

Think Local: Why Changing the World Begins in Your Backyard – Week One

Remember the International Context

Selected Scriptures

Introduction: In order to effectively “think local” we need to remember the international Christian context in which we live. God’s *eternal mission* is alive and well on planet earth. We can take courage in *our local* work knowing that we’re part of an international movement that is being fulfilled as Jesus promised.

1. BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE – God promised that his eternal mission would be an international movement.

- A. God’s eternal mission is reflected in commands given to Adam and Eve. Gen. 1:26-28
 - 1. They’re made in the image of the Triune God and given 2 mandates.
 - 2. God’s desire is that they spread the fame of his name (fill the earth) through action.
- B. God’s eternal mission is reflected in the two Great Commissions. Gen. 12:1-3; Matt. 28:18-20
 - 1. Abraham: God promises he will be a source of international blessing w/ 2 forms of grace.
 - 2. Disciples: God commands them to penetrate all nations.
- C. God’s international mission is predicted in Jesus’ promise in Acts. Acts 1:8; 2:1-4
 - 1. The place of Jesus’ commission is Jerusalem. The focus is on completeness.
 - 2. God gives a foretaste on the Southern Steps of the Temple.
- D. God’s international mission is empowered by Jesus. Matt. 16:13-19
 - 1. There is a message founded on a person: on this rock.
 - 2. There is an invisible-international group: the church.
 - 3. There is the promise of defensive power: gates of hell won’t prevail.
 - 4. There is the promise of spiritual power: keys to the kingdom.
- E. So what is Jesus’ eternal and international mission?

2. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE – God’s eternal mission has – *in fact* – spread to the ends of the earth. *An overview of the international missions movement...*

- A. The story of the growth of the Christian church is like waves on a sea.
 - 1. First wave: Christianity replaces the Roman Empire (A.D. 33-600)
 - 2. Retreat: Christianity struggles with the forces of Islam (A.D. 600-950).
 - 3. Second wave: Christianity expands throughout Europe and beyond (950-1350).
 - 4. Retreat: Christianity struggles again with Islam in the East (1350-1500).
 - 5. Third wave: There is a reformation and a scientific revolution (1500-1789).
 - 6. Retreat: The faith becomes mired in enlightenment colonialism (1789-1815).
 - 7. Fourth wave: Christianity explodes outward (1815-1914). A high point is 1910.
 - 8. Choppy Waters: Christianity advances through the storm (1914-present)
 - 9. Where we are today: Third Great Awakening in the Majority World.
- B. What characterizes authentic world Christianity today? Four things.
 - 1. World Christianity has moved from Western Christendom to Majority World.
 - 2. World Christianity remains founded on the Bible and biblical translation.
 - 3. World Christianity is expressed in service.
 - 4. World Christianity is expressed in the supernatural, prayer and warfare.

3. SO WHAT? – We cultivate confidence!

- A. The problem – When we see the decline of Christianity in the West, we often don’t respond with faith.
 - 1. Wrong responses – passivity, politics only, blend with the world.
 - 2. Why these responses are wrong – God promised his church would thrive. It is thriving.

- B. The right response – Assess, “How is God working right now in the city where I live?”
1. Assume that God’s eternal mission is working in your city.
 2. Assess what God is doing in your city.
 3. Assess what gifts you have that allow you to move in secular circles.
 4. Find a niche place to serve.