
VIDEO LECTURE MODULE: BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

LECTURE 29: MISSION

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The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Module

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

30 LECTURES

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21 CHAPTERS OLD TESTAMENT · 9 CHAPTERS NEW TESTAMENT

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3. Fall
4. Noah
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Lecture 29

MISSION

Lecture Theme:

God calls his Church to proclaim his gospel to every tribe, tongue and nation, thereby displaying the glory of God through redemption in Christ and its power to bring many throughout the world to worship him.

Text:

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Mt. 28:18–20).

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 29

The pursuit of any project requires clear instructions. You must know both the goal, or end, and the plan and steps to get there. You need answers to both questions: what is the objective? and what is the strategy? This is true of everything from building a house, to engaging in a military exercise, to completing a project at work. Jesus did not ascend to heaven without providing clear instructions to His people. In erecting His kingdom, He supplied a clear sight of His final intentions as well as specific directions that His church must carry out in fulfilling them. He supplied precepts backed by promises.

What mission did Christ give to His church? What did the Old Testament foretell of this important work? How is the New Testament different from the Old Testament in the approach God gave to proclaiming the gospel? How is the glory of Christ connected to evangelizing the nations? What should we expect as result? What level of priority does God place on the church’s mission in the New Testament? How is worship related to evangelism? What is the ultimate end of taking the gospel to distant lands? Last time, we saw that God applies Christ’s completed work of redemption in history to every individual believer throughout time. In order for that to take place, the good news in Christ must be proclaimed to them.

In this lecture, we will consider the mission that Christ gave to His church to set forth His glory to every creature throughout the world, but let’s begin, first of all, by considering what the Old Testament had to say and how it promised all of these things. We have seen from the early chapters of Genesis that God’s plan of redemption was intended for people throughout the whole world. This is tied to Christ’s redemptive work in history. We read, for example, of the Father’s promise to the Son in Psalm 2:7–8, “I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto to me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” We read in Genesis 9:24 that God

would use the Jews, the seed of Shem, to establish His covenant and church, and the Gentiles would come into it and greatly expand it in the future. God also told Abram in Genesis 12:3, "And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." When the law was given under Moses, we read in Deuteronomy 4:6–8, that it would be a light to all of the surrounding nations, showing the wisdom of God. The Psalms are full of references of the gospel going to the nations of the world. For example, Psalm 67:2–4 says, "That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth."

There are countless references in the Old Testament prophets to the same thing. For example, Isaiah 60:3 says, "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." In Daniel 7:14, it foretells of Christ's worldwide reign at His ascension. It says, "And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." We have seen throughout this course many other examples of the building momentum within the Old Testament pointing forward to the fact that the Gentiles would be enveloped in God's plan of redemption. The early stages began with the chosen seed of Abraham, but it was to be taken to the Gentile nations. So later, Paul can say to the Romans in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

As we turn to the New Testament, we see the fulfillment of all of this. We also see an important transition within God's unfolding plan. Whereas the Old Testament employed a "come and see" emphasis, the New Testament issues a "go and tell" mandate. So, under the Old Testament, people could come to Jerusalem, come and see, to learn of Jehovah and of His salvation. We saw this with the Queen of Sheba, for example, who heard from a far-off of the wisdom of God and came to see it for herself. And, some Gentiles were brought into the covenant this way. Remember Rahab, who was one of the Canaanites in what became Jerusalem, or you think of Ruth who was a Moabitess, or Uriah [who] was a Hittite, and many others. They were brought into the covenant through their knowledge of the gospel, but it was a "come and see" emphasis, if you will.

But, before Christ's ascension He gave His church the great commission, which states, Matthew 28:19, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations." It's a "go and tell" mandate. The presence of God would no longer be confined to the geographical location of Israel. Instead, Christ says in Acts 1:8 just before His ascension, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come 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." This is a picture of expansion that would fill the whole earth.

Think back to Matthew 13 where Jesus tells a series of parables about the kingdom of heaven. They teach this point about expansion. And so, He'll speak of the mustard seed, which is the smallest, the tiniest, of all seeds, and how it grows into an enormous tree and fills the earth. He says this is a picture of the kingdom. Or, He uses the parable of leaven, leaven that is sown, if you will, into the lump and then fills the whole lump, or piece of bread; the kingdom begins small, and it fills the whole earth. In each case, it's a picture. You remember, Jesus had 12 disciples and a handful of other followers, or you think before Pentecost, 120 people are gathered in the upper room. It's a small beginning. And yet, Jesus says that the gospel would be taken to all creatures.

Jesus has conquered sin and death, Satan and hell, so He can promise to His church as He does in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The book of Acts describes the earliest historical development of all of this. Paul is raised up as the apostle to the Gentiles. and many join with him in his labors; but within the lifetime of the original disciples, the gospel spread from Jerusalem and Judea through Samaria and all the way through Asia and into Europe. Paul takes the gospel all the way to Rome, but he had his sights set even beyond that, on Spain, though he apparently died before reaching it. But, he writes in Romans 15:24, "Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company." The success of this gospel enterprise is secured by Christ Himself through His omnipotent reign.

Notice the words that precede the great commission. So, if you go back to Matthew 28, notice in verse 18 it begins with "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy

Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” You see the connection? Christ’s ascension and Christ having all power and authority is the basis for Him telling them, “Go, and teach all nations.” The spread and triumph of the gospel throughout the world is guaranteed because it is attached to Christ’s glory, which is why we read in Revelation 11:15, “and there were great voices in heaven, saying, the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom, of our LORD, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”

Well, the description of heaven itself exemplifies this gospel fruitfulness that the gospel is taken to the nations. In Revelation 21:24, nearly at the end of the Bible, it says, “And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.” But, Christ not only provided precepts for His church to follow, He also issued a precious promise, “Lo, I am with you always.” We have the promise of His presence throughout the Old Testament and New Testament and now to the end of the age, and it is His presence that makes all the difference. The gospel commission from Christ to disciple the nations lies near the heart of the true church. She can never be indifferent to the spread of the gospel through the work of foreign missions. Christ’s mandate establishes a divine priority on this glorious pursuit. The church’s mission is to make glad the nations through the spread of Christ’s glory, but the question remains: to what end? to what end is all of this? And, that brings us, thirdly, to the worship of God.

Taking the message of the gospel to the ends of the earth results in believers being brought to worship the living and true God. We read in Revelation 7:9–10, “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” Here you see the glory of Christ on full display and those of the nations that have been discipled worshiping at His footstool. Evangelism is the means, but worship is the end. In heaven, evangelism ceases, but worship continues for all of eternity.

The history of redemption consists in the display of God’s glory and bringing people through the redemption of Christ to worship the God of glory. This aim fulfills the original purpose for the creation of mankind. As we see in Revelation 4:11, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” In John 4:23–24, Jesus said, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

Biblical worship is central everything in biblical Christianity. Protestant reformer John Calvin said, “If it be inquired, then, by what things chiefly the Christian religion has a standing existence among us, and maintains its truth, it will be found that the following two not only occupy the principal place, but comprehend under them all the other parts, and consequently the whole substance of Christianity. That is, a knowledge, first, of the mode in which God is duly worshiped; and secondly, the source from which salvation is to be obtained.”

The public corporate worship of God is set apart from the rest of life, just as the Sabbath is set apart from the rest of the week and just as the Lord’s Table is set apart from all other meals. When God’s people have gathered for worship, it has always been a microcosm of heaven. This is illustrated in the tabernacle and in the temple, as well as in the New Testament assemblies, as we see in Hebrews 12:22–29. If the aim of our mission is to bring men to worship God, then we better be clear on what this worship entails. When Christ said in the great commission, “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,” that included the importance of worship. Again, John Calvin remarked, “He sends away His apostles with this reservation, that they shall not bring forward their own inventions, but shall purely and faithfully deliver from hand to hand (as we say) what He entrusted to them.” The whole Bible lays overwhelming emphasis on how we approach God in worship.

We learned in earlier lectures that the biblical law of worship teaches us that we are only to worship God as He has appointed. Any human innovation contrived by the vain imagination of the fallen mind of men, not commanded by God, that is introduced into the worship of God is idolatry. What he has positively prescribed is permitted, and what he has not instituted is forbidden, Deuteronomy 12:32, “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.” Westminster Confession of Faith chapter 21 paragraph 1 summarizes this when it says, “But the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshiped according to the imaginations

and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture.” So, for example, in the New Testament, the acts of worship that God has sanctioned include the reading of Scripture, the preaching of God’s Word, the singing of Psalms, prayer, administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper as the ordinary actions of worship. All of the strands gathered throughout Scripture are woven together to emphasize the priority of pure worship.

The goal is to bring people throughout the world to worship God in the way that He has appointed in His Word. Unregenerate men always have a natural propensity toward idolatry and false worship. Pagans worship what they please and as they please. Paul rebuked the Athenians in Acts 17:29 saying, “We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device.” We see the same thing underlined in Romans 1:21–25.

We need the Scriptures, which are alone sufficient to instruct us on how best to worship God. They teach us that Christ alone, as Head of His church, has the authority to appoint ordinances of worship. Westminster Confession chapter 20 paragraph 2 states, “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in any thing contrary to His Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship.” The church cannot invent new acts of worship as an independent, autonomous, sovereign body. We are to submit to what Christ has commanded. The second commandment establishes this principle, as you’ll remember, and the fear of God drives us to meticulous care in ordering our worship according to His Word.

We see this demonstrated throughout both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The first instance is found, of course, in the account of Cain and Abel, which we considered earlier in this course. In Leviticus 10:1–3, Nadab and Abihu were killed for worshipping in a way that God had not commanded them. Even kings were punished for this; think of Uzziah and Jeroboam. And, godly magistrates upheld this principle, for example, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Nehemiah. In Matthew 5:17–19, Jesus insists on the maintenance of the 10 Commandments. He rebukes the Pharisees for holding their manmade traditions of worship and rejecting God’s commands. When He cleanses the temple, He demonstrates His holy jealousy for the sanctity of the house of God. The rest of the New Testament teaches the same. Hebrews 12:28–29 say, “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire.” And we could go on.

The gospel delivers men from their natural idolatry and brings them to worship God in spirit and in truth, so we must be clear on the purity of worship that God specifies in the Bible, lest we bring men from one form of idolatry and replace it with another. The worship of God is attached to His glory. God gave His church the mission of taking the gospel to the nations to proclaim the good news of redemption found in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ so that those who are saved might be made glad in the sight of His grace and glory and enjoy the pleasure of ascribing unto Him all of the praise. So, you can recognize how this mission of taking the gospel to the nations is a means to the end of bringing men and women, boys and girls, from every nation, tribe, and tongue to worship the living and the true God according to His Word. This is very much central to the church.

So, in conclusion, we’ve seen that God calls His church to proclaim the gospel to every tribe, tongue, and nation, thereby displaying the glory of God through redemption in Christ and its power to bring those throughout the world to worship Him. What will be the end result of all of this? In our final lecture, we will explore what God reveals about the culmination of history on the last day and beyond.