

A Moratorium on Mission?

Some years ago there was a movement afoot to declare a moratorium on missions. One scholar even went so far as to declare that the era of foreign missionary movement was definitely over because the goals and objectives of that movement were no longer valid.

He rejected as a goal "the widespread assumption that the church was destined to convert the entire human race to Christianity." He could not find a biblical foundation for world wide missions. Consequently the church, he said, should voluntarily dismantle her present missionary organization.

A moratorium on missions? Dismantling the work the church has been doing for centuries? How absurd! The task of the church won't be finished until the day Jesus returns.

When the disciples asked Him, "What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?" He answered, "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" (Matt.24:14). When will Jesus come again? Then: when the church has fulfilled her divinely appointed mission.

When is Christ coming back?

The Lord entrusted the Gospel of the Kingdom to the church. The kingdom of God must spread. It is always looking for new territory. Not retreat but advance is the church's duty. As soon as the church loses sight of the expansionary nature of the Kingdom, the church has signed her own death warrant.

When will Christ come again? Is He coming soon? I don't know when He is coming. But His coming will be hastened by obedience to His command to take the Gospel into all the world. What a tremendous responsibility has been given to ordinary human beings! When William Carey wanted to go to India to take the Gospel to that country a century and a half ago, he was told, "Sit down, young man; when God wants to evangelize the heathen, He will do it without your help." But Carey had a vision. He knew the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19f). So he left his homeland, went to India and became the father of the modern worldwide missionary movement.

The promise of Christ's return has motivated many Christians to greater efforts for outreach. D. L. Moody claimed that "I have felt like working three times as hard ever since I came to understand that my Lord is coming back again."

Realistic Goal

What is the goal of mission work? The salvation of souls and planting of churches? There is more to missions than that. Jesus said that the Gospel of the Kingdom must be proclaimed throughout all the world. The Kingdom has invaded this present evil age. What does the kingdom perspective do for missions? We are not optimists expecting the Gospel to conquer the world and establish the kingdom of God. Too often Christians have tried to bring in the Kingdom through their own efforts. But the kingdom of God cannot be built with human hands. Only God can bring in the Kingdom and overcome the powers of darkness and sin.

Peter, himself, deeply involved in missions, spoke of "But keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13).

We are despairing pessimists who feel that the task is hopeless. We are realists. We sense the terrible powers of evil. The demonic is very real. On the mission fields of the world the Lord Jesus Christ is involved in a battle which determines the future of hundreds of millions of people. And as the church we are engaged with the Lord in this battle.

Kingdom missions

Missions with the Kingdom as its goal is not narrow but broad in its approach. It doesn't confine itself to salvation of individuals. It is holistic.

The proclamation of the Kingdom involves bringing people to confess that Jesus Christ is King and the only means to enter the Kingdom (John 14:6). It calls people, who confess Jesus Christ as Saviour and King, to repentance and conversion. A new convert is taught a new lifestyle. In Christ's name all prevalent and dominant views of culture must be resisted. Family life, work, the arts, the use of the land are all affected by the transforming power of the Gospel.

Missions try to introduce evidences of the presence of the Kingdom. Justice and righteousness are promoted. Poverty among fellow Christians gets attention (James 5: 1 ff). Racial discrimination is combated. Christians are all one through their common Saviour (Gal. 3:28). Education, medical work, social planning, stewardship teaching also belong to the missionary task of the church.

Called to do battle

A moratorium on missions? Dismantling present missionary organizations? If we are convinced that all who are without Jesus Christ are eternally lost, and if the Gospel of the Kingdom has been entrusted to the church, we should actively support missions with word, deed and prayer (1 Tim. 2:1,2).

We are waging a spiritual battle (Eph. 6:120). But the Kingdom will come. The church is assured of her victory. "They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will

overcome them because He is Lord of lords and King of kings - and with Him will be His called, chosen and faithful followers" (Rev. 17:14).

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