

WORLD MISSION

18/10/2009

Our reference is: The Bible - - - from Genesis to Revelation!!

The **idea** of mission is there from cover to cover. If you've been around church for any length of time you've heard about "missions", and "missionaries". But what's it all about? This morning we will see that the mission pursued by Christians today began at the dawn of human history. It's a mission that will only conclude with the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus.

1. THE NEED

The first book of the Bible opens with a description of the Creation. The emphasis is not on the HOW... but on the WHO. Some believe that everything came into existence by a random collision of atoms. (It takes much more faith to believe that, than it does to accept the message of Genesis.) The Bible says that when the creation was finished (Gen 1;31): *God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.* " That is how our English versions of the Bible translate it. But the original wording in Hebrew is very emphatic: *"God saw all that he had made, and it was absolutely excellent."* Flawless – perfect - impossible to improve upon. The cosmos was perfect. Stars and galaxies, planets and moons, mountains and oceans, birds and animals, plants and reptiles. And it all culminated in the creation of the man and the woman.

"Absolutely perfect"! However, in spite of God's warning, they rejected His authority and disobeyed His word. They got what they deserved. They were banished - - driven out of the Garden and unable to return (Gen 3;22-24). By Genesis ch.4 we have moved from "absolute perfection" to rebellion, jealousy, anger, hate, and murder. From now on, the human race would live in the outside-Eden world, estranged from the Creator-God and constantly at war with each other. Romans 1 describes their worship of substitute gods (Rom 1;18-23) and the fact that they are under God's judgement.

This is the world we live in. Our rebellion against God is labelled "sin". Sometimes it takes the form of obvious wrongdoing such as hatred and violence. But frequently it has a veneer of respectability which masks the rejection of God's authority. Either way, men, women, and young people are in a predicament.

The Bible says that, by nature, we are: spiritually "lost" (Lk 15;24), "dead" towards God (Lk 15;24 Eph 2;1), under God's "wrath" (Ro, 1;18 Eph 2;3), needing to be "saved" (Eph 2;5,8), under judgement (In 5;24), without hope (Eph 2;12), living in the outside-Eden world (Gen 3;23-24), unable to save ourselves. (That is why Jesus had to die on the cross to save us).

Tony Bullimore was a British entrant in the Vendée Globe single-handed around the world yacht race. On January 5, 1997, in the Southern Ocean far to the south of our continent, Ballimore's boat capsized. The majority of press and media reports assumed that the 55 year old sailor was lost. However, he was alive: trapped in an air pocket in the upside-down boat, in pitch darkness, having lost all his food supplies. All he had left was a single bar of chocolate.

After several days, Ballimore's boat was located by an RAAF Orion aircraft. HMAS Adelaide went to the location and crew members rescued Bullimore. It was calculated that he had only enough air in his watery prison to survive one more day. Question: Did he need to be rescued? You'd better believe it!

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tony_Bullimore
http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/january/9/newsid_2518000/2518229.stm]

It is a great illustration of the huge rescue mission that continues in our world today. Every man, woman, and child needs the Rescuer: the Lord Jesus Christ.

Before Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden, God made a gracious promise about One who would overcome evil (Gen 3;15). But the world was in revolt against God. Gen 6;6 says: "The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain." Our God is a God who **grieves** - whose heart is filled with **pain**. He is the heavenly Father whose children have caused Him much pain. Have you thought about that?

He would have had a perfect right to cut us off for ever. But in His mercy, He mounted the greatest rescue mission of all time. He continues to raise up messengers of salvation. He sends them not only to the wealthy and the clever, but also to the poor and the oppressed. The need is not only in the cities, but also in the towns, and in the villages of the outback. God loves them also with undeserved love.

In Gen 3;15 God had signalled the coming of One who would conquer evil. But in the mean time, He called Abraham to be His servant.

2. ABRAHAM

At the end of Genesis 11 we move from pre-history into the period when we can identify people and places and cross-check events. The Bible is the book of salvation. And it is essentially a historical document.

What was going on in Abraham's life when we meet up with him in Gen 12 ? He was already married to Sarai, and he had travelled from his ancestral home in Ur of the Chaldees to spend time in Haran. Now the Lord gave him a command and a promise (Gen 12;1-4).

He had already travelled over 1000 km from Ur to Haran, Now he faced another journey. He did not know the destination, or how far he would travel, or what he would have to do when he got there. All kinds of objections might have been raised. But Abraham quietly packed his bags and stepped out into the unknown (Heb 11 ;8).

Abraham's trust in God did not waver. It was a hallmark of this man's character. So much so that he became an example to countless generations. The Lord had promised that his descendants would live in Palestine. Abraham was given land.

But it seemed impossible for Abraham to have children. One night God told Abraham to step outside his tent. It was the stars that Abraham needed to see. Without smog or city lights they seemed closer and brighter than ever God said (Gen 15;5-6) *"Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*

Not in an Opera House, cathedral or palace, but in a much more impressive place - out in the vast open spaces, God spoke to Abraham - - under the blazing stars. God was speaking, not to a king, but a drover. A man who had left his homeland at God's call, and went out not knowing where he would end up, but determined to obey His God. You see, Abraham was right, when many of his contemporaries were wrong. They thought that God was there for their comfort and convenience. When it suited them, they would worship Him. But there had to be limits. "You can take religion too far", they said.. "A little bit of religion's alright, but some people overdo it. All things in moderation..."

Abraham belonged to the godly minority - the faithful remnant. Time and again the Hebrews denied the faith and lived like the pagans. Israel became like the nations round about, prompting God to say to them: *"My name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you"* (Ez 36;22 Rom 2;24). But in those dark days the prophets spoke of God's plan for the nations, and Christ's central place in that plan. It is spelt out in more than 60 prophecies of the Old Testament. Christ would come as...

3. THE PERFECT MISSIONARY

Jesus was not just another religious teacher. Nor was He crusading about morality. The world needed a Saviour! The entire history of Israel showed the futility of trying to live up to a moral code. God's law was good in itself (Rom 7;12) but it only served to highlight the impossibility of living up to God's standards. St. Paul said *"the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith"* (Gal 3;24 NASB). Of his own experience he wrote: *"I would not have known what sin was except through the law."* (Rom 7;7). The law of God showed him he needed to stop trying to earn his way to heaven, and accept the free gift of salvation through faith in Christ. (Rom 3;23-24). The Bible says: *"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Rom 6;23)

Just before the birth of Christ the angel says to Joseph: "You shall call his name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." (Mt 1;21) 1 Tim 1:15: "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save (or rescue) sinners." And Gal 3: 13-14 shows how the blessing God promised to Abraham so long before, had now come to the nations through Jesus Christ and His cross.

4. THE FINAL DESTINATION

As we meet here this morning, world history is moving towards the end of the salvation era. In Mt 7 Jesus says that there are two roads. The broad road leads to destruction, and the narrow road leads to life. In Mt 25 he describes the separation of the human race on Judgement Day and says that one group will share the eternal punishment prepared for the devil and his angels. The other group will enter into eternal life. *"God is not wilting that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Pet 3;9) He wants people to take the narrow road that leads to life and heaven (Rev 7;9-10).

The mission that began before the rebellion of Gen 3 will continue to the end of time. It is not restricted to one race or nation. Jews and non-Jews alike need to hear and respond to the gospel - the message of salvation. There is no other way to God - - it is Jesus Christ alone (In 8;12 14;6 Ac 4;12). That is our message to the world.

5. OUR ROLE

We are to be messengers. Credible, consistent, missionaries. If you're a Christian - if you have been rescued - you should be committed to rescuing others.

When our lives are different people are curious to know why. Then we should be ready to tell them about Jesus (cf. 1 Pet 3;8-15).

The consistent message of the New Testament is that Christians should go out with the message. The emphasis in the Bible is on Outreach, not Indrag.

We need to be living the life and sharing the news **where the people are...** at the workplace, in the sporting team, among parents at school, in our neighbourhood.

The first great missionary outreach was carried out, not by the experts, but by the rank and file (Ac 8;&4). It was the new Christian converts who led the charge.

Few people come to Christ through academic arguments. Most come through the witness of a friend.

You can be a missionary without going to Bible College, or learning another language, or getting on a Jumbo Jet.

For us, the world of mission begins in the Blue Mountains, and takes in Sydney, the Eastern seaboard, the Great Dividing Range and Western NSW. The mission continues throughout Australia, and takes in every people group across the world. But WE need to share the message in OUR world.

The results will be seen in eternity...

The great multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb crying out in a loud voice:

"Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."