



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

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).

L503. Date: February 1960. **Text:** Matthew 24:4-14; I Corinthians 15:1-4.

Topic: Great Commission; Missions.

INTRODUCTION—One church member was heard to remark, “Missions! Missions! Missions! That’s about all you hear in our church.” His intended complaint was actually a compliment. It showed he had a pastor and other church leaders who were sensitive to the Lord’s command. It stressed the fact that the churches had no greater business than missions. This is the way God intended us to win souls and extend the Kingdom of God. All the church does is 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. This is the grand purpose of denominational organizations and church programs. Missions must never become secondary in any church program.

Look at the commission Christ gave the church. *“Go into all the world”* — a great challenge; *“Go to every creature”* — a tremendous congregation for there are approximately two billion, ten million (2,010,000,000,) human beings alive today. The church that is truly missionary Baptist is not just so in name, but is such because she preaches, teaches, and practices missions in her church program and in her giving. It is the greatest hypocrisy for a church or an individual to boast of the name “Missionary Baptist” unless heart and mind are truly missionary. The North American Baptist Association [**now Baptist Missionary Association of America**] is “missionary” by practice, not by name only. With laborers in the United States, Mexico, Brazil, Portugal, Cape Verde Islands, Africa,

Formosa, and Japan, the Association has a mission program which is worthy of the support of any congregation of Missionary Baptists. God grant this lesson may stir a new dedication to missions within individuals and churches who study it!

EXPOSITION

I. Missions Are Urgent Because of Coming Distress, Matthew 24:4-14.

Some “liberal” optimists hide their heads in the sand and declare the world is getting better and shall continue to do so. Only one who does not believe the Bible could believe this. The Scriptures witness a time of tribulation ahead that surpasses anything history has ever recorded. The Christian must carry his witness while it is day, for the night comes when no man can work, John 9:4.

1. False religions will increase, verses 5, 11. Jesus warns that men will become increasingly gullible and subject to false religions. Some will arise calling themselves “Christ” (or maybe, “God,” as “Father Divine” dares to do) and many followers will be attracted. Again, verse eleven observes many false prophets will deceive still others. One has only to read a book as Van Baalen's *The Chaos of Cults*, to see what a remarkable fulfillment of this prophecy is before our eyes. The heresy originated by Mary Baker Eddy (called, “Christian Science”) and Joseph Smith (called, “Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints,” or “Mormons”) is typical. It is significant that the founders of these cults all grew extremely wealthy as a result of their “religion.” Thousands of people are now enslaved to the false doctrines of the cults in the United States and more are being daily enlisted.

2. International distress will seize nations, verses 6-8. The more man advances in scientific knowledge and the farther he drifts from God, the more complicated becomes his organizations to keep peace between the nations. However, when men forget God there is no political force in the universe which can keep peace. As a result of apostasy in religion and the rise of false religions, nations will desert God and distress results. With wars, rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, etc., the opportunity to witness to the world of the Gospel will be seriously hindered. Let the church arise and do mission work while there is opportunity.

3. Religious persecution against true believers will come, verses 9-10.

While persecution has never stamped out the Gospel, it will hinder freedom in witnessing. It will close doors of nations against missionaries, will prohibit freedom of assembly, will stop religious presses from publication, and generally hinder the progress of the Gospel message. It would be a serious sin for Christians to sit by and do nothing until a land is closed against the Gospel. While we have opportunity, every open nation must be entered and people won. Then when the persecution comes, the Gospel will have been planted and will continue to grow. Our Association should thank God the Roman Catholic dominated rule in Columbia, South America, has been put down and now religious freedom is permitted again. Hasn't the Lord laid upon someone's heart the call to this great nation to the south?

4. Great apostasy will be witnessed among professed Christians, verses 12-13. Verse 12 warns of a failure of many to have a spirit of warm concern. With their love growing cold the support of the church and its program will lag and mission work will not be so greatly supported. There will be fewer to support the work and perhaps fewer to go. Thank God every year of the existence of the [Baptist Missionary Association of America] has seen an increase in the offerings to missions. Isn't this God's challenge to "strike while the iron is hot" and major on missions now? The day of the falling away may be close at hand or not—we do not know. God has given us this day and we must faithfully represent Him now.

5. A worldwide witness will be given in spite of troubles, verse 14. Opposition of Satan has never been able to stop the progress of the Gospel. It has moved forward in spite of the demons of hell and their diabolic schemes. Therefore, the troubles mentioned above will not be victorious against righteousness. (The "gates of hell" shall not prevail against the church, Matthew 16:18.) The gospel will be preached—even under persecution—until all the world has heard the witness. Then the end will come. Thank God, He has given us the opportunity of having a part in that work, either by going with the message of Christ, or by supporting those who go.

II. Missions Are Urgent Because of Our Message, I Corinthians 15:1-4.

1. It is a divinely revealed message, verse 1. The gospel message is not the invention of man, but the revelation of God. It is a divine message because it comes from God, tells us of God, and brings us into communion with God. It could never have been invented by the minds of men and still be true. Knowing that the Bible has come by Divine inspiration, we stand

amazed before its truth, II Peter 1:21. God has spoken! We have His message! We must tell it over and over until the last person has heard the good news that “Jesus' saves!”

2. It is a message which saves men through faith, verse 2. To be saved is to be safe, and this is exactly what the Gospel does. When one trusts in Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour he finds the gospel is “*the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes,*” Romans 1:16. All the children of God have been redeemed by faith in this Gospel message, Galatians 3:26. No other power is able to effect conversion, Acts 4:12. There is no distinction between men when we come to the cross. There the Lord receives the low and the high, rich and poor, good and bad, black and white, Galatians 3:28. We can take the message to all men knowing that they are included in the call and that through faith they can be redeemed even as we have been. No people are too backward or uncultured, nor are any too advanced, for the Gospel to answer a basic need — forgiveness of sins and communion with God.

3. It is a message which tells of a saving sacrifice, verses 3-4. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus is the very heart of the gospel message. It is through that sacrifice that we are brought to God, I Peter 3:18. We have redemption through His blood, Ephesians 1:7. Those who insist that we should preach a “bloodless gospel” had as well not preach, for to leave out the message of salvation is to take away the “good news” from the Gospel and leave only a hollow shell. Jesus has died for us and “*by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,*” Hebrews 10:14. Theories of men can never replace the truth of the Bible: Man is dead in sin and without hope except in the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ. See John 3:14-18.

III. Missions Are Urgent Because of Sin's Destruction.

Men are bound in sin. They are slaves to it. Only one out of each four people who die over the world has ever heard the gospel. It is a serious crime against God and man for believers to allow men to continue under sin's destruction when they have the message which will deliver them.

1. Sin blinds the unbeliever, II Corinthians 4:3-4. Satan does all he can to keep the unbeliever from becoming a Christian. His best trick is to blind the unbeliever to the seriousness of sin and the danger of delay. This makes it so much the more urgent that someone who knows Jesus should witness to the lost. The unsaved man does not know of his real condition or danger

before God. He needs our tenderest sympathy and deserves our most patient ministry. We must lead him to the light of life.

2. Sin binds men in the chains of sin, Romans 6:16. The sinner may think he is free to do as he pleases, but actually he is a bond slave to sin. Let him but try to break its habits and quit its practice, and he soon sees his helplessness. Even the believer has trouble with the influence of sin in his flesh, Romans 7:13-21. Deliverance comes only through Jesus Christ, who is able to free from sin's dominion, Romans 7:24-25. Our message to the world is that Jesus can set one free. We know by personal experience—we are living examples of the power of Jesus to redeem. He so delivers men from the chains of sin that there is no danger of our being overcome therein again, John 5:24. *“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed,”* John 8:36.

3. Sin brings condemnation upon the souls of men, John 3:18-19. The man who has not trusted in Jesus is dead in trespasses and in sins. The guilt of sin which rests upon his soul has cut him off from fellowship with God. The judgment of God which will surely come upon sin is directed toward him because of the guilt which abides upon him. Thus we say that man is condemned. The eternal judgment (or, Great White Throne Judgment, Revelation 20:11-15) is simply for the purpose of determining degrees of punishment and pronouncing the sentence. The unbeliever is condemned right now and judgment only makes this condemnation final. The only hope of any man is faith in Jesus Christ. Every man must be saved. Not even the most uncultured savage can get into heaven without Jesus Christ. To die without Him is to suffer eternally in hell whether one has heard of the Bible and its message or not, Romans 1:18-32; 2:11-16. Yet, the Christian who has been unconcerned will have to bear the responsibility for lost souls, Ezekiel 33:1-9.

4. Sin kills the soul eternally, Romans 5:12. The death which sin brings upon man (mentioned in Genesis 3:3-4) is both physical and spiritual. It is clearly physical as shown by God's statement, *“for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,”* Genesis 3:19. More serious than this, however, is the spiritual death which cuts the soul off from God and condemns it to the lake of fire. It is sin which causes man to be condemned. When death has come and the soul has departed the body, nothing will change the eternal destiny chosen. It is impossible for there to be any travel from the place of suffering to the place of glory, Luke 16:26. The idea of a purgatory where one could suffer for sin and then be transferred to heaven is completely alien to the Bible. It was the invention of men who sought to enslave men to their religious system. As death finds a man, so shall the judgment; as judgment

finds one, so shall all eternity. If a man dies without Christ, he is condemned to eternal separation from God. What a missionary challenge!

IV. Missions Are Urgent. Because of Christ's Commission, Matthew 28:19-20.

1. The commission is worldwide in scope. Matthew records Jesus' words as "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.*" This means that every group of people in the world is to hear the message. Mark makes the commission even more personal. He records the words of Jesus ("*thus, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,*" Mark 16:15. The command is again seen to be to the whole world. However, it is not to the masses of men that we go, but to deal with individual men and women. Perhaps it is easier to go to those of culture and high standards of living, but the commission included more than these. We are responsible for the half-dressed savage in the jungles as much as for the well-dressed businessman in our hometown. To God, there is no difference between the heathen in America and Africa. He does not look at the kind of clothes we wear or the food we eat and judge us thereby. He looks upon the heart. The unbeliever in one nation will go to the same lake of fire as the unbeliever from any other nation. All men must be saved by faith.

2. The commission is systematic in operation, Acts 1:8. The Lord gave us a practical plan of mission work. He informed us we must start where we are. (So often we think that if circumstances were just different we could do so much for the Lord. Let us learn to do our best where we are and trust the Lord for all circumstances.) Acts 1:8 sets out what we now designate as "local, state, interstate, and foreign missions." It speaks of "Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth." Our churches do their mission work through local associations, a state association, and a national association (the BMAA). The loyal church seeks to share in each phase of this work for one phase is as important as another. Only by such a systematic support (including regular monthly offerings) can the work consistently grow.

3. The commission is great in its responsibility, II Corinthians 5:18-20. (1) We have a personal responsibility in missions. The commission was given to the church, but we compose the membership of our particular

church. Therefore the commission was given to us. We are “ambassadors” (witnesses, representatives, apostles) of Christ, verse 20. God has given us the ministry of reconciliation, and we take the place of Christ in leading men to be reconciled to God. Jesus commissions every Christian, “*Ye are the light of the world . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,*” Matthew 5:14, 16. (2) This responsibility demands faithful witnessing. In II Corinthians 5:20, Paul sees the Christian witness being given “in Christ's stead.” That is, we occupy the place once occupied by Jesus Christ—we are God's witnesses to men. When Jesus went back to heaven He left His disciples on earth to be His witnesses. We are disloyal to this trust if we fail in evangelism and missions. We are faithful only as we witness to all men of salvation in Him. (3) This responsibility is great because it is an urgent message which is proclaimed. Read II Corinthians 5:18-21 and note the frequent use of the term “reconcile.” It means man is out of fellowship with God and must be reconciled to Him. This is another way of saying man is a sinner and must be saved. We are reconciled to God by the death of His Son, and are saved by His life, Romans 5:10-11. We rejoice in the truth that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. However, Paul reminds us that to call upon the Lord, men must hear of Him; to hear of Him, there must be preachers sent; to send preachers, someone must pay the bill, Romans 10:13-15. Thus the responsibility for missions comes back to the individual church and the individual member of each local church. Just what kind of support do you give to the Lord's missionary ministry?

QUESTIONS

1. Who is a true “missionary Baptist”?
2. Name the fields where the Baptist Missionary Association of America has a mission station. Name as many missionaries as you can.
3. Give some reasons why mission work is urgent.
4. What is the heart of the missionary's message?
5. Is the heathen lost and condemned the same as the unbeliever in America?
6. To whom was the Great Commission given? How does it affect us as individuals?
7. How much has your church given to all phases of missions this year?