

MINISTERIAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

SEMINAR I

Theme: “The Mission and Ministry of the Pentecostal Church”

The Global Mission and Ministry of the Local Church

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INTRODUCTION

In order to fully understand the global mission and ministry of the church, one must go back to its origin. The origin rests entirely in God; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The New Testament refers to the church as “the church of the living God” (1 Timothy 3:15). Jesus Christ speaks of the church as “my church” (Matt. 16:18). Throughout the Book of Acts, it is the Holy Spirit who inspires and fills the church with wisdom and power.¹

In the past one hundred and eighteen years, the Church of God has experienced many changes: hairstyles, neckties, transportation to and from church, from telegraph to telephone to e-mail and today, high-speed internet ministries transports the Gospel anywhere electricity is found. A ministerial application from the year 1916 (The letterhead was posted: General Overseer, A. J. Tomlinson, 2525 Gaut Street, Cleveland, Tennessee) had the following questions:

¹ J. Rodman Williams, *Ten Teachings*, (<http://home.regent.edu/rodmwil/10teach-08.htm>, 1974), 1.

- Question # 42 – Are you able to repeat the books of the Bible from memory?
- Question # 64 – Do you have any personal debt that is owed and if so, do you have property to cover them?
- Question # 69 – Have you ever used any medicine for yourself?
- Question # 73 – Have you ever chewed gum before?
- Question # 74 – Does your wife or children use chewing gum?
- Question # 80 – Do you usually try to dress nice and neat when you preach?

We, as twenty-first century Church of God members, have seen many changes in the church throughout the past 118 years. But there is one thing for sure, the global mission and ministry of the church has never changed nor will it ever change.

Jesus said, “The church is my church.” Ephesians 1:22 proclaims that God has placed all things under the authority of Christ, and God has given Christ this authority for the benefit of the church. This scripture defines the church as “Christ’s body”. When people say, “I do not need the church,” what they are really saying is “I do not need Christ’s body.”

When we speak of the church, we’re not merely speaking of the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee or the Assembly of God, Springfield, Missouri or the Methodist, the Baptist, the First Nazarene...the church is the body of Christ! We must understand that the church is the body of Christ if we are to carry out the global mission of the church.

I. WHAT MAKES THE CHURCH WORK – WHAT MAKES THE CHURCH GROW?

There is a Church of God in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti with over 8,000 Church of God members. What is impressive about this particular church is that Haiti is a nation that just 200 years ago dedicated her country to Satan. Overcoming obstacles that many of us may never be able to understand, God has blessed the Haitian church in more ways than we can imagine or think. **“What makes this church work?”** It is **miracles, signs, and wonders!** Many of the people in this church were once in bondage but were miraculously saved and delivered by the power of Jesus Christ. These people had been radically transformed from darkness to light. This is what makes the church work and grow! **Miracles! Signs! Wonders! God’s presence!**

II. THE CHURCH AND ITS MISSION

If we truly understand the origin and foundation of the church, its mission becomes evident. The church, which includes the Church of God, is to be an agency of God for **evangelizing the world**. Jesus said, “Ye shall be my witnesses.” Witnesses - that’s what we are to be! When the church loses the focus of witnessing, that’s when we’re done. You can write us off. We’re finished! When a church starts looking inwardly, that’s when the ministry is over...done! Jesus said, “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” Involvement in missions, at home and abroad, is not an option; it is a command! “Go ye therefore,” Jesus said, “Teach all nations, baptize them, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you and lo I am with you even until the end of the earth” (Matthew 28:19).

It is not enough to say that the church is simply interested in missions or even that we are somehow involved in taking part in the promotion of missions. A great deal of missionary interest and effort fall short of being satisfactory because many times the whole concept of what missionary enterprise is totally inadequate. Many would relate “pity for the people, cruel sufferings, hungry children,” and even the “training for a better way of life” to be the definition of true missionary work. The definitions of the global mission and ministry of the church must be much deeper and much broader in order to have a solid foundation for worthy and enduring missionary effort. In Robert Hall Glover’s book entitled The Bible Basis of Missions, he states:

The missionary enterprise is no human conception or undertaking, no modern scheme or invention, no mere philanthropy even of the finest kind. It did not originate in the brain or heart of any man, not even the apostle Paul. Its originating source was in the heart of God himself. In Jesus Christ, God’s great missionary to a lost world, was the supreme revelation of His heart and expression of His love.²

John 3:16 boldly underlines the great surrender as Jesus Christ paid the ultimate sacrifice for the sins in the lives of the world. This scripture clearly states that God so loved the world that He gave. You cannot love without giving. John 3:16 is commonly regarded as the central text of the New Testament, the very heart of the Gospel. This

² Robert Hall Glover, M.D., F.R.G.S. *The Bible Basis of Missions* (Los Angeles, California: Bible House of Los Angeles, 1946), p.13.

text and many others like them make clear the fact that the redemption of the whole world was God's great purpose from the beginning.

III. THE MISSIONARY HEART OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

It has been said that the New Testament is the greatest missionary volume ever produced. Every section of it was written by a missionary, with a primary objective of meeting a missionary need and promoting missionary work. Robert Glover puts it this way:

The New Testament draws its breath in missions, it incarnates missions, wherever it goes it creates missions.³ From beginning to end, the New Testament is a book of mission. It owes its very existence to the missionary work of the early Christian churches, both Jewish and Hellenistic.⁴

The Gospels are "living recordings" of missionary preaching, and the Epistles are not so much some form of missionary apologetic as they are authentic and actual instruments of mission work.⁵

The global mission and ministry of the local church can be identified all through the New Testament and the teachings of the personal ministry of Jesus. For example, "God so loved the world" – "The field is the world" – "I am the light of the world" – "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me" – "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring." Jesus himself is identified as a missionary as He

³ Ibid. p. 22

⁴ Ibid. p. 23

⁵ Ralph D. Winter & Steven C. Hawthorne, (eds.) *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1981), p. 45

spoke to the woman of Samaria and announced Himself as both the Messiah of the Jews and the Savior of the world. With His miracles and parables alike, Jesus gave evidence of His sympathy and mission. How can anyone diminish these Scriptures into simple church tradition? For the Christian Church, the body of Christ, these Scriptures bring specific importance to the theology of Christian mission.

IV. THE GREAT COMMISSION

The Great Commission was not recorded just once but actually five times in the New Testament. By this fact, it must be evident that the global mission and ministry of the local church and every Christian is the preaching of the Gospel to the whole world and the church's supreme business. Mark 16:15 says, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Luke 24:47 says, "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." John 20:21 says, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." The missionary task is the responsibility of Christ's followers, the body of Christ, and each Christian as we are the ones entrusted to the spreading of the Gospel in the Christian movement.

V. CHURCH IS ABOUT WORSHIP

The church is to be a corporate body in which we worship God. I Corinthians 12 deals with this at great length. As said earlier, we are part of the body of Christ and in this body of Christ we are to worship God. It is the will of God for us to worship Him. Worship involves music, it involves praise, but it involves a whole lot more than that! Worship involves our personal daily devotion time with the Lord. Worship

involves spending time with God, individually and corporately. Not just on Sunday morning during worship, but seven days a week. Many times, we as Christians in the great body of Christ come together on Sunday morning and we sing how wonderful He is...how lovely He is... how marvelous and glorious He is... If He is everything we say He is on Sunday morning, then why do we not spend more time with Him everyday? Worship involves the way we live and it is a part of the ministry of the local church to promote the worship of its King, its Lord, and its Savior of the world.

VI. THE CHURCH AND THE SCOPE OF SALVATION

The Chicago Daily News once reported that Billy Graham, in talking about what Americans need most, stated: “It is absolutely impossible to change society and to reverse the moral trend unless we ourselves are changed from the inside out. Man needs transformation or conversion....our only way to mold reform is through repentance of our sins and a return to God.” The Old Testament, in no uncertain terms, reiterates the same truth over and over again. Second Chronicles 7:14 is a perfect representation of this very specific statement: “If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

Even a casual look at the world quickly reveals man’s condition in sin and the awful plight in which this fallen condition has left him. Furthermore, it is a condition against which mankind is completely helpless when left to his own human resources.

The Bible speaks, however, of God's gracious plan to provide a solution to man's problem. We call it salvation or soteriology.⁶

The global mission and ministry of the local church is not just to build buildings, to educate and train, to feed the hungry, or even to raise large amounts of money. The greatest priority of the body of Christ and the highest mission of the church is to bring **salvation** throughout the world. Acts 3:19 says, "Therefore repent and turn in order that your sins may be blotted out, so that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord"; Acts 26:20 states, "...they should repent and turn to God and perform deeds worthy of repentance." Repentance without turning one's life over to God does not obtain remission of sins; neither does turning one's life over to God without repentance bring remission of sins. It is a given that people do not repent and become converted until they know that they are sinners and that they need the Savior. **This is where the church can define the importance of its ministry and mission.** Before one can accept Christ as his/her personal Savior, he/she must become informed of the elements of the Gospel. Evangelism is at the center of the global mission and ministry of the local church. Not only does humankind need to know that their sins will bring the inescapable judgment of God upon themselves, but also that they can never enjoy life in its fullness here and now until they become converted and experience God's marvelous transforming grace.

Jesus himself offered a better existence for humankind when He declared in John 10:10, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." He also promised

⁶ J. Hampton Keathley III, "Soteriology: The Doctrine of Salvation" (<http://www.bible.org/docs/theology/soter/soter.htm>, 1997), 1.

“...my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full (John 15:11)...and your sorrow will turn into joy (John 16:21)...and no one will take your joy from you (John 16:22).”

The apostle Paul described the salvation experience in these words: “Wherefore if any one is in Christ he is a new creature; the old has passed away, behold it has become new” (II Corinthians 5:17). The global mission and ministry of the local church and body of Christ clearly prioritize the message of salvation. John Wesley once stated,

Sinners, turn, why will you die?
God, your Saviour, asks you – Why?
He who did your souls retrieve,
Died Himself that you might live.
Will you let him die in vain?
Crucify your Lord again?
Why, you ransomed sinners, why
Will you slight his grace and die?

CONCLUSION

We, the community of faith, a priesthood of believers, those who understand the mission of Ecclesia have personally confessed salvation in Christ and are living in the “already – not yet” dimension in which Dr. Steve Land speaks of in his book on Pentecostal Spirituality. We should watch and wait with anticipation and excitement for the return of Christ. We are to live everyday as a witness to the love of Jesus and to demonstrate holiness of life to the world. Let us be what He wants us to be and never lose the desire of His soon return for His Church. Only then can we really hope to hear the words of welcome from the Father: “Enter in my good and faithful servant.” We have not yet arrived at our goal, but we have already discovered the joy of our global mission and mandate to bring the message of God’s love and grace to a lost world.