

Introduction

(Eph 4:11,12) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, (12) to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...

The purpose of this course:

Our role as teachers is to *equip* you, for *works of service*. The Biblical model of the church relies on the work of every member and not only the pastors and teachers. This is one weakness of many churches today: an unhealthy reliance on the clergy for performance of God's work. When the people are mobilized to serve God in the church, they benefit and the Lord's causes are more greatly advanced.

Four Statements about the Centrality of Missions

If you plan to become a worker for God, you need an understanding of God's overall purpose. (We begin with the end in mind.)

Definition: When we say "missions" tonight, we are referring to God's core purpose for humanity: His plan to **redeem** lost humanity, to reestablish his **rule** through Jesus. This plan of God is called "the blessing" in many parts of the Bible. Let's look at four statements that express the centrality of missions.

1. Missions is the central plot of the Bible.

After the fall of Adam and Eve, God begins to reveal his plan for redemption. This plan centers around the "seed"--a human descendant who will redeem humanity and reestablish God's rule over the earth. (Refer to the "hour glass" model in the student notes.) We are going to look at some passage that through time increasingly focus on the **identity** of the "seed," and then some passages that explain the increasing **impact** of the "seed."

Old Testament: The blessing promised

(Gen. 3:15) And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel."

- **WHO: The "seed" will be a member of the human race:** One of Eve's descendants will defeat Satan.
- **WHAT: The "seed" will crush.** See 1 Peter 1:18-20 (God was not *surprised* by the fall.) God hints at two comings of this seed—one in which he is injured (though not mortally) by Satan, and one in which he mortally wounds Satan.

(Gen. 12:1-3)** The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. (2) I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. (3) I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

This is called the **Abrahamic Covenant** which was given around 2100 BC. Key elements of the promise: land, nationhood, personal blessing, and all the nations blessed through one of Abraham's descendants.

- **WHO: The "seed" will come from the nation springing from Abraham**

God repeats this promise to Abraham using the term "seed":

(Gen. 22:17,18) . . . your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. And in your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.

The promise is repeated to Isaac:

(Gen. 26:3,4) Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. (4) I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed

And repeated again to Jacob

(Gen. 28:13,14) There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. (14) Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.

- **WHAT: The "seed" will bless all the nations.** The Jewish nation is "chosen", not so that all its members go to heaven, but in order to the people through which God works to bring salvation to all "families" (people-groups). (See also Ex. 19:6; Ps. 67.) As the Old Testament unfolds, this blessing primarily involves redeeming humanity and establishing God's rule.

(Gen. 49:8-10) Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. (9) You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? (10) 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.

This promise was given about 1859 BC.

- **WHO: The "seed" will be a member of the tribe of Judah.**
- **WHAT: The "seed" will be a king who establishes God's righteous rule.** "Shiloh" means "him to whom it (rulership) belongs." He will be the rightful ruler of all the peoples (nations).

(1 Chron. 17:11-14) When your days are over and you go to be with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring (seed) to succeed you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. (12) He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. (13) I will be his father, and he will be my son. I will never take my love away from him, as I took it away from your predecessor. (14) I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever; his throne will be established forever. (2 Samuel 7: is the parallel passage).

This is the Davidic Covenant, which was given about 1000 BC.

- **WHO: The "seed" will be a descendant of David (a member of the tribe of Judah).** This becomes the kingly line of Israel.

- **WHAT: The "seed" will be an eternal ruler.** God will establish an dynasty through David and Solomon which will culminate in an everlasting King. David evidently understood this (see his response in 2 Sam. 7:19, where he call this "the charter for humanity."). See also Isa. 11:1-10 >> this "shoot" from David ("stem of Jesse") will bring the blessing of his rule to all the nations.

Note: Along with the ruling King theme is that of the *suffering Servant*. This theme is alluded to in Gen. 3:15 (. . . you shall bruise his heel . . ."), developed in the sacrificial system (see [Week #4](#)), and is fulfilled in a human being (Isa. 53). Although it was not clear in the Old Testament, these two roles are fulfilled in the two comings of Jesus Christ. (Zech. 6:12,13 hints that the same Person will be both ruling King and a priest who makes atonement. See also Psalm 110.)

Jesus' First Coming: The blessing of redemption fulfilled:

Matt. 1 - Note how Jesus' human lineage traces back through David and Judah to Abraham.

The gospels record:

- The rejection of God's Messiah by Israel. The people didn't want a suffering servant to redeem them; they wanted a ruling king.
- God sovereignly working through Israel's rejection of the Messiah to accomplish his salvation for the world through Jesus' atoning death.
- Jesus telling Israel that because of their rejection of him, he will temporarily suspend their role as the chosen nation and give that role to another "nation" who believes in him (Matt. 21:43). This "nation" is the church—see below.

The Church Age: Our role in spreading the blessing of redemption:

Now that God has brought the "blessing" of forgiveness through Jesus, he wants Jesus' followers to spread the news of this blessing to all people-groups. (This is why the "HOURGLASS" diagram narrows down to Jesus, and then spreads back out.)

(Matt. 28:18-20*) Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (19) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

This is the Great Commission. The commission is to make disciples of Jesus from all people-groups (*ethnoi*). God wants the message of what Jesus has done to be accessible to every people group. This is the portion of the blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3) to be fulfilled in this period of redemptive history ("in him shall all the families of the earth be blessed"). Note the apostles' references to Christians as recipients of the blessing of Abraham (Gal. 3:6-9,29; 1 Pet. 2:9,10; Rom. 4:9-18).

The verb of this passage is "make disciples." It is modified by three participial phrases which explain how to do this: "going" (taking initiative to go where the people are vs. "stay in the land"), "baptizing" (implies evangelism and actual conversion), and "teaching" (speaks of grounding, equipping, and maturing believers so that workers are multiplied). The Great Commission implies that it will take a long period of time ("...to the very end of the age.")

(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.

The beginning of the expansion. The rest of Acts narrates how God guided, empowered, and at times thrust them out to do this . . .

He outlines the beginning of his expansion strategy ("...Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."). The first century church came to understand this strategy and implemented it with unparalleled effectiveness. By the end of Acts, the gospel had spread numerically, from 120 to thousands, geographically, from Jerusalem to Rome and ethnically, from a Jewish sect to a Gentile movement.

See also Acts 1 (...all that Jesus began to do...")

(Rev. 7:9,10) 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. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. (10) And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

John sees a vision of the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 and the Great Commission.

Jesus' Second Coming: The blessing of redemption & rulership consummated

(Rev. 20:4) I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

This is a vision of a future time when Jesus returns and rules on earth, a time known as the "Millennial Kingdom" (MORE LATER). This is the continued fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham and David (e.g. Genesis 22:17,18; Gen. 49:8-10). Note: Teachers may want to ask students to identify how Rev. 20:4 and Rev. 22:3-5 fulfill God's earlier promises.

After his return, Jesus completes the blessing of the seed by ruling the whole earth.

(Rev. 22:3-5) And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; (4) and they shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads. (5) And there shall no longer be *any* night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever.

2. Missions is the central plot of history, within the biblical period and beyond.

- **God is sovereignly working history to accomplish His purpose.**

(Eph. 1:10,11) And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will . . .

God is supervising and orchestrating human events toward this goal.

Biblical Examples:

Joseph sold into slavery and ending up in Egypt: Was this merely a terrible tragedy for Joseph, or God preserving his people?

(Gen. 50:20) You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

God worked through Jesus' rejection and crucifixion to accomplish redemption

(Acts 2:23, 24) ...this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed him to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. (24) And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

As Christians we realize also that God is sovereign in our lives and in whatever circumstance we find ourselves God can use it to change us and advance his mission purpose (e.g., Phil. 1:12-14).

- **The obedience of the church affects the length of human history.** History will be prolonged until every nation has heard the gospel and some have responded. The church has the ability to "hasten" the coming of the end by obeying the Great Commission.

(Matt. 24:14) 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.

(2 Pet. 3:12) . . . as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.

So what?

Non-Biblical views of history (e.g. Pantheistic - cyclical; atheistic - evolutionary and nihilistic) are wrong.

Everything that happens is permitted by God toward this end. God will accomplish his purpose; we have the option of being voluntarily involved or being used anyway (like Herod and Pilate with Jesus' death >> Acts 2:23). Will we for him or against him?

If you believe this, you begin to look at all current events through this lens: how is God working through this event to fulfill the Great Commission?

Often we can't see at the time; we can only see in retrospect. But we should be looking and praying for the eyes to see what God is doing in the world so we can better cooperate with him.

3. Missions is the primary purpose of the church

The church does many things - it provides a forum for social interaction and place to have fun. People find safety and shelter from the world, families are strengthened, and believers are equipped to serve. But none of those things are why the church exists. The future of the church is not the church itself. **The church is an instrument of God to reach out to the nations.** It is the nations, the lost people, not the found people, that are the central purpose of God's active concern.

This doesn't mean God doesn't care about his own. But his care extends beyond them to people all across the world who don't yet know him. The minute that a church forgets this and supposes that He

only loves them (and starts spinning theologies that neglect God's central concern), the clock is ticking toward the breakdown and destruction of that church.

Therefore, the church must not make its focus: political agenda; family protection; fundamentalist church protection; corporate worship, personal healing, etc.

This is why we are committed to evangelism and missions as the hub around which everything we do revolves.

Xenos Mission Statement:

God has called on the church to cooperate with him as he reconciles the world to himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). Therefore, Xenos Christian Fellowship exists to help people learn to draw close to God. This work begins by inviting people to receive the gift of forgiveness offered through Christ.

We are committed to fostering spiritual growth by encouraging people to respond to God's love through loving service toward God and all people. Specifically, we direct our resources to serving the family, the non-Christian community locally and internationally, and the broader Christian community.

There is nothing different about Xenos in this regard. We have been blessed by God (in part) because we have continued to obey the light that we have received. That light has consistently moved us in the direction described here. But God is not dependent on us to accomplish his purpose. If we move away from this purpose or shrink back from the steps of faith he asks us to take (domestic work and frontier work and example for others), God will find someone else to use. We will be bypassed in that sense, begin to experience inner "rot" and become eventually an empty husk. We are committed to not letting that happen in our lifetime.

The church is the only social entity that exists primarily for the benefit of its nonmembers.

4. Missions is a key to victorious Christian living

The average Christian bookstore is glutted with books on how to appropriate God's blessings for *you*, how to be all God wants *you* to be. American narcissistic, therapeutic, self-absorbed "spirituality" is antithetical to biblical spirituality. Where are the books that teach us how to follow, suffer for and die for Christ? They don't sell, so they aren't printed, so Christians don't read them. But there is no lasting fulfillment in Christianity apart from this!!

(John 12:24,25) I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. (25) The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

(Mark 8:34,35) Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (35) For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it."

Any spirituality which merely develops and fulfills that individual, and does not focus on God's mission, is unbiblical and therefore doomed to failure and disappointment.

Recall that by mission we mean the extension of God's blessing (redemption and rule) to all people.

Have you ever given up your small ambitions? Have you ever laid down your plans for your life, asking God to bless your agenda—and told him: "Here is my life—use it to fulfill your purpose?"

The goal of this Class is to help equip you to play your role in this purpose.

It is not primarily for self-improvement, knowledge quest or experiences with God. Though all of these are good, and may happen in this class, they are a byproduct of following Christ into his purpose.

(Eph. 4:11,12) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, (12) to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up . . .

Xenos Vision Statement:

Xenos has set out to build a highly trained, sophisticated, caring, leadable, cohesive, committed, and flexible workforce of Christian servants who continually strive to serve the Lord and do his will.

This is one of the big reasons why we urge you to be actively involved in evangelism and a home group. In this context, you can practice this lifestyle, and begin to share what you are learning with others.

Memory Verses

Gen. 12:1-3** - The Abrahamic covenant, in which God promised to provide his redemptive blessing to the world through Abraham's descendants. Key elements of the promise: land, nationhood, personal blessing, and all the nations blessed through one of Abraham's descendants.

Matt. 28:18-20* - The Great Commission, in which Jesus commands the church to both evangelize and train people from every people group.