

CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS MISSIONS?

What is God's desire for men? What is God's program and purpose? What is God doing in our world? What is God's plan yesterday, today and tomorrow?

The Communists have a program and plan. They have goals and objectives. "The basic doctrine of Marxism-Leninism is that a state of war exists and that the Communist Party has been created to win this war...This war is historically declared; it is universal; it encompasses every aspect of society; in it there can be no vestige of truce. The Communists did not choose it; they simply recognized it. Their duty is to prosecute the war to total and complete victory" (*You Can Trust the Communists*, Fred Schwarz, page 3). They would like to conquer and control the world. They desire that all men everywhere might be part of the Communist system. They have a **plan** and they have a **purpose**. It is a human plan and it will not be accomplished. They may win some battles but they will not win the war. Christ will ultimately control the world and rule the world, not the Communists.

The living God has a plan and purpose for this world also, and God's purpose will be fulfilled. It will not fail. **GOD'S PURPOSE IS TO MAKE HIMSELF KNOWN!** God wants men and angels to know WHO HE IS and what He is like. God's purpose is clearly seen in the Old Testament book of Ezekiel. There is a phrase or a sentence that is repeated again and again in this book. It is found about 58 times. As an exercise, you may want to skim through the book of Ezekiel (especially chapters 6 through 39) and see how many verses you can find which have these words: "***and ye shall KNOW that I Am the LORD***" or "***and they shall KNOW that I Am the LORD.***" In the space below you can write down some of the verses where this phrase or sentence is found:

God wants all men everywhere to KNOW who He is!

Read Joshua 4:23-24. Why did God dry up the waters of the Jordan River so the children of Israel could pass over into the land? Verse 24 gives the answer: "that all the people of the earth might _____ the hand of the _____ that it is mighty." Consider the contest between David and Goliath. In 1 Samuel 17:46 what did God want all the earth to know? _____

_____ Solomon spoke the words found in 1 Kings 8:43. According to this verse, what is God's purpose for all people of the earth? _____

What is God's purpose according to 2 Kings 19:19? _____

God wants to *make Himself known* so that all people might know WHO HE IS!

Who is God?

As we shall see, Biblical missions may be defined as the *propagation* (spreading something abroad, spreading something far and wide) of the Word of God so that all might know the ONE AND ONLY TRUE GOD. Who is this GOD that people everywhere need to know? Much could be said, but here are 4 things that everyone needs to know:

1) He is the only Creator!

What does Nehemiah 9:6 tell us about the LORD? _____

People need to know *who their Maker really is!* Psalm 100:3 says "_____ ye that the _____ He is _____: it is _____ that hath _____ us, *and not we ourselves.*"

Today there are many people who say and teach that there is NO CREATOR. They say that animals and plants were not created but they all gradually evolved (gradually changed from one thing to another) during millions and millions of years. Those who believe this are called *evolutionists*. People need to know that EVERYTHING which they can see and touch was *created* by the GREAT CREATOR, the Lord Jesus Christ (see John 1:3). Could anything be made *without Him* (John 1:3)?

2) He is the only God!

People everywhere need to know that there is only ONE GOD. In the Bible we read about heathen people who worshipped and served *many gods* (see Joshua 24:14-16). The gods which they worship are not really gods at all. Their gods are nothing but I _____ (Psalm 115:4). These "gods" are described in Psalm 115:4-8. Can these gods see? Can they hear? Can they speak? Can they do anything? Can they help needy people? Can they answer the prayers of men?

There is ONE GOD (see Deut. 6:4—"The LORD OUR God is _____ LORD"). There is only ONE GOD. A person can search the universe and beyond, but will he ever find any other god (Isaiah 44:6)? _____ Notice what God Himself says in Isaiah 44:8—"Is there a God beside Me? yea, there is _____; I know not _____." How much does God know? Does God know *everything that there is to know?* _____ The God who knows everything says that He does not know of any other god or gods! If anyone should know whether there are other gods, HE SHOULD!

If the LIVING and ALL-KNOWING GOD has no knowledge of any other gods, then we can be absolutely sure that there are no other gods. If there were, God would know about them!

3) He is the only true God!

There are many false gods but there is only *one true God*—“And this is life eternal, that they might _____ thee, the _____ God” (John 17:3). All other gods are phoney, fake, pretend and unreal. They are mere IDOLS. They are gods that have been made up in the minds of men. They are gods that do not really exist at all.

One unreal and phoney god is the god called BAAL. In 1 Kings chapter 18 we have the true story of when Elijah proved that the LORD was real and that BAAL did not really exist at all. See especially 1 Kings 18:22-39. On this day God did a mighty miracle and Baal did not do anything! How did Elijah make fun of this false and phoney god (1 Kings 18:27)? What important conclusion did the people come to (1 Kings 18:39)? _____

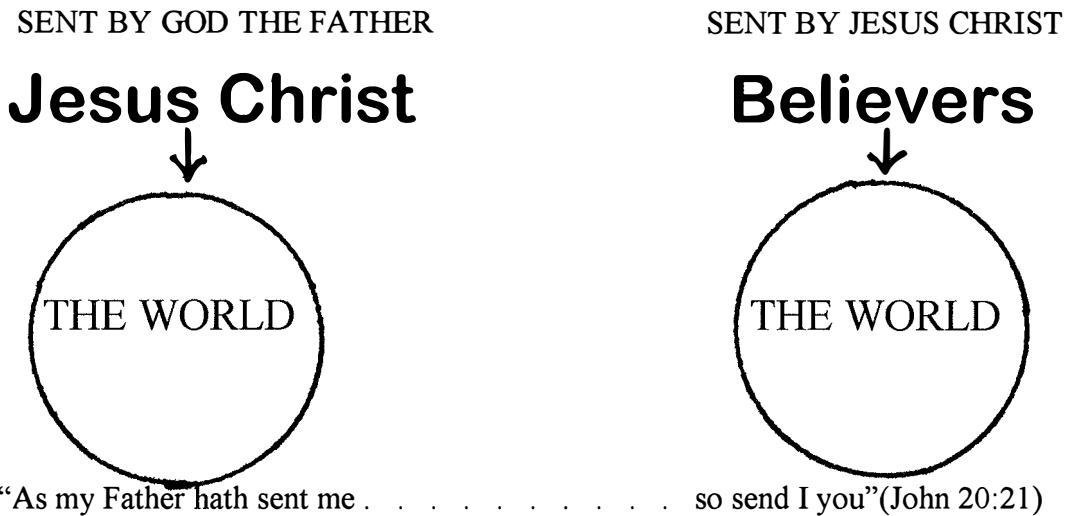
4) He is the only Saviour!

Is there any other Saviour apart from the LORD (Isaiah 45:21)? _____ Therefore, sinful and needy men have only one place to look if they want to be saved: “Look unto _____ and be ye _____” (Isaiah 45:22). There is no other Saviour and there is no other God! No one else can save! Apart from Him there is NO HOPE. Those who come to Him have all the hope in the world. God wants people to know that HE CAN SAVE (Hebrews 7:25) and that *He is the only One who can save* (Acts 4:12).

Those Who Are Sent

The word “MISSIONS” or “MISSION” is not found in the Bible. The word “MISSIONARY” is not found in the Bible either. Even though these words are not found in the Bible, they are good words and we need to understand what they mean. The word “MISSIONS” comes from a Latin word (mitto) which means “I SEND.” God’s purpose is to MAKE HIMSELF KNOWN and to do this God sends certain people on a MISSION. Those whom God sends are often called *missionaries*. This word means “SENT ONES.” Missionaries are people sent by God to be God’s MESSENGERS and God’s WITNESSES and God’s SPOKESMEN.

Although the Bible does not use the word “MISSIONS” or “MISSIONARY” it does have much to say about God *SENDING* people into the world. Consider John 17:18—“As Thou (God the Father) hast _____ Me (Jesus Christ) into the world, even so have I (Jesus Christ) also _____ them (His believers) into the world” (compare John 20:21).



Jesus Christ was sent into the world on a mission. God gave His son an assignment and Christ carried out this assignment *perfectly* (John 17:4)! In the same way, Jesus Christ has sent His believers into the world on a mission. Let us briefly think about the mission and the assignment which our Saviour has given to us:

- 1) Where has God sent us (Mark 16:15)? _____
- 2) What has He sent us with? What kind of message has God given us? See 1 Thessalonians 2:4—“But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the _____ (the good news).”
- 3) God wants this message to go to every _____ (every person). See Mark 16:15.

As we have seen, our mission involves **SENDING**. Jesus Christ has sent His believers into the world. Our assignment also involves three other things:

SHINING **SHOWING** **SAYING**

The Word Needs to See Believers Shining

Christ has sent us INTO THE _____ (John 17:18). What is this world like? Is it a very nice world where everyone is kind and loving and where there are never any problems? Is it the kind of world where everyone loves God and worships Him? How would you describe this world?

The world Christ has sent His believers into is a very dark and sinful world. In the middle of the darkness, God wants LIGHTS to be shining brightly: “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst (middle) of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye _____ as _____ in the world” (Philippians 2:15). Jesus said to His followers: “Let your _____ so _____ before men” (Matthew 5:16). Believers are to be as little lights in the world that point men to the GREATEST LIGHT of all (see John 8:12).

The World Needs to See Believers Showing

Believers have something that unsaved people do not have: “He that hath the _____ hath _____” (1 John 5:12). Believers have the wonderful gift of ETERNAL LIFE and they need to show forth this life to those around them who are still in death. Just as a *drunk person* shows certain things by the way he walks and talks and acts, so a *believer* ought to show the world certain things by the way he walks and talks and acts (compare Eph. 5:18). Those who KNOW THE LORD ought to live and act differently than those who do not know the Lord. Believers need to be SHOWING this difference. In what ways can and should believers be DIFFERENT?

The World Needs to See Believers Saying

Believers need to SHOW and they also need to TELL! In Acts 4:20 we learn about a group of believers who could not keep silent: “For we cannot but _____ the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). They had a message of good news which they just had to proclaim! Suppose a group of doctors were to discover a cure for cancer. Should they speak up and tell the world about this or should they be silent and keep it a big secret? Believers have a message that can save people from ETERNAL DEATH. This good news is to be spread abroad far and wide.

Suppose you are walking down a street at night and you suddenly notice that one of the homes is on fire. The people in the home are sleeping and not even aware of the danger. Should you say something? Should you tell anyone? Should you just walk away or should you run into someone’s house and call 911? What a tragedy if you do not WARN these people of the danger they are in! As believers, do we have a responsibility of warning unsaved people of the danger they are in? Did John the Baptist do this? See Matthew 3:7,12. What kind of fire did he warn them about?

God has given us a wonderful message of good news to tell far and near. There is another name for this *good news*. It is called *the gospel*. The gospel is the good news that God has for sinners. According to 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 and John 3:16, what is the GOOD NEWS (GOSPEL) that people need to hear and believe? _____

There is another word that is closely related to the word GOSPEL. It is the word EVANGELIST. An EVANGELIST is a person who proclaims the gospel and preaches the good news. He brings the gospel message to those who need to hear it. The word EVANGELIZE means TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO, to proclaim the good news.

What is so GOOD about the gospel? Is it good news to you? Have you believed this message of good news concerning Christ and what He has done for you? Is this good news good enough to tell others about? Have you ever EVANGELIZED (preached the gospel to) anyone? Remember, if you are a believer then you know about something that is better than a cure for cancer. You know about a cure for the greatest disease of all—SIN!

The most important thing is that we are evangelized ourselves. We need to let God's GOOD NEWS excite and thrill our own heart. The more I appreciate the Person and work of the Lord Jesus and what He has done for my soul, the more effectively I will be able to share this good news with others. "The Lord hath done great things for me whereof I am glad!" (Compare Psalm 126:3).

Who Is Involved in the Program of Missions?

1) God is involved.

God is the One who desires to make Himself known throughout the earth. He is the One who SAVES and He is the One who SENDS. Missions is *God's program* and God is at the very center of it.

2) Angels are involved.

The angels (both good and bad angels) are very much interested in what is taking place on the earth. What does Luke 15:7,10 tell us about the way good angels are involved with what happens on earth? _____

The devil and his angels are also very much interested. The devil opposes God's program of missions. The devil does not want God to make Himself known. Satan wants to keep people in the dark as much as possible. What does Luke 8:12 and 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 tell us about the way the devil and his angels are involved with what happens on earth? _____

3) All mankind is involved.

We have already seen the important part that believers are to have in God's program. As God's SENT ONES, they are to be *shining* and *showing* and *saying*. It is their privilege and opportunity to have a part in God's wonderful program of missions. It is their joy to KNOW CHRIST and it is their joy to MAKE CHRIST KNOWN.

Someone has said, **"Every person is either a missionary or a mission field."** This means that every believer ought to be a missionary (*TO MAKE GOD KNOWN*) and every unsaved person is a mission field (*NEEDS TO KNOW GOD*).

4) What area is involved?

Where is God doing His work of MISSIONS? Is He working only in the land of Israel? Is He working only in the United States? Where is God involved? God's concern reaches out unto "all the _____ of the _____" (Isaiah 45:22). God's GOOD NEWS is to go into all the _____ (Mark 16:15). Christ's witnesses are to reach out into the "uttermost part of the _____" (Acts 1:8). Even Old Testament believers knew that God's concern reached out to the people of ALL N_____ (see Psalm 67:1-2). God is involved and God is involved EVERYWHERE! Is God involved with you? Is God involved with you right now? How?

Looking Behind and Ahead

1) Before Creation

God existed before anything was ever made. Jesus Christ had a wonderful relationship with His Father even "before the _____ was" (John 17:5 and see verse 24). At this time, however, there was no need for God's program of missions. There were no creatures to whom God needed to make Himself known.

2) After the Creation of Angels

Before God ever created man He first created the angels. After the angels were created there was no need for God's program of missions. All of the angels knew God and they knew who God was. They were not in the dark about who God was. They were in the light.

What about today? Do the demons (bad angels/fallen angels) know who God is (see Mark 5:7; James 2:19)? _____ The devil is the enemy of God but he is not ignorant about God. The angels do not need missionaries sent to them.

3) In the Old Testament Period

God's chosen nation of Israel was meant to be His witnesses (see Isaiah 43:10). They were to bear testimony to the entire world that there was one true God.

4) Today

Today we live in a world where there is a great IGNORANCE concerning who God is and what God has done (see 1 Thess. 4:5). The people are in great darkness and they need to see the light of the knowledge of God (see Isaiah 9:2 and 2 Corinthians 4:4,6). Today there is a great need for God's program of missions.

5) In the Kingdom

Will people know God during the time when Jesus Christ will reign on the earth (Isaiah 11:9)? _____ Will it be necessary for people to tell their neighbors to "KNOW THE LORD" or will they already know the Lord (Jeremiah 3 1:34)? _____

During the kingdom age, there will be no need for missionaries. Christ, the King of all the earth, will make Himself known in a very special way.

6) The Eternal State

After the thousand year kingdom there will be the new heaven and earth (Revelation 21:1). People will either be spending eternity with the Lord or they will be spending eternity in the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8). Will it be necessary to preach the gospel then? _____ All destinies will be settled and fixed at that time (Rev. 22:11). In this life God gives men ample opportunities to know Him. In the next life it will be too late. There will be no opportunities for a "SECOND CHANCE." People can hear the gospel today and be saved from hell but no one in hell will ever hear the gospel. It will be impossible to be saved *out of* HELL. The time for salvation is NOW, not later (2 Corinthians 6:2).

* * * * *

In the next chapter we will learn about a MISSIONARY NATION, the nation Israel. We will learn about God's program to make Himself known and how he chose and used a special nation to accomplish this purpose.