

Outline

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Mission

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MISSION

Introduction

Before the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven He entrusted the church with the task to preach, teach and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19,20). Each church has a missionary task. In this chapter we will reflect on this task and how we are fulfilling it.

1. Scripture

The Form for the Ordination (or Installation) of Missionaries gives a good overview of the Scriptural basis for the missionary task of the church and lists many proof texts.

The Bible from the beginning till the end speaks about missions. The LORD created the earth and everything in it. This whole world is under His domain. Thus after we fell into sin, His word of redemption is for the whole world as well. He wants all nations to come to know the gospel of redemption. It is true that under the Old Testament this gospel was connected to one family and one nation, but not to the exclusion of the other nations. The LORD uses this one nation to preserve the gospel so it can reach all the nations. The LORD said to Abraham that in him all nations would be blessed.

Gen. 12:1-3

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Moses reminded the LORD of what the nations would think of His deeds with Israel.

Exodus 32:11-14

But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. "O LORD," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.'" Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

Num 14:15,16

If you put these people to death all at one time, the nations who have heard this report about you will say, 'The LORD was not able to bring these people into the land he promised them on oath; so he slaughtered them in the desert.'

The LORD gave foreigners a place in Israel.

Num. 15:13-16

"Everyone who is native-born must do these things in this way when he brings an offering made by fire as an aroma pleasing to the LORD. For the generations to come, whenever an alien or anyone else living among you presents an offering made by fire as an aroma pleasing to the LORD, he must do exactly as you do. The community is to have the same rules for you and for the alien living among you; this is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You and the alien shall be the same before the LORD: The same laws and regulations will apply both to you and to the alien living among you."

There are two well known examples of foreigners who received a place in Israel, Rahab and Ruth. Both received a place upon their confession of faith.

Joshua 2:8-11

Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof and said to them, "I know that the LORD has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea* for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

Joshua 6:22-24

Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's house and bring her out and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath to her." So the young men who had done the spying went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her. They brought out her entire family and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel. Then they burned the whole city and

everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the LORD's house. But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho--and she lives among the Israelites to this day.

Ruth 1:16-17

But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me."

Ruth 4:13-17

So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. Then he went to her, and the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth." Then Naomi took the child, laid him in her lap and cared for him. The women living there said, "Naomi has a son." And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

In the Psalms Israel is to praise the LORD as the God who rules the nations, and the nations are called the praise the LORD who rules in Zion.

Ps. 47:1-4

Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy. How awesome is the LORD Most High, the great King over all the earth! He subdued nations under us, peoples under our feet. He chose our inheritance for us, the pride of Jacob, whom he loved.

Ps 99:1-3

The LORD reigns, let the nations tremble; he sits enthroned between the cherubim, let the earth shake. Great is the LORD in Zion; he is exalted over all the nations. Let them praise your great and awesome name-- he is holy.

In the prophets we hear of a wonderful future that includes all the nations.

Isa 2:1-4

This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

Isa 19:23-25

In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance."

Joel 2:28-32

"And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD calls.

The coming of Christ shows God love for this world.

John 3:16-17

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,* that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

The Lord Jesus reminds the people of this as well. They should not think that the gospel is only for Jews. In fact, the Lord will take it away from them and give it to others.

Mat 22:1-10

Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come." Then he sent some more servants and said, "Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet." "But they paid no attention and went off--one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

"Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

When Israel reject the Messiah, the Lord appoints twelve apostles to be the foundation of the church and charges them with the duty to be witnesses of God's grace in this world.

Mat 28:16-20

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Acts 1:6-8

So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit marks the point where the church has to go and preach also to the Gentiles. It took some convincing. Peter had to receive a vision in order to understand it.

Acts 10:34-5

Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.

The Holy Spirit also had to instruct the Church to sent out missionaries.

Acts 13:1-5

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

Paul then begins his missionary journeys. Often he would first go to the Jews, but when they reject it work among the Gentiles.

Acts 13:42-48

As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God. On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying. Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us: " 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.' " When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

In his letters Paul speaks about the purpose of the preaching for all people.

Rom 1:16-17

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

Rom. 10:12-17

For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

2 Cor 5:17-21

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Eph. 2:11-22

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)-- remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Through faith in the Word preached by the apostles, also Gentiles may have communion with Christ and in Christ with God.

1John 1:1-4

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete.

The Bible ends with the prospect of a multitude of many nations which surrounds the throne of God.

Rev. 5:9-10

And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

2. Confessions/Church Order/Forms

2.1. Belgic Confession

The Belgic Confession does not mention the task of the church to send out missionaries, but this duty is implied in the confession that the church is build on the apostolic preaching and finds its unity in the Word of God.

Art. 27

This Church has existed from the beginning of the world and will be to the end, for Christ is an eternal King who cannot be without subjects.

Moreover, this holy Church is not confined or limited to one particular place or to certain persons, but is spread and dispersed throughout the entire world. However, it is joined and united with heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith.

2.2. Heidelberg Catechism

The petition Thy Kingdom come has implications for the work of mission.

Q/A 123

What is the second petition?

Thy kingdom come. That is: So rule us by Thy Word and Spirit that more and more we submit to Thee.

Preserve and increase Thy church. Destroy the works of the devil, every power that raises itself against Thee, and every conspiracy against Thy holy Word. Do all this until the fulness of Thy kingdom comes, wherein Thou shalt be all in all.

2.3. Canons of Dort

In the Canons of Dort the churches confess that the doctrine of election does not make preaching superfluous. On the contrary, it is through the preaching that the Lord realizes His decree of election (see chapter 3/4, art. 17)

Chapter 1, Article 3 The Preaching Of The Gospel

So that men may be brought to faith, God mercifully sends heralds of this most joyful message to whom He will and when He wills. By their ministry men are called to repentance and to faith in Christ crucified. For *how are*

they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent?

Chapter 2, Article 5 The Universal Proclamation Of The Gospel

The promise of the gospel is that whoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish but have eternal life. This promise ought to be announced and proclaimed universally and without discrimination to all peoples and to all men to whom God in His good pleasure sends the gospel, together with the command to repent and believe.

Chapter 2, Article 6 Why Some Do Not Believe

That, however, many who have been called by the gospel neither repent nor believe in Christ but perish in unbelief does not happen because of any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice of Christ offered on the cross, but through their own fault.

Chapter 2, Article 7 Why Others Do Believe

But to those who truly believe and are by the death of Christ freed from their sins and saved from perdition, this benefit comes only through God's grace, given to them from eternity in Christ. God owes this grace to no one.

Chapter 3/4, Article 8 The Earnest Call By The Gospel

But as many as are called by the gospel are earnestly called, for God earnestly and most sincerely reveals in His Word what is pleasing to Him, namely, that those who are called should come to Him. He also earnestly promises rest of soul and eternal life to all who come to Him and believe.

2.4. Church Order

The Church Order outlines the tasks of missionary, council and churches in regard to the work of missions.

Art. 18

When ministers of the Word are sent out as missionaries, they shall be and remain subject to the Church Order. They shall report and give account of their labours to the church which sent them and shall at all times remain subject to its calling.

It shall be their task, in the specific region assigned to them or chosen by them in consultation with the church that sent them, to proclaim the Word of God, to administer the sacraments to those who have come to the profession of their faith, teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded His church, and to ordain elders and deacons when this appears feasible, according to the rules given in the Word of God.

Art. 51

The churches shall endeavour to fulfil their missionary task

When churches cooperate in this matter, they shall, as much as possible, observe the division into classes and regional synods.

2.5. Forms

The Form for Ordination or Installation of missionaries speaks extensively about the missionary task of the church. The execution of this task is also part of the prayers of the church.

Form for Ordination (or installation) of missionaries

Prayer # 2

We pray for the mission among the Jews, Moslems, and heathen, who live without hope and without Thee in the world. Grant Thy blessing upon the propagation of the gospel among those who still call themselves Christians but have deviated from Thy truth in doctrine and life.

Prayer # 11 A Morning Prayer

Bless Thou the proclamation of Thy divine Word here and in the mission fields, and frustrate all the worlds of the devil.

3. Goal

The Lord calls the church to proclaim the gospel to all the peoples of the earth and so call them to repentance and faith in Christ. The aim of mission to serve the glory of God in the conversion of heathens and the establishing of churches.

4. Our Missionary Task

Although each church has a missionary task, it is not always possible for each church to have its own missionary. For this reason we cooperate with other churches. There are sending churches and supporting churches. Appendix 1 contains the Agreement of Cooperation. Our support for the work of mission comes out in praying for the work of mission on a regular basis, supporting it financially and

attending meetings organized for the co-operating churches. The sending churches inform the cooperating churches by means of Press Releases which are published in the bulletin, and by means of a monthly Newsletter. The sending churches together publish Mission News and it is distributed among the members as well. Some churches have Mission Committees which deal with delegating to meetings of cooperating churches, other churches do this via the Council. Either way, it is important to keep all the elders and deacons well informed.

5. Mission and Mission Aid

The Lord teaches His people to be merciful. Under the Old Testament the sojourner enjoyed the care of the people of Israel. Also today we not only bring the gospel but are also called to help those in need. The connection between mission and material help has seen its changes over the years. Sometimes they were closely connected together, with the danger that the missionaries became too involved in handing out material help. There was also the danger that people would join the church in order to receive such help. On the other hand, work of mercy should not be disconnected from the preaching of the Gospel. The reason for helping is the work of Christ. The members of the churches on the mission field certainly have a calling to help those in need among themselves, but so do we, as we are united by the bond of the true faith.

6. Evaluation

1. Are we in agreement with the Scriptural basis and goal?
2. Does the work of mission receive sufficient attention in worship, church life, council? Are there areas in which we need to improve? Why? How?
3. How is the relationship with the sending church?
4. Is there opportunity for additional mission projects?

For the Agreement of Cooperation, see Mandates and Regulations

