemned already, because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." He will be no more condemned after the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) than he is right now. That judgment will only pronounce the sentence and determine the degree of punishment.

The only hope of such a man is Jesus Christ. **"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? . . . So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God,"** Romans 10:13-15, 17. Yes, missions are urgent! How else can one be delivered from the condemnation upon sin?

4. Sin kills, Romans 5:12. Sin brought both physical and spiritual death into the world of mankind, Genesis 3:3-4. The sinner is "dead in trespasses and sins." Not because he is a wicked sinner, but because he is an unbelieving sinner. Unless one is renewed by the Second Birth during his lifetime here, there is no hope for his soul. There will be no transfer of destiny in eternity, Luke 16:26. As death finds a man, so shall the judgment;

as judgment finds him, so shall all eternity. If any man dies without Christ, he is condemned to eternal suffering and separation from God. What a missionary challenge! Who will arise to it today?

IV. CHRIST'S COMMISSION, Matthew 28:19-20.

1. Worldwide in scope. Matthew records Jesus' words thus, **“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.”** None are to be excluded because of nationality. The commission is made even more personal in Mark 16:15, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,” This includes each person in the world and points out that the Christian witness is to be given to individual men and women so as to persuade them to Jesus. It may be easier to deal with cultured people with high standards of living, but the Commission includes more than these. We are as responsible for the half-dressed savage in the jungles as we are for the well-dressed businessman in our hometown. God does not look at the kind of clothes nor the type of food nor the style of one's house in matters of salvation. He looks upon the heart. An unsaved man needs Jesus whether he lives in America or Africa. There is no difference here. Jesus has commissioned (commanded!) His churches to take the gospel to every man upon the earth. Missions are urgent!

2. Systematic in operation, Acts 1:8. How practical is the plan of mission work which the Lord gave. In substance, it says, “Start in your home town, cover your state, witness in the neighboring state, and continue on throughout the whole world.” This is the method the early Christians used. It is the method commonly used today. Our churches do mission work through local associations, state associations, and a national association. (This latter is the *Baptist Missionary Association of America, 9219 Sibley Hole Road, Little Rock, Arkansas.*) The dedicated church seeks to share in each phase of the work. She can witness in her area, in her home state, and through the national association she can witness across her nation and into foreign countries. In each year of the existence of the BMAA (organized in 1950), the money spent on home and foreign missions has been larger than the year before. This evidences increasing obedience to the Lord's commission.

3. Great in responsibility, II Corinthians 5:18-20. Two things are suggested here. (1) Each Christian has a personal responsibility to witness. The commission was given to the churches, but individuals compose the membership of each church. Hence, we are “ambassadors” (witnesses, representatives, apostles) of Christ, Matthew 5:14-16. (2) This responsibility can be discharged only by faithful witnessing. We are disloyal to His trust

unless we support evangelism and missions. Man is out of fellowship with God. There is no hope for him without reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ. This is why Christian missions are so urgent.

CONCLUSION—We rejoice in the truth that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Remember, however, that Paul reminds us that to call upon the Lord, men must hear of Him; to hear of Him, there must be preachers sent; in sending preachers, someone must pay the bill, Romans 10:13-15. So the responsibility for missions comes back to the local church and each individual who is a member. Study your church budget. What percent of the offerings actually go to missions? Study your teaching program. How much do the people know about the Biblical obligation of missions? Study your communication media. How much do the people know about the work presently being done by our churches around the world? Then one other question remains, “What can you do to help your congregation feel the urgency of Christian missions and are you willing to be a leader in encouraging such support in your own church?”

QUESTIONS

1. Why are missions urgent?
2. What is the name of the local, state and national organization through which your church does mission work?
3. Where are foreign missionaries of the BMAA working?
4. Are the heathen who have never heard the gospel really lost? Explain.
5. To whom was the Great Commission given?
6. How many home or foreign missionaries can you name?
7. What is a “commission”? . . . the “Great Commission”?
8. What can you do personally to support home and foreign missions?
9. How much did your church give to missions this past year?
10. How does Romans 10:13-17 show the urgency of world missions?