

Theology of missions paper

[Religion](#), [Jesus](#)



THE THEOLOGY OF MISSIONS Submitted to Dr. H Edward Pruitt in partial fulfillment of the requirements of GLST 500 by Alyssa Avant B. A. University of Mississippi, 2003 July 15, 2012 CONTENTS

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..... 5 i ii 1 INTRODUCTION As Christians we have a message of hope. We are taught in Proverbs 13: 12, “ Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life. ”¹ We know that hope as Jesus Christ, the Messiah who came to save us. As the most commonly known scripture of our world tells us, “ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ”² However, many people in our world today still do not know Him as Savior and Lord of their life. As Christians our mission, as was the mission of Christ is to lead others to a saving knowledge of Himself. God uses us as His children to help fulfill the mission of calling everyone unto Himself.

This paper will develop a theology of missions by looking at the Old and New Testament scriptures that help us to understand missions. We will also look at other Biblical theologies. We will in short see the patterns of missions and why it is such an important topic in the lives of us as Christians. MISSION IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT Though they are not as commonly discussed there are key passages that help us to understand our mission in both the Old as well as the New Testaments. The New Testament scriptures pertaining to missions are more widely known and studied, as it has a strong mission emphasis, but lets first look at those found in the Old Testament. One of the greatest examples of a mission emphasis in the Old Testament is the story of Abraham, as he was the first man to whom God gave the call of the great commission. Genesis 12: 2-3 1. The Holy Bible: New International Version, (Zondervan: International Bible Society, 2009) Proverbs 13: 12. 2. Ibid, John 3: 16. 2 declared that Abraham's name, his blessing and his being made into a great nation was for the purpose of being a blessing to all the peoples of the earth. Herein lies the heart of the mission mandate from its very inception. 3 Two key verses, Genesis 12: 3 and Exodus 19: 9 revolve around the famous declaration that it was God's plan to provide that all people would be blessed as a result of being the lineage of the father of the chosen people. Another area of Old Testament scripture that focuses on the area of missions is the message found in the Psalms. There are several key passages that summon the nations in the Psalms. The key Psalm according the Kaiser is Ps. 67 where God had blessed Israel and caused his face to shine upon them in a favorable way, so that God's way may be known in all the earth and his salvation made available to all nations. A similar message

can be found in Psalms 93-100. There is first an invitation to "Sing to the Lord a new song" and it is stated that the Lord reigns. The whole series leads up to the proclamation that the nations of the earth are to come to the Lord with singing and joyful service. They are called to acknowledge him as their God and Lord and King over all. "4 This is the ultimate goal of our Lord and this continues to be made known in the New Testament. The New Testament continues to portray the missional thinking of God in a way that is even more easy to understand. All four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John give us a clear understanding of God's salvation made available to us through Jesus Christ. The most commonly known verses of scripture that pertain to missions in the New Testament is that of the Great Commission found in Matthew 28: 19-20, 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, and teaching 3. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. International Journal of Frontier Missions, electronic ed, Volume 13: 1 (Pasadena: Jan — March, 1996), 1. 4. Ibid, 5. 3 them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age. "5 This is the most obvious commandment on Christians today to carry out God's mission. MISSION THEOLOGY IN RELATIONSHIP TO BROADER THEOLOGY As Moreau, Corwin and McGee outline there are three areas of Theology and according to them it is " natural to build a theology of mission at the core of all theological studies. " They go on to tell us that " mission is at the heart of who Christians are and what the church is to be and do. "6 MISSION IN ITS THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT Though God's Word is very clear over time there have been denominations and schools of thought that have caused misunderstanding.

One of these is Calvinism, the main objection to Calvinism is that it “negates any missionary or evangelistic impulse”⁷ due to its concept of preelection. Other theologians such as Karl Barth do not explore or discuss the topic of foreign missions much at all. At first glance, it may seem that Barth overlooks missions as a topic and area of importance, however, he does talk about those who are elect. “Scripture speaks of election in several different senses.”⁸ The elect are sometimes referred to as God's choice of Israel as his favored people.

KEY THEMES OF MISSION THEOLOGY It is important that missions theology have a particular theme. According to Moreau, Corwin 5. The Holy Bible: New International Version, (Zondervan: International Bible Society, 2009) Matthew 28: 19-20. 6. Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Missions*, 75-76. 7. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, second ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 934. 8. Ibid, 937. 4 and McGee there are several possible themes that could emerge. These include the kingdom of God, Jesus Christ, the glory of God, and the Great commission. There are also contemporary writers in mission studies that add to these: contextualization, liberation justice, *missio Dei*, and more. Evangelicals focus on the concern God has for the world, human estrangement from Him and the ensuing desire for reconciliation.

9 IMPACT ON GOD'S PEOPLE As you can see there are varying viewpoints whether you're looking at the theologians of old or modern day understandings of missions. The primary area of importance that remains is the need of Christians to spread the Good news and to make disciples of those who have not heard. For missionaries, this means knowing and understanding Scriptures and setting out to use them in their contact with others, their

mission work, and their everyday life by whatever means necessary. For pastors and church leaders, the area of missions must be in an area of prominence and importance in their churches today and should not be a topic that is rarely covered or spoken about, otherwise our every day lay person may never understand or know their role in missions. For lay people, participation must be of utmost importance. Even lay people should dedicate themselves to pray for missions, support missions monetarily and even go on their own short term missions trips as God leads them to do so. CONCLUSION Mission theology has to be an area of importance to the lives of God's people. We must see our clear mission as clearly as it is stated in Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments. It is a mandate and commandment of God for us to “ go ye therefore”. We must focus on others, especially those who have never heard the name of Jesus Christ if we are to truly fulfill the calling that God began with Abraham and his covenant with Israel. This covenant is still of importance to us today as it was the 9. Moreau, Corwin and McGee, *Introducing World Missions*, 77. 5 beginning of God's plan to bring everyone unto himself. 6 BIBLIOGRAPHY Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Missions*. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, second ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 934. The Holy Bible: New International Version, (Zondervan: International Bible Society, 2009).