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## THE MISSION FIELD IN 3D:

### *The Agony and Authority of the Son of Man*

October 30, 2005

#### Contrasting colors of 3D lens

MOST OF US do not like borrowing glasses. Glasses are personal, and we like wearing our own. The exception to this is however, once we walk into a 3D movie theater. There, if we keep our own glasses, we will miss the effects of the movie and everything will look flat. One has to put on the 3D glasses, glasses not made of two contrasting lenses, a red lens and a blue lens; to bring stunning dimension to a flat movie screen. It is the strong contrast of the lens that brings life to the screen. The worldwide mission of God is like a 3D movie screen. If you look at missions, without the lens of Biblical Truth, it will look flat. Even worse, it may look discouraging and confusing. To see it properly you have to take off the glasses we are used to wearing, (those with the lens "efficiently" and "efficiency") and put on the Biblical glasses filled with two contrasting "lenses" that brings dimension to God's global work.

First, there is a lens of glory. There are no promises in the world that can match the glory and epic sweep of the promises a Christian has in Jesus Christ. For example, consider the implications of this simple phrase if it is true: "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." It follows then, that in this little class, there is more firepower than all the rest of the world combined for the simple reason that living in us is something that is greater than the world. And there are hundreds of other promises that give weight and reason to the great and unshakable truth: that God, in the Gospel, is *for us*.

However, there is a second lens that stands *in contrast to the first*. It is the lens of disappointment, discouragement and pain.<sup>1</sup> The Bible is unflinching in the ways it calls us as Christian to look courageously through *both lenses* to see accurately what God is doing. If we

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<sup>1</sup> I am trying on purpose to avoid the word "suffering." It is so used sometimes that it loses its feeling in our Silicon Valley lives. We read about missionaries "suffering" surrounded by cannibals, or facing fierce Muslims and we imagine it is a different category from the general heaviness, discouragement, disappointment and weariness of our own lives.

have glory lens but not the pain lens we become sentimental optimists that have no depth. Don't you know the people who seem to "chatter the promises of God" so lightly and so easily? Whose, "hallelujah, praise the Lord" has the same tone and sound whether it is over their McDonalds hamburger or the triumph of the missionaries in Algeria?

If we have the pain lens and not the glory lens we are prone to overwhelming despair, depression, or even worse, escape and numbness. Grief that looks squarely in the face of what is really there is much healthier than optimism that ignores and escapes. The world has perfected the art of living in escape. The world often looks at the world with their own glasses; a faithless lens that denies the glory, and an "anesthetizing" lens that just tries to escape any pain. For me this describes so much of the addictions of secular people: food addictions, alcohol, workaholics, movies, escape to cozy "nice-world" of suburban America. Christians are called to behold the glory with faith and face the pain straight-up.

What does this have to do with missions? A problem that grieves me is when I see the church wearing the world's glasses instead of the 3D glasses of the Bible. The result is that the church loses vision, get addicted to comforts, and is impotent to give herself with JOY (glory lens) and SACRIFICE (pain lens) to the cause of world missions. So the purpose this morning is to polish the lens to liberate us to get involved with joy and sacrifice to what God is doing in the world.

*To do this I want to look at one of the best promises in the Bible, and the way Jesus applies it as one of the best promise in relating to world missions. The clear river water that wanders through the woods starts high the rugged mountains. The promise we are going to look at is common place to all of us, but sometimes we forget the tall mountains were it comes from. The promise starts in a high, lofty mountain of revelation and flows down into the New Testament.*

## **PART 1: THE BOOK OF DANIEL**

The exile was dark time in Israel's history. We think of "exile" it as something purely political, or get the image of a desert island. For the Jews, it embodied the whole concept of being "cursed" it was the last stage, and it was a nations "death-sentence." The reason was that

all God's blessing to his people in the Old Testament were connected to the Land. The "Promised Land" to Abraham, the Exodus "to the promised land" and blessings at the time of David and Solomon all show that God blessed his people through the land. The land "mediated God's blessings to his people." So the word "exile" to a Jew would have been the word "amputation" to an athlete. "Cancer" or "Alzheimer's" would be for us. Exile was a fine-tuned machine to destroy a nation and eradicate all its loyalty.

Listen to Jeremiah's grief as the nation is carried into exile. He writes a poem:

"How lonely sits the city that was full of people!  
She has become like a widow who was once great among the nations!  
She who was a princess among the provinces has become a forced laborer!  
She weeps bitterly in the night and her tears are on her cheeks;  
She has none to comfort her among all her lovers.  
All her friends have dealt treacherously with her;  
They have become her enemies.  
Judah has gone into exile under affliction and under harsh servitude;  
She dwells among the nations, but she has found no rest;  
All her pursuers have overtaken her In the midst of distress."

#### **Lamentations 1:3-5**

What more, exile was a time when it looked like God was not a powerful king. To most people who were reading the newspaper and not listening to the prophet Jeremiah, all stakes were against YHWH. It looked like Darius, and Nebuchadnezzar and Balthazar had the power and God has deserted his people. The time of exile was a time of deep, discouraging darkness.

**In this context Daniel has the most descriptive vision of God in the OT.<sup>2</sup>** And he describes what he saw in a poem that we can look at. Let's look at this poem.

Daniel 7: 9-10

"I kept looking Until thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took His seat;

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<sup>2</sup> VanGemeren 348

His vesture was like white snow And the hair of His head like pure wool.  
His throne was ablaze with flames; its wheels were a burning fire.  
A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him;  
Thousands upon thousands were attending Him,  
And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him;  
The court sat, And the books were opened.

Let's look at just two things: His name and His throne

a) **His name** is "the Ancient of Days"

Nebuchadnezzar died, Balthazar died, Darius would die, King David died, Solomon died, all kings died and this king's name "is the Ancient of Days." This is the only time this name is used in the Bible. It means that God is older than days. He is eternal; he outlives *days*. What king can say *that*?

Every king that has ever lived—not matter how great his glory was—was eventually overthrown. But what if you are a King that stands outside of "days?" The walls that surround this king are made of *time itself*, and no human has ever been able to penetrate such a barrier.

b) "**His throne** was ablaze with flames, its wheels were a burning fire. A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him,  
And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him"

Do you remember Nebuchadnezzar? He was made an idol of himself, and then threw into a fiery furnace anyone who would not bow down. Daniel's friends don't bow, they get thrown in, and as they are thrown in Nebuchadnezzar's men get destroyed by the fire. And when Nebuchadnezzar has to call out to Daniel's friends, he not doubt stood his distance.

The King that Daniel saw had a "river of fire" streaming out from His throne. A river of fire and the only fuel that keeps his fire going is the sheer presence of this King. He is

a living volcano of light and purity.

Look at the next parallelism that increases in intensity. First there are thousands that "attend." Attending is an active verb, meaning to serve or help. Look at the next line. "Ten thousands stand." So imagine a king seated on a flaming throne with thousand and thousands around him attending and serving him. Then you look high and you notice that beyond them there are tens of thousands more and all they are doing is *standing*.

But this is not the end of the vision. In fact, this much of the vision merely sets the stage. Because this Great King, the Ancient of Days, does something that will burn in the mind of God-fearing Jews for hundreds of years: Listen to the poetry:

**Daniel 7:13-14**

"I kept looking in the night visions,  
And behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming,  
And He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him.  
"And to Him was given **authority**, (NIV)  
**Glory** and a **kingdom**,  
That all the **peoples**,  
**nations** and  
**men of every language** Might serve Him.  
His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away;  
And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

Daniel sees two things. First, there is something "like a Son of man." It is a human looking person that stands in contrast with all the beasts. To this man the Ancient of Days gives something very specific. The first word may be the most important. He gives *authority*. And with the authority comes glory, a kingdom that will be global. Three times it is repeated: "all peoples," "nations" and "men of every language."

The vision was so powerful that Daniel is shaken up: "As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me."

Now let's follow the stream into the New Testament.

## PART 2: THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

The book of Matthew, in many different ways, shows how what appeared to be a teaching rabbi, was in fact the chosen Messiah of God. Matthew does not outright just tell us (like Paul sometimes does) but rather he *shows* through a careful witness of his life how Jesus is the ultimate savior for the Jews. He simply holds this life up and lets all the power of the sweeping OT promises shine through it.

Matthew 1:1 *"this is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David the son of Abraham"*

Notice the three: Messiah (great promised ruler), David (the greatest OT King) and Abraham (the recipient of the promised seed)

But Matthew reaches a climax near the end of the book.

**Matthew 26:63:** The High priests weighty inquisition of Jesus: Are you the Messiah?

*"But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure you by the living God, that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN."*

Pilate asks something similar.

**Matthew 27:11**

*"Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And Jesus said to him, "It is as you say."*

Jesus traded for Barabbas. Jesus, before all the crowds of his own people, has less value than an insurrectionist. Not only is Jesus a rebel to the Jews, he's worse. It is hard to image a lower popularity.

Jesus dies, rose to life and then we have a remarkably short account of what happened afterwards. Matthew is so selective!

A word of preparation: Go ahead of me to Galilee

**The final discourse of Jesus in the book of Matthew: Here is the climax:**

*"Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."*

All the other references to Daniel 7 were in the future tense, and now, of all times Jesus cites Daniel 7-- the most glorious part of it-- in the past tense.

*But Jesus already has authority?*

**8:3** Authority to heal diseases

**9:6** Authority to forgive sins

**10:1** Authority over unclean spirits Matthew

**14:22** Authority over nature: rebukes the wind and the sea

**21:23** Authority to speak for God

**17:23** Authority to predict the future.

**28:8** Authority over the death

But only here, for the first time, Jesus says that he has something far superior. Which means that something happened on the cross that somehow gave Jesus more authority, and the way Jesus describes this authority is by applying what Daniel saw to himself. So the same Son of Man we saw in Daniel who was presented with authority by the High King of heaven stands

with his disciples and says: "what Daniel saw *happened*. I am that man, and I have all that authority."

So what is the application for us? What does Jesus say? : Now, we can read that famous verse we all know by heart:

*"GO THEREFORE and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

However, remember the context of the disciples. Such a command to "make disciplines" is almost like telling someone to "make disciples of Muhammad" in New York in October 2001.

- Jesus had such low popularity that he was exchanged for an insurrectionist. He was not just "unpopular with the polls," the crowds were screaming "crucify."
- All the disciples would be killed in their efforts to carry out this commission except for John. (as far as we know according to church tradition).
- The book of Acts is not one smooth account of an easy victory over the world. Listen to one of the first mission conference speakers message: Paul on the way back from his first missionary journey: Acts 14:21 *"After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."*

So how did they do it? How was this "making disciples" going to happen?

I submit that the way the disciples were going to be make disciples was by following the example of Jesus in the way he brought overwhelming victory from the darkest of moments.

How did Jesus *get this authority*? Was it simple?

*He received in through his obedience that lead him to a horrific death on a cross. And at the time of his death, it was the darkest moment imaginable for the "success" of His kingdom. He was dying as a worthless criminal, all his disciples abandoned him, and it looked like even God had abandoned him. The disappointment, weariness, and numbness of the disciples would have been overwhelming and they all went back to their boats, right were they started. All the*

promises were in ashes. The "new kingdom of Jesus" had been destroyed and sent into the exile of death.

Then Jesus rose.

And from the darkest corner of history comes the greatest triumph of history. What happened that Sunday morning turned all the grief into fruitful joy and started an explosion that is still rocking the world today.

I believe that we are call to do the same thing. We are called to walk into the darkest of situations, and endure heavy disappointments, numbness, and drudgery until the resurrection power of Jesus breaks in and bring overwhelming power and life<sup>3</sup>.

Now look back at the cross with the two lenses, the pain and the glory? There is Jesus hanging on the cross, what does he have over his head? A little sign written "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS." and for the first time it is translated into three languages and not one of them is Hebrew. Over Jesus' head Pilate becomes the first Wycliffe Bible Translators announcing the great news that this man is the King.

### APPLICATION

**Jesus Christ has the authority to command us to be SACRIFICIAL (and walk through deep disappoints) in the building of his church because he has the authority to ensure our JOY by turning every sacrifice and disappointment into an eternal gain.**

Are we wearing those glasses when we go? Are we wearing those glasses when we give?

Vicky and Misha in Africa

Becky Jones in Hungry

Laura in Ethiopia

Dan Morton in Alaska

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<sup>3</sup> Brian Morgan's definition of "peace" according to the prophets. "Defeat the enemy on their own turf."

Go for it! Get involved, giving, praying, loving, going, knowing that... are we going to be proud standing before our great King knowing we spent more at Starbucks than on Missionaries?

**Jesus Christ has the authority to command us to be sacrificial (and walk through deep disappoints) in the building of his church because he has the authority to turn every sacrifice and disappointment into an eternal gain.**

*Amen*