

Creation to Christ

Lesson 12 Kingdom

Class Objective: To develop an understanding of the kingdom that is and the kingdom that is to come and our role in God's work.

Memorization: Panel 12 Kingdom

Jesus continues His work in the world through His Spirit and through His followers. God has set a day for Jesus to return to earth in all His glory and to judge all people. He will welcome His followers and turn away those who oppose Him. His kingdom will have no end. Until then, His followers are to pray and work together that the kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. We are to carry the good news of Jesus to others and serve Him in all that we do.

"The scope of the mission is all the peoples. Today, the Joshua Project says we have got about 6,000 people groups, give or take, that are still unreached. They don't have a self-sustaining church in their midst. Some are totally unengaged. Let's be part of changing that in our day. Let's reach all the people groups of the world with this news."

John Piper

Lesson Points: Matthew 28:18--20, 2 Corinthians 5:10

1. Jesus continues to work
 - a. Through His Spirit John 14:26
 - b. Through His Followers Acts 1:8
2. Jesus will return to earth Matthew 24:30, Acts 1:11
3. Jesus will judge Hebrews 9:27, John 5:28-29
 - a. Followers Welcomed Romans 5:8-9; 8:1
 - b. Unbelievers Condemned John 3:18
4. His Kingdom will have no end Daniel 4:3
5. The work of the followers
 - a. Pray Ephesians 6:17-19
 - b. Work Matthew 28:18-20

IX. The Kingdom – The Baptist Faith & Message

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10, 23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10, 16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6, 9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.

X. Last Things – The Baptist Faith & Message

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27, 30, 36, 44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40, 48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28, 35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

XI. Evangelism and Missions – Baptist Faith and Message

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8, 16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

The Catechism

Sometimes there are other ways to express a true answer to these questions. Feel free to use Scripture to formulate other true answers where possible and helpful. The aim of a catechism is not to be exhaustive but to give a solid base from which to "keep growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:17).

Question 12: How does God execute his decrees?

Answer: God executes his decrees in the works of creation and providence.

Scripture: Genesis 1:1; Revelation 4:11; Matthew 5:45; 6:26; Acts 14:17; Proverbs 16:9, 33, 19:21, 20:24, 21:1, 31.

Comment: Instead of "execute" you can say "perform" or "accomplish" or "bring about". The word "providence" will be taken up in a later question. For now it refers to the way God preserves and governs all his creatures and all their actions (like the fall of a bird or the election of a president). It refers to God's general rule over the world he has created.

Global Mission Focus via Joshua Project: Pick a new group each week and discuss the culture strategies and prayer needs. Pray over each need as a class. Invite children to pray.

Sunday School Lesson Notes
Creation to Christ Week 12

Name: _____

Memory Verse: Acts 1:8 (ESV)

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Lesson Points: Matthew 28:18--20, 2 Corinthians 5:10

1. Jesus continues to work
2. Jesus will return to earth
3. Jesus will judge
4. His Kingdom will have no end
5. The work of the followers

John 14:26, Acts 1:8

Matthew 24:30, Acts 1:11

Hebrews 9:27, John 5:28-29

Daniel 4:3

Ephesians 6:18, Matthew 28:18-20

The Catechism

Question 12: How does God execute his decrees?

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Scripture: Genesis 1:1; Revelation 4:11; Matthew 5:45; 6:26; Acts 14:17; Proverbs 16:9, 33; 19:21; 20:24; 21:1, 31.

Pray for the Nations
Arab, Northern Yemeni In Yemen



Population: 12,212,000
World Popl: 12,483,700
Total Countries: 3
People Cluster: Arab, Yemeni
Main Language: Arabic, Sansani Spoken
Main Religion: Islam
Status: ■ Unreached
Evangelicals: 0.00%
Chr Adherents: 0.00%
Scripture: Translation Needed
www.joshuaproject.net

"Declare his glory among the nations." Psalm 96:3

Notes:



Kingdom

Jesus continues His work in the world through His Spirit and through His followers. God has set a day for Jesus to return to earth in all His glory and to judge all people. He will welcome His followers and turn away those who oppose Him. His kingdom will have no end. Until then, His followers are to pray and work together that the kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. We are to carry the good news of Jesus to others and serve Him in all that we do.

-Jesus works through us

-Jesus will return

-We can share Jesus with others
Matthew 28:18-20

2 Corinthians 5:10

CREATION TO CHRIST WEEK 12 SCRIPTURE

Catechism Verses

2 Peter 3:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.

Genesis 1:1 (ESV)

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Revelation 4:11 (ESV)

¹¹ "Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created."

Matthew 5:45 (ESV)

⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

Matthew 6:26 (ESV)

²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

Acts 14:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."

Proverbs 16:9 (ESV)

⁹ The heart of man plans his way,
but the LORD establishes his steps.

Proverbs 16:33 (ESV)

³³ The lot is cast into the lap,
but its every decision is from the LORD.

Proverbs 19:21 (ESV)

²¹ Many are the plans in the mind of a man,
but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.

Proverbs 20:24 (ESV)

²⁴ A man's steps are from the LORD;
how then can man understand his way?

Proverbs 21:1 (ESV)

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD;
he turns it wherever he will.

Proverbs 21:31 (ESV)

³¹ The horse is made ready for the day of battle,
but the victory belongs to the LORD.

Lesson Verses

Matthew 28:18–20 (ESV)

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

2 Corinthians 5:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

John 14:26 (ESV)

²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Acts 1:8 (ESV)

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Matthew 24:30 (ESV)

³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Acts 1:11 (ESV)

¹¹ and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

Hebrews 9:27 (ESV)

²⁷ And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,

John 5:28–29 (ESV)

²⁸ Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

Romans 5:8–9 (ESV)

⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

Romans 8:1 (ESV)

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

John 3:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

Daniel 4:3 (ESV)

³ How great are his signs,
how mighty his wonders!
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and his dominion endures from generation to generation.

Ephesians 6:16–19 (ESV)

¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,

Matthew 28:18–20 (ESV)

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Arab, Northern Yemeni in Yemen

Provided by Joshua Project



Photo Source: [Richard Messenger](#)
[Creative Commons](#)



Arab, Northern Yemeni in Yemen

People Group Location from IMB. Other Map Data/Geography from GMMIS (GMI). Map by Joshua Project

Map Source: People Group Location from IMB. Other map data / geography from GMI. Map by Joshua Project.

Introduction / History

Northern Yemenis who are residing in Saudi Arabia, formerly lived in the northern mountains and northeastern deserts of Yemen, the poorest country in the Arab world.

Yemen has a turbulent history of wars and conquests.

Where Are they Located?

Northern Yemeni Arabs are primarily located in the southwestern area of Saudi Arabia, across the Dead Sea and the coast of Eritrea.

What Are Their Lives Like?

Over population, unemployment, drug abuse, unending political conflict, and tribal rivalries have driven many to Saudi Arabia seeking "greener pastures." However, the pastures are no greener than in their homeland. Their unemployment rate is between 20-40 percent.

What Are Their Beliefs?

Almost all Yemeni Arabs are Muslims, they tend to blend their Islamic religion with other beliefs, though they have been taught that the Koran and the Hadith hold life's spiritual answers. Embracing the Lord Jesus Christ carries heavy penalties in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. It is believed that small groups of believers meet secretly in homes.

What Are Their Needs?

Life for Yemeni Arab women in Saudi Arabia is extremely difficult and opportunities for a better life and family situations are limited on all fronts. Religious freedom and human rights are possibly the world's worst in Saudi Arabia. These people for whom Jesus gave His life need to hear the truth. The Bible has not been translated into Sanaani Arabic. It is available online,

People Name:	Arab, Northern Yemeni
Country:	Yemen
10/40 Window:	Yes
Population:	12,212,000
World Population:	12,483,700
Primary Language:	Arabic, Sanaani Spoken
Primary Religion:	Islam
Christian Adherents:	0.00 %
Evangelicals:	0.00 %
Scripture:	Translation Needed
Online Audio NT:	No
Jesus Film:	No
Audio Recordings:	Yes
People Cluster:	Arab, Yemeni
Affinity Bloc:	Arab World
Progress Level:	

but the Saudi government severely restricts Internet. There are some audio resources.

Prayer Points

* Pray for a move of the Holy Spirit that will give Northern Yemenis a willingness to embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and savior, depending on Him alone for salvation.

* Pray for a Disciple-Making movement among Northern Yemenis in Saudi Arabia that will spread to their desperately needy homeland, Yemen.

Text Source: Keith Carey



NOVEMBER 7, 1993

Let the Nations Be Glad

Missions Week

Resource by John Piper

Scripture: Psalm 67 Topic: World Missions

God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us—that thy way may be known on the earth, thy salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise thee, O God; let all the peoples praise thee. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for thou wilt judge the peoples with uprightness, and guide the nations on the earth. Let the peoples praise thee, O God; let all the peoples praise thee. The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us. God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear him.

Overview of the 1986 Missions Fest Sermon

When I preached on this psalm several years ago in our 1986 Missions Conference, I passed over the main point of the psalm explaining that Don Richardson was going to cover that at his seminar. Instead I took my points from the rest of the psalm.

God's Purpose Is to Be Praised in All the Nations

I said that the psalm teaches that God's purpose is to be known and praised and enjoyed and feared among all the nations.

- To be known: verse 2—"That thy way may be known on the earth."
- To be praised: verse 3—"Let the peoples praise thee, O God; Let all the peoples praise thee."
- To be enjoyed: verse 4—"Let the nations be glad and sing for joy."
- To be feared: verse 7—"That all the ends of the earth may fear him."

That was my first point: God is jealous to be known and praised and enjoyed and feared. He is displeased when people are ignorant of him or disrespectful to him or bored around him or unduly casual in his presence.

God Wants People to Know What Kind of God He Is

The second point was that what God wants people to know about him is that he is a God of justice, a God of power, and a God of grace.

- A God of justice: verse 4—"Thou wilt judge the peoples with uprightness."
- A God of power: verse 4—" [Thou wilt] guide the nations on the earth."
- A God of grace: verse 1—"God be gracious to us and bless us."

In other words seven years ago I stressed what is just as true, and even more needed, today—namely, that there is one true and living God and that he wills to be known by all the peoples of the world. And that means known subjectively with joy and praise and fear, and known objectively as being one kind of God and not another—being just and powerful and gracious.

Psalm 67 does not support the kind of new age spirituality so common today that simply emphasizes the mood of serenity and solemnity through meditation and centering without any serious concern that the Object in focus be the true and living God.

God wants to be known for who he really is: just and gracious and powerful, so that our praise and joy and fear are rooted in reality not imagination and really show God's worth and glory.

The Main Point of Psalm 67

God Blesses Us so That the Nations Will Be Blessed

But I passed over the main point seven years ago—at least in one sense it's the main point. The main point of the psalm is what the psalmist does with all that truth. He knows that God wills to be known and praised and enjoyed and feared for who he really is. So his response is to pray that God would bless Israel in such a way that God really would be known among the nations.

In other words, the main point of the psalm is the link between verses 1 and 2 found in the word "that." He prays, "God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us; that thy way may be known on the earth, thy salvation among all nations."

So the point I want to stress this morning is this: God blesses his people for the sake of the nations.

God's Point Throughout History

This was the foundational truth that God spoke to Abraham when he called him out of Ur of the Chaldees: "I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:2–3).

It was a theme that Isaiah and others picked up in words like, "I will give you [Israel] as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6).

This is almost exactly what the psalmist says in Psalm 67:1–2. Only the psalmist turns that promise into a prayer (which is what we should do with promises): "God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us; that thy way may be known on the earth, thy salvation among all nations."

God promises blessing to his people because he wants them to be a blessing to the nations. Therefore we should pray for blessing on ourselves for the sake of the nations.

This is not because God does not love us, or is just using us. It's because he loves the nations and because he knows that our joy in all that God is for us increases when it expands into the lives of others. In other words, when we ask for God's blessing on us for the sake of the nations we are also asking for our joy to be full.

When God Will Most Likely Bless Us

God will most likely bless us when we are planning to bless the nations.

There is another point implied in this main one: if God blesses his people for the sake of the nations; then God is most likely to bless us when we are planning and longing and praying to bless the nations. If God wants his goods to get to the nations, then he will fill the truck that's driving toward the nations. He will bless the church that's pouring itself out for unreached peoples of the world. And this blessing is not payment for a service rendered; it's power and joy for a mission to accomplish. When we move toward the unreached peoples, we are not earning God's blessings, we are leaping into the river of blessings that is already flowing to the nations.

Two Truths in Verses 1 and 2

So we have two truths in the connection between verses 1 and 2.

1. God blesses his people for the sake of the nations.
2. Therefore God is most likely to bless us when we are planning and longing and praying to bless the nations —and to make the nations glad in God.

The way I to want reinforce these two truths in your mind this morning is to tell you about ten blessings from the last decade here at Bethlehem, which, I think, illustrate a few ways that God blesses a people who are bent on blessing the nations—the unreached peoples of the earth.

How God Led Me to Be a Missions-Minded Pastor

Bethlehem was a fairly missions-minded church when I came 13 years ago, but I was not very missions-minded

pastor when I came. A book like this (*Let the Nations Be Glad: the Supremacy of God in Missions*) would have been unthinkable for me to write in 1980. But God did some pretty decisive things in the fall of 1983—ten years ago this month.

I preached the sermon, "Missions: The Battle Cry of Christian Hedonism," and felt that a Rubicon had been crossed. Tom Steller and I and others that were here in those days felt like a new calling had come on our lives to direct this church more and more toward the unfinished task of reaching the unreached peoples.

I look back at my journal from those days and find the evidence of God's hand getting us ready for more blessing by turning our hearts to the nations.

For example, on December 9, 1983, I wrote,

Noël and I are reading Ruth Tucker's book, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*. Last night I read the section on Zinzendorf. It was encouraging because it showed that a man can inspire others to do a thing for which he is unsuited . . . Zinzendorf inspired a great missionary force but in the few efforts of foreign missionary service which he made, his experience was unhappy . . .

Whatever I am good for it is encouraging to know that others can be inspired to do what I may be unsuited for. We are not apparently locked into only mobilizing duplicates of ourselves.

Is this not already happening at BBC? I am praying that we become increasingly a launching pad for missionaries and pastors and teachers and evangelists. Matthew 9:38 now precedes Matthew 28:19–20 in my missionary thinking. I must not feel squeamish, as I have, about challenging others to do things I may not be very good at or comfortable in.

Eight days later there is an entry on how inspiring Mary Drewry's biography of William Carey was to me because of all the hardships he endured without ever giving up for 40 years in India.

A month later in January of 1984 I wrote,

A new sense is in my life owing to my new awakening to the big unfinished Cause of Missions and to the wartime mentality I am trying to cultivate. The sense is this: as I kneel to pray this morning about a very busy Monday I feel a new strategicness about it all. I feel the sense of wanting and expecting God to make every meeting and visit and report and leisurely contact and Bible study and preparation a part of a plot, thought through and schemed for the effectual execution of a strategic invasion of Satan's domain either to achieve today some act of liberation for the captives, or to plant decisive explosives at the prison doors and lay the wires and hide the maps and rations for the day not far hence when I or someone else will ignite the fuse of God's power.

Six weeks later in the glow of the first Missions in the Manse I wrote a prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, rise like the sun on our darkness. Be exalted in your matchless power and wisdom and love! To see you and know you in your fullness, Lord Christ, is the key to all power . . . So I look to you. I marvel at you. I long to know you. Shine Lord! Crack the dark in every heart, Lord Jesus. Use me. Use me.

Use me to fill the world with your glory.

God was doing something in those days to fix our prayers and our hopes and our plans on the nations. In view of what Psalm 67 says in verses 1 and 2 I attribute many of our blessings in the last ten years to this awakened sense of calling to be a church for the nations, as well as a church for the neighborhood. God blesses his people for the sake of the nations. And if we devote ourselves to reaching the nations, God will very likely bless us.

10 Ways God Has Blessed Us at Bethlehem

Let me list off ten of the blessings that I think have come for the sake of the unreached peoples of the earth.

1. God-Centered Worship

For the nations God has blessed us with ten years of intense, earnest, authentic, God-centered, hope-giving, life-changing worship. One of the reasons for this blessing is that we see worship as the fuel and the goal of world missions. The goal of world missions is the gladness of the peoples in the glory of God. The fuel of that goal is our own gladness in God. If we are not real and deep and fervent in our worship of God, we will not commend him among the peoples with genuineness. How can you say to the nations, "Be glad in God!" if you are not glad in God?

2. Globe-Circling Prayer

For the nations God has blessed us with passionate, God-sized, globe-circling prayer. We do not have big prayer meetings. But there are many small clusters of praying people. And the ones I am a part of bear the wonderful marks of missionary zeal. They are laced with the bigness and unstopability of God's purposes in history.

3. Suffering

For the nations God has blessed us with suffering. We cannot calculate the good effects of God's severe mercies in these recent years. It has broken us, softened us, weaned us more from pride and from the temporary things of the world, and fixed us more on the eternal matters of salvation and holiness and the lostness of the peoples. God gives us the gift of suffering for the sake of the nations.

4. Courageous Faith

For the nations God has blessed many of you with courageous faith. When Tim White was shot there, was no mass exodus from the city. When the violence subsided in Congo, Steve and Julie went back. When there was the threat of radioactivity in their town in China, Mark and Rene went back. When ELWA was surrounded by rebel forces, David Decker stayed behind. When political upheavals are expected in Guinea this December, David and Faith go in anyway. God is blessing us with the preciousness of genuine courageous faith because we have our hearts set on the nations. They won't be reached without it.

5. A World Christian Pastoral Staff

For the nations God has blessed us with a World Christian pastoral staff. Is it an accident that all of us have been overseas in one kind of ministry or another? Dan Lehn in China, David Livingston in Nigeria, Tom Steller in Cameroon, Joan Lovestrand in Indonesia and the Philippines, Brad Nelson in Mexico and Thailand, Greg Dirnberger in Japan, Dean Palermo in Colombia, David Michael in Ecuador, and I in Liberia. This is a blessing from God on this church for the sake of the nations.

6. Increasing Numbers of People

For the nations God has blessed us with increasing numbers of people. In 1983 there were less than 600 of us in worship. Today there are about 1,200. Here's an entry from my journal in April 1983: "Let's grow in order to build a sending base for the frontiers. Let's think of recruiting people for the mission of evangelizing unevangelized cultures. God will not honor our zeal for growth if it is motivated by vanity. But he will if it is motivated by love for his glory and concern for the cultures without a gospel witness." I believe God honored that and has given us growth for the sake of the nations.

7. Increased Giving

For the nations God has blessed us with increased giving. Not just because there are more people but because there is more radical commitment to live and give like heaven and hell are at stake. The giving per attendee has far more than doubled between 1983 and 1993. Our missions budget has increased in that period six-fold from \$72,000 to \$484,000 and from 22% of the budget to 34% of the budget while the compensation for pastors and staff has dropped from 52% to 42% of the budget. This remarkable increase is the blessing of God for the sake of the nations.

8. Our New Building

For the nations God has blessed us with this building. That is a controversial thing to say. Not all of us thought we should build a building like this. But God is merciful with the honest disagreements of his people. The fund raising plan was called SPAN I and then SPAN III—Spreading Praise to All Nations. God blessed us with this building for the sake of the nations. That was our plan—that it exist to spread praise to all the nations. If we honor that intention, God will see to it that the building is paid for, and perhaps sooner than the seven years that remain on the loan.

9. A Vision and Prayer Goal

For the nations God has blessed us with a vision, a prayer goal, of 2000 by 2000—to send 2,000 people out from us (in short term or vocational missions) and to win 2,000 people from lostness here at home, by the year 2000.

10. Missionaries

For the nations God has blessed us with missionaries. It is overwhelming how many people, younger and older, are being called by God to uproot from the comforts and security of Minnesota to minister cross-culturally for the sake of the kingdom. Of the 85 people listed on your blue folder this morning only nine of them, I believe, were already on the field in 1982. And besides these, there are now over 50 people in the nurture program on the way into missions at Bethlehem. In one sense, Bethlehem is not just a church, it's a missionary recruiting and support agency. God continues to answer the prayer of [Matthew 9:38](#) among us: "Lord of the harvest, send out workers into

your fields."

Prayer for God's Added Blessing

We have seen in Psalm 67 and we have seen in our experience the truth that God blesses his people for the sake of the nations. Now I want to pray for his added blessing, especially on two groups of people.

One, those of you who have discerned God's call on your life and are now moving intentionally through whatever processes are necessary toward a missionary vocation cross-culturally.

Two, those of you who in recent years or even days have been unsettled where you are and are wondering seriously if God might be calling you and are seeking his will in this matter and would like prayer for clarity and assurance whether for next year or five years from now.

There is every reason biblically to believe that the blessing of God will remain on us in the years to come if we remain committed to being a blessing to the unreached peoples of the world—not just to the people around us, and not neglecting the people around us, but remembering that there are several thousands of people groups with no witness to Christ at all. Not forgetting that the University of Minnesota has thousands of unbelievers next door, but also remembering that in Turkey there are 343 universities with 500,000 students with not one Christian student organization planted on those campuses.

We are on the brink of a tremendous surge in missionary sending at Bethlehem. It is necessary that all ten of these blessings from the last ten years keep on abounding—and more. Give yourselves to prayer for the company of goers and for the enlarging and strengthening of the sending base here at home.