

The New Testament Pattern of Missions

by A.B. Simpson

The New Testament pattern of missions emphasizes the importance of prayer, the power of the Holy Ghost, and the divine order of the Gospel message in the evangelization of the world.

Scripture: Ezekiel 43:10, Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15, Luke 10:2, John 4:35

Topics: "Evangelism", "Missions"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the divine pattern of missions as outlined in the New Testament, urging the Church to recognize its responsibility in evangelizing the world. He highlights the importance of understanding the needs of the world, the power of prayer, and the necessity of sending out missionaries to reach the unreached. Simpson calls for a revival of the Church's commitment to missions, stressing that every believer has a personal commission to share the Gospel. He concludes with a reminder that the ultimate goal is to prepare for the return of Christ by spreading the Gospel to all nations.

Transcript

"Show the house to the house of Israel, and let them measure the pattern, and if they be ashamed of all that they have done, show them the form of the house and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the laws thereof" (Ezekiel 43: 10, II).

This was God's command respecting the temple which is yet to rise on Mount Moriah from the wreck of ages. Its deepest significance, however, is to be found in the spiritual temple of which that was but a type, that great house of God's building which consists of ransomed souls, and is built on the foundation of Christ Himself.

This house has a divine pattern. Just as the tabernacle of old was to be constructed strictly according to the pattern that was shown to Moses on the Mount, so the Church of Christ has a divine plan, and should be in every particular constructed accordingly. The failure to do this has been the cause of all the apostasies, declensions and mistakes of the past eighteen centuries, and is the reason that the heathen world is still lying in darkness and crying to God against the unfaithfulness of His people.

Let us look a little at this plan as Christ Himself has unfolded it, especially with reference to the evangelization of the world.

I. The first step in the work of the world's evangelization is to look intelligently at the field. And so the Master says to us, John 4: 35, "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest."

An intelligent conception of the needs of the world is the foundation of all true Christian work; but how little Christians, as a rule, know or even think about the great outlying world. How many could give an intelligent account of the needs of India, Africa or China? Our own little family circle or our church society absorbs our interest and is more to us than the millions who are perishing abroad. Our eyes are so limited that we cannot see beyond the bounds of our own denomination, and millions and millions of dollars are being wasted in multiplying churches, simply because we feel that we should spread our particular sect, when whole nations are without even a single voice to proclaim the story of Christ and His salvation.

Lift up your eyes, beloved, upon the 400,000,000 of China, the 322,000,000 of India, the 180,000,000 of Africa, the 60,000,000 of Japan, all in heathen darkness. Lift up your eyes upon the 80,000 ministers of the Gospel in America, and the more than 1,000,000 of Christian workers for 110,000,000 of people, and then think of one missionary for every 400,000 heathen, and ask if this is right, if this is God's plan for His house.

And then, the need is an immediate one. Say not, "There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest." The present generation must save the present generation. A celebrated missionary said that it would take three or four generations to reach the people of Africa, and it could only be done through the children. Our business is with the present generation. A thousand million souls must be saved within twenty-five years, or they never can be saved.

The fields are white, the doors are open, the needs are urgent. Let us understand them. Let us study missionary geography under the burning light of the Holy Ghost, and God will so write on our hearts the names of these peoples, and tribes and tongues, that we cannot rest until we have gone to them with the message of salvation.

2. The second step in the evangelization of the world is prayer. Luke 10: 2, "Therefore said He unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth laborers into His harvest."

If we look out on the fields, the most ardent and hopeful heart comes back from the vision utterly discouraged, as we look at the need and the apparent resources. A view of the heathen field, and the results even of one hundred years of missions, while it has many gleams of encouragement, is, upon the whole, heartbreaking. Several millions of souls have been saved from heathenism, but two hundred millions more of heathen are to be found in the world today than a century ago.

As we look at the story of the early century, it seems so different. In a single generation Paul and his associates had planted the Gospel successfully in almost every land. How is this? The answer is very simple. The Almighty God was in their work; there was no machinery, there were no societies, no great missionary offerings nor boards, no railroads, steamboats, telegraphs; and yet God made everything tell, and in a single missionary tour Paul was able to plant the Gospel in the whole of Greece, and lay the foundations of mighty churches for the coming centuries.

We have seen a few touches in our own time of God's mighty power in the mission field. The story of Madagascar, the story of Titus Coan in the Sandwich Islands, the story of Celebes and Fiji, the story of

Arnot in Africa, and Paton in the New Hebrides, are apostolic in their marvelous power and glory. They are types of what God would do and can do if we will let Him.

How is it to come about? By a ministry of prayer. The world is to be evangelized by the Church on her knees. God is to take this work in hand, and we are to recognize Him in it, and when His supernatural touch is fully realized, nations will be born in a day. Beloved, let us pray, and let all our missionary work be divine.

3. The third stage of the New Testament plan of missions was the sending out of the twelve and the seventy. The sending of the twelve was separate and can scarcely be called a precedent; but the sending of the seventy was undoubtedly meant to be a pattern of the work and the workers of the coming centuries, because, as He sent them, He commanded them to pray that others likewise should be sent forth, and they were, therefore, but the pioneers of the mighty army who were to succeed them in the coming ages. It is very beautiful to notice that they were to precede Him. They were to go to every city whither He himself should come. And so we in our missionary work, but go before Him, and He will follow us and follow up our work, and in a little while He will come in person. We are the pioneers of the Lord's coming.

These early missionaries were to be self-denying and simple in their lives. They were patterns of all true missionaries. They were not to carry any needless baggage nor look for earthly luxuries and comforts. They were light infantry intended to rapidly itinerate and cover the land with the message of His coming.

Oh, that all our missionaries were like them! They were to go two and two, and the Lord still sends His disciples in company; and they were to go armed with the power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and on all the power of the enemy; and yet to count this much less than the fact that their names were written in heaven.

4. The next step is the great public commission which He gave after His resurrection, "Go ye and disciple all nations," Mat. 28:19.

This was His great manifesto as a king. He was about to ascend to His throne and He proclaimed as He did so, that "All power was given to Him both in heaven and in earth." And, therefore, He sends forth His ambassadors to the nations of the earth to call them to His kingdom, and to carry to them His commands, and teach them to observe these commands until the end. The promise with which He accompanies it means more than His personal presence in the hearts of His people. It is the promise of His providential presence in a special sense and manner as the one to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth. It is a presence which carries with it all the omnipotence of the Godhead, and it is a promise that none can claim in its fullness unless they are obeying the command that precedes it.

This great commission has never yet been fully realized. It contemplates a worldwide evangelization so glorious and complete that no nation, nor tribe, nor tongue shall be overlooked. It calls us, especially, to look at the nations rather than the individuals of the race, and to see that the unevangelized peoples are the first objects of our care, and never to rest until this glorious Gospel shall have been proclaimed in every tongue spoken by man, and from every nation there shall be some representatives to herald the coming of the Son of Man.

5. The personal commission. Mark 16: 15, 16, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." This

is His commission to each individual to go to individuals. The former is a commission to nations, but this is to persons. Every member of the human family is to receive an offer of salvation and every one has an equal right to know the way of life. This is not a commission to the Church, but to each one of us. You have as much right to go in obedience to this as I. The world will never be evangelized until every individual Christian recognizes his personal call. Each of us has been called already, and we must give some answer; and if we cannot go personally, we must see that someone goes to represent us as far as it lies in us.

This is the most solemn and searching word on the subject of missions in the Bible. It will meet each one of us on the judgment day laden with the blood of souls.

Brother! Sister! as you read this page it speaks to you, and neither I nor any church on earth can absolve you from this eternal obligation nor excuse you from your duty. When God thus calls a man he is bound to go, and if all the Boards on earth refuse him, God will open some way for him.

6. The divine order of the Gospel message. Luke 14:16-24. The parable of the great supper is Christ's plan for the evangelization of the world. The first invited guests represent the ordinary hearers of the Gospel. God sends the message to them, but they are too busy with the world and their pleasures to go.

Then the second call is given: "Go out into the streets and lanes of the city." This is to the neglected at home. This is the work of rescue missions and home missions; it is extremely important, but it is not all. There is a third call: "Go out into the hedges, highways, to the outcasts, to the people beyond the pale of the Church, to the heathen and the lost," and this is what we are seeking to do. God requires no man to spend all his life in reiterating the Gospel to the people that will not receive it. He gives every one a chance; then He would have us pass on. The mistake of the Church has been that she has sat down to convert the whole of one country and is neglecting the great outlying masses that have never had the chance to hear the Gospel.

7. The enduement of power for missionary work. Acts 1: 8. "Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

The mighty undertaking which the Master was committing to their hands was beyond the power of man, and therefore He provided for them the infinite resources of the Holy Ghost. He was to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and so He did accompany them in their ministry with stupendous power and astonishing results. One sermon on the day of Pentecost brought thousands to conviction. In a single missionary journey the Apostle Paul established Christianity through the province of Asia Minor, and in another tour the great and civilized communities of Greece were led to accept the truth, and powerful churches established in all their leading cities. He tells us how in Thessalonica the truth was proclaimed with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and multitudes turned from idols to serve the living and true God and wait for His Son from heaven. Hearts of men were stirred and persuaded. Even in Corinth he reminds them how his word was not of excellent speech and man's wisdom, but in demonstration of spirit and of power.

This same mighty power is as necessary today in the perfection of ecclesiastical machinery. We are in danger of forgetting it. Modern schools, medical missions, industrial teaching, and a thousand other things can never take the place of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and the fullness of this power will never be known except in connection with the world's evangelization. It is for this that Christ especially promised it.

As we seek it, that we may be witness unto Him, we may claim it without limitation, and the wider our witness-bearing, the more glorious the power will be. A mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost on all the machinery on the mission field could bring the world's evangelization in a few years.

In the vision of the prophet, there lay a mighty army in the plain that had just been clothed with flesh and skin and had the forms of men, but they were dead. Suddenly there came a call, "Come forth, oh, breath, from the four winds and breathe upon these slain that they may live," and, lo, as the rushing wind swept from every side and thrilled those passive forms with life, they sprang to their feet and stood in ranks, an exceeding great army. So today, a few thousand men and women have stepped out in front of the armies of the living God and are holding the outposts around the globe while back of them lie millions and millions not more than half alive, languidly going through the forms of battle.

Oh, for the trump of God to wake the dead! Oh, for the breath of power to rouse the mighty host! Oh, for thousands of missionaries in every land, all alive with the Holy Ghost! From the workers on the field, from the native converts, from all the little bands pressed and depressed with the weight of Satan's power that fills the very air and paralyzes their spiritual energies, there comes this one cry above all others, "Pray for us that we may be filled with the Holy Ghost." Let us pray for them, and let us impart it to them from overflowing hearts. Let the mighty baptism of a missionary Pentecost begin at home and sweep in waves of fire till it girdles the earth with the mighty evangel, and rolls on to meet the armies of the Advent.

8. The special and supernatural signs which the Lord has promised shall follow the preaching of the Gospel. Mark 16: 17. "These signs shall follow them that believe. In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. And they went forth everywhere and preached the gospel, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following."

This is something that is included in the promise of Acts 1:8, and yet is a distinct part of it. We may have the baptism of the Holy Ghost without the special signs of power promised in this passage. These are given to a particular class; namely, "Those that believe." Dr. Young translates the passage, "Them that believe these things." It is not merely believing the Gospel, but believing for the special promises and signs. We get just what we believe for. Consequently, since the Church has lost her faith in a great measure in the supernatural signs and workings of the Holy Ghost, she has lost the signs also, and the result is that she is compelled to produce conviction upon the minds of the heathen very largely by purely rational and moral considerations and influences, and the direct appeal to the supernatural power of God, which the apostles ever made, is rarely witnessed.

The need, however, for these supernatural evidences among the heathen is as great as ever. The Brahmins of India can reason as well as we. The intellects of China are as profound as ours; the literature of heathen nations is full of subtlety and sophistry that can match all our arguments; but in the touch of God there is something that man cannot answer or explain away. God has been pleased to give these signs in the work at home in these last days. He has shown His supernatural power in the healing of disease and in marvelous answers to prayer, and He is just as willing to do the same things in the sight of the heathen, if we will but believe for these things.

We are not to go abroad to preach the signs, nor to begin with the signs, nor to produce the signs ourselves; our business is not to work miracles and wait until we can do so before telling the story of Jesus. Our work is to tell the simple story of His life and death and His resurrection, and to preach the

Gospel in its purity; but to do it expecting the Lord to prove the reality of His power, and to give the signs which He has promised.

Now, in order to do this, there must not only be faith on the part of the isolated missionary, but there must be supporting faith on the part of those who send him. There must be the united expectancy of the missionary abroad and the church at home, reaching across and around the world, and touching heaven with a chain of believing prayer. We must more and more recognize this if we expect our missionaries to be armed with a special supernatural power, and our work abroad to have the very same features as the work at home. Too little have we recognized this, but as we do so more and more, God will meet our expectation, and even the perils of dangerous climates and the difficulties that confront our work will become occasions for yet greater victories for the name of Jesus, and mightier displays of the divine omnipotence.

Beloved, God is calling us in these last days to be the instruments and channels through whom He can speak to the nations, and when we are prepared to understand Him and answer His call, a very few of us will be mightier than millions. God used a Daniel in Babylon, a Nehemiah in Jerusalem, and an Esther in Persia, through simple divine faith in Him, to accomplish more for His glory with great nations and empires than the whole kingdom of Judea had been able to accomplish in many centuries. There are dangers of excess and fanaticism we admit, and by these the enemy will try to destroy that which is true and prejudice that which is genuine; but there is the middle ground of supernatural reality and power, where we may safely stand, as far on one side from the excesses of Irvingism as it is on the other from the coldness of unbelief. We cannot expect the power of God to be manifested at the will and caprice of men as a mere wonder-working power; but where the conditions are properly met in a simple, holy and humble faith, God will not disappoint His trusting children, and will prove, as ever in the past, that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever."

9. The home preparation. In the story of the Acts of the Apostles we have a very instructive illustration of the necessity of the thorough preparation of the home field for the work abroad. God did not immediately begin foreign missions in the first days of the Apostolic Church, because the church itself was not ready. It would not have been possible to start a crusade for the world from Jerusalem--that church was too conservative and cold. God had to start a new center. Therefore the church in Antioch was raised up.

It was a mixed community--Jews and Gentiles and all social classes. There were some there who belonged to the court of Herod; there was the scholarly Saul of Tarsus; there was the good brother Barnabas, a business man; there was poor Simeon, a black man. It was a cosmopolitan company. It was not formed by ecclesiastical hands. It had just grown up spontaneously and providentially by a few simple words that these men had spoken one to another about this wonderful Gospel. There was a freedom, simplicity, largeness and freshness about this church in Antioch that brought it into touch with the great outlying world, and it was from this center that God sent forth the great missionary movement, from which our own evangelization has come, and which today is broadening into the evangelization of the whole world.

All this has its parallel in the Church of today. It is not possible through a cold, conservative ecclesiasticism to develop a true missionary movement. The work at home will always be reproduced abroad. Therefore, in these last days, God has been raising up in the home field, not a new sect, but a new spiritual movement in all the churches; a sort of church within a church. A spiritual company bound together by in-visible cords and touching hearts and hands in the Holy Ghost. And from these consecrated

circles He is calling out a new missionary movement. From them are coming men and women filled with the Holy Ghost to give their lives to the work, and from them are coming, through special self-sacrifice and consecrated business, large and wondrous offerings, that have awakened the attention of all Christians.

People ask us how it is that money can be so easily obtained and in such large sums. Back of it lies a deep, spiritual cause, a work of many years, a glorious movement which has been deepening the life and love of God in Christian hearts, and preparing them to feel that no gift nor sacrifice was worthy for a moment to be compared with the blessing that they had received. It would be impossible to go to an ordinary congregation of even wealthy people and obtain any such offerings unless they had been previously prepared by the Holy Spirit. It is because these people have given themselves and all they have to the Lord, and have found in Him a life and joy which nothing could recompense, and they are glad to give all they possess to send abroad the Gospel and share this blessedness with other hearts. And such a spiritual movement will always produce its counterpart in the foreign field. The work that grows out of such lives, will be a living, supernatural, aggressive and whole-hearted work.

We do not for a moment suggest any invidious comparisons, we recognize the piety and devotedness of the missionaries on the field, but we do say that those that have come from warm and loving churches, and that are supported in the spirit of self-denial, and upheld by believing prayer in the churches at home, will be the highest type of missionaries abroad.

And so, let us not be slothful nor negligent of the work in our midst. Even while laboring for the evangelization of the world, let us consider one another to provoke to love and to good works, and as the tides deepen here they will overflow on every distant shore.

10. The spirit of New Testament Missions is an aggressive one, ever reaching out to regions beyond. 2 Cor. 10:16, "To preach the gospel in the regions beyond and not to build on another man's foundation," this was the spirit of Paul's ministry. Ever reaching out to unoccupied fields, and never satisfied while there was still another land or tribe that had not received the Gospel.

After eighteen centuries there are still boundless fields in the regions beyond for us to reach out to. Of the world's 3,000 languages, 2,200 at least yet remain in which the Gospel has not been preached, and the Bible has not been translated.

Oh, surely every true and noble heart must understand the aspiration of the great apostle, and long to break away from the old trodden paths where so many others are competing for a place, and where there are few that have not some chance of knowing the story of salvation, and claiming whole tribes and nations for our inheritance and our spiritual offspring. There are hundreds competing for the one jewel that you are striving for at home, and when you grasp it you will have to share it with others. There are treasures in dark mines abroad that none can claim with you, but which you and your precious Lord may share together through the ages of glory, as a recompense of your labors.

William Carey might have been the pastor of a little English village, but now he is the apostle of India. Judson might have had a very prominent church in New England, but he is the father of the Karens of Burmah.

Oh, let us realize the honors and opportunities of our life, and despise the sacrifices and the trials through which they must be won.

II. The standpoint of Christian missions. Acts 15:16, 17. "God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name." After this, He says, "I will return and build again the tabernacle of David that has fallen down; restoring the ruins that the residue of men may seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles on whom my name is called saith the Lord that doeth all these things."

Here we have three distinct stages. First, God visits the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name. This is what He is doing in the missionary work of today. Second, after this, He returns to restore Israel and build again the tabernacle of His ancient people. This is His second coming for which we are looking and waiting. And then, thirdly, after His coming, the residue of men and all the Gentiles will seek and find Him, and in the millennial ages the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

This is all very simple and plain. This is the divine order up to which we are working. God is simply visiting the Gentiles today. It is a passing call. It is a selection of those who are willing to come. It is a spiritual preparation for His advent. He is gathering an escort which, in every tongue that man has spoken, shall be able to herald the coming King, and stand in glorious ranks around His millennial throne, as the first fruits of the nations. This is our mighty calling, to find a bride for Him; to gather a people for Him; to invite one and two and three here and there to meet Him. Let us not be surprised if multitudes refuse to come, they are doing it at home, they will do it in the lands abroad, but let us be content if we find His sheep; if we gather His people. Yes, if we even invite them. What an in-finite encouragement this gives to missionary work! We are not depressed if the world refuses to accept its Lord. It has always done so, it will do so till He comes, and seed will still be scattered in every field and furrow, and much of it will be choked with thorns, and plucked up by birds of the air or withered by the stony places; but some will bear fruit and His expectation will not be disappointed.

12. Finally, the end. Matt. 24:14, "This gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations and then shall the end come."

This is the consummation. We are preaching the Gospel not for the conversion of the world, but for a witness unto all nations, and when we shall have accomplished this, He will come. He has given to us the key to the future. He has put in our hands the secret of ages. God's great chronometer does not measure time by days and years, but by preparations and conditions, and the hour of the Marriage of the Lamb may be fixed by the bride.

Oh! how this should stir and thrill our hearts with holy energy and aspiration! I cannot understand how any man or woman can believe in the Lord's coming and not be a missionary, or at least committed to the work of missions with every power of his being. There is no mockery more sad and inconsistent than that of believing and speaking of the Blessed Hope with folded hands and selfish heart.

No man can rightly believe in the coming of Jesus without expending all the strength of his being in preparing for it by sending the Gospel to all nations. God is summoning those who hold this hope today to a great missionary crusade, and there are enough of these to make it effectual before the close of the generation, perhaps before the end of the century.

The Master's coming draweth near,

The Son of Man will soon be here,

His kingdom is at hand.

But ere that glorious day can be,
This Gospel of the kingdom we
Must preach in every land.
Oh, let us then His coming haste!
Oh, let us end this awful waste
Of souls that never die!
A thousand millions still are lost,
A Saviour's blood has paid the cost,
Oh, hear their dying cry!

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