

## World Missions

WHEN talking about world missions, so often we hear the terms “home missions” and “foreign missions” used. Pastor A says he’ll only support “church planting missionaries,” and Pastor B says he’ll only support church planting missionaries on the “foreign” field. This creates a real dilemma for Brother Missionary, for he is caught, as it were, in a catch 22 situation. Pastors A and B want to do what is right, but they, like so many others, have found themselves unwittingly caught up in this manmade philosophy of “home and foreign missions.” The concept of “home missions” and “foreign missions” cannot be supported from Scripture for it is nowhere to be found. The Scriptures teach one and only one approach to missions.

Consider, if you will, a few basic thoughts on this subject. In Matthew 28:19-20, our Saviour gave the “Great Commission” to the Church to evangelize the world. He said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations...” It is quite obvious that the commission was, and is, to go and evangelize the entire world. In Matthew 9:37,38 we read about the need for laborers in the harvest field: “Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.” Whose harvest is spoken of? According to Scripture, it’s the Lord’s. And who is it that sends the laborers into HIS harvest? It’s the Lord Himself! In the Gospel of John and chapter 4 we have a similar account: “Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.” (Jn. 4:35, 36) In the context of the above verses, our Lord is clearly teaching that the “harvest field” is the whole of humanity and that time is of the essence lest it be too late. He further instructs that His demand for laborers is in short supply and that we need to pray in more laborers into His harvest field. But one may well ask, “Just where is this harvest field, is it a ‘home’ field or a ‘foreign’ field?” That’s a good question; so let’s proceed to answer it.

According to Scripture, those who have repented of their sin and by faith alone in the shed blood of Jesus Christ have trusted Him as personal Saviour are now a Christian; forgiven and saved for all eternity. As Christians we are:

**Pilgrims on this earth.** Consider Hebrews 11:9-13 where it talks of Old Testament saints as being “pilgrims on the earth.” And like they of old, the Christian of today is also a “pilgrim on the earth,” that is, just passing through.

“The Greek word for pilgrim means a by-resident; one who lives by another or among a people not his own. This is the idea here. It is not that they confessed themselves to be wanderers, or that they had left their home to visit a holy place, but that they resided as mere sojourners in a country that was not theirs. What might be their ultimate destination, or their purpose, is not implied in the meaning of the word. They were such as reside awhile among another people, but have no permanent home there.” (Barnes)

**Citizens of Heaven.** Though Christians are residents of a given country during this present pilgrimage, more importantly they are at this very moment citizens of Heaven. “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” (Eph. 2:19) “For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ph. 3:20)

“Our conversation; more exactly, our citizenship: we are citizens of heaven; our King is there; our hearts and thoughts are there; we obey its laws, and look to it as our everlasting home. As Christians are citizens of heaven, and only pilgrims and sojourners here, they should not be greatly influenced by things of earth, or chiefly occupied with its concerns. Their treasure is, and their hearts should be in heaven; whence they look for Christ perfectly to change them into his own glorious image, and raise them forever to reign with him in the kingdom of their Father.” (Family Bible Notes)

Verse 20. “For our conversation is in heaven...”

“That is, this is true of all who are sincere Christians. It is a characteristic of Christians, in contradistinction from those who are the ‘enemies of the cross,’ that their conversation is in heaven. The word conversation we now apply almost entirely to oral discourse. It formerly, however, meant conduct in general, and it is usually employed in this sense in the Scriptures. The word here used, politeuma —is found nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means, any public measure, administration of the state, the manner in which the affairs of a state are administered; and then the state itself, the community, commonwealth, those who are bound under the same laws, and associated in the same society. Here it cannot mean that their ‘conversation,’ in the sense of discourse or talking, was in heaven; nor that their ‘conduct’ was in heaven — for this would convey no idea, and the original word does not demand it; but the idea is, that they were heavenly citizens, or citizens of the heavenly world, in contradistinction from a worldly community. They were governed by the laws of heaven; they were a community associated as citizens of that world, and expecting there to dwell. The idea is, that there are two great communities in the universe—that of the world, and that of heaven; that governed by worldly laws and institutions, and that by the laws of heaven; that associated for worldly purposes, and that associated for heavenly or religious purposes; and that the Christian belonged to the latter—the enemy of the cross, though in the church, belonged to the former. Between true Christians, therefore, and others, there is all the difference which arises from belonging to different communities; being bound together for different purposes; subject to different laws; and altogether under a different administration. There is more difference between them than there is between the subjects of two earthly governments.” (Albert Barnes NT Commentary)

**Ambassadors for Christ.** “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us;...” (2 Cor. 5:20) When the President of these United States appoints an ambassador, it is always to a **foreign** country to represent the **home** country. As Christians, we are pilgrims in this land that we call planet earth, our citizenship is in Heaven where our Saviour is, and He has appointed us as His ambassadors here in this **foreign land**.

Verse 20. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ. We are the ambassadors whom Christ has sent forth to negotiate with men in regard to their reconciliation to God.

Tindal renders this, “Now then are we messengers in the room of Christ.”

“The word here used (presbeuomen, from presbuv, an aged man, an elder, and then an ambassador) means, to act as an ambassador, or sometimes merely to deliver a message for another, without being empowered to do anything more than to explain or enforce it.” (Bloomfield)

“An ambassador is a minister of the highest rank, employed by one prince or state at the court of another, to manage the concerns of his own prince or state, and representing the dignity and power of his sovereign.” (Webster)

“He is sent to do what the sovereign would himself do were he present. They are sent to make known the will of the sovereign, and to negotiate matters of commerce, of war, or of peace, and in general everything affecting the interests of the sovereign among the people to whom they are sent. At all times, and in all countries, an ambassador is a sacred character, and his person is regarded as inviolable, he is bound implicitly to obey the instructions of his sovereign, and as far as possible to do only what the sovereign would do were he, himself present. Ministers are ambassadors for Christ, as they are sent to do what he would do were he personally present. They are to make known, and to explain, and enforce the terms on which God is willing to be reconciled to men. They are not to negotiate on any new terms, nor to change those which God has proposed, nor to follow their own plans or devices; but they are simply to urge, explain, state, and enforce the terms on which God is willing to be reconciled. Of course they are to seek the honour of the Sovereign who has sent them forth, and to seek to do only his will. They go not to promote their own welfare; not to seek honour, dignity, or emolument; but they go to transact the business which the

Son of God would engage in were he again personally on the earth. It follows that their office is one of great dignity, and great responsibility, and that respect should be showed them as the ambassadors of the King of kings.” (Albert Barnes N.T. Commentary)

From a pure, technical, Biblical perspective and looking at it through the eyes of God, **ALL missions are foreign missions.** For the child of God, Heaven is our home and there is no need for missionary workers there. So what are we to do with the trap of “home and foreign” missions that we are caught in? We should discard it and return to the Biblical principle that **ALL missionary work is foreign missions.**

It would be wrong to place all missionary laborers in one part of the Lord’s harvest field; therefore we need to pray the Lord of the harvest for wisdom in knowing where He wants to send the laborers, whether it’s down the street, to the other side of town, or to another continent. No matter where it is, it’s the Lord’s entire harvest field, and **it’s ALL foreign missions!**

It is my personal opinion that the manmade dichotomy of “home missions vs. foreign missions” has done more to harm the world-wide missionary enterprise than any other single thing that I can think of.

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