

## Extending the Limits of Missions

Read Isa. 54: 1-5

### AN ENLARGED PROGRAM OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Isa. 54:2,3, "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations spare not, lengthen thy cords,  
and strengthen thy stakes."

INTRODUCTION; On May 31st, 1792, William Carey preached his famous sermon from this text at a meeting of the Ministers' Association at Nottingham, Eng. In this message he put forth the two propositions: Expect great things from God, and Attempt great things for God.

This sermon resulted in the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society. Most everyone dates this as the birthday of the new world-wide era of modern missions, as other missionary pioneers followed Carey, and other denominations followed the Baptist Missionary Society. Up until this time, however, Carey's ministerial brethren had no sympathy with his ideas about our Christian obligation to use the means of missions for the conversion of the heathen. William Carey has taught us to have faith, to think high, aim high, set challenging goals, and make big plans, and attempt great things for God, rather than just coast along and drift along with the "status quo."

#### I. Notice the People Involved in the Text

1. The languishing spiritual state of Israel before the Christian period.

A. Spiritual religion under the O.T. was largely confined within the narrow bounds of the Jewish nation, which sometimes seemed to be deserted of God her husband, esp. after 586 B.C.

B. The barren and desolate woman of v.1 is the ideal Zion, with more spiritual children than she formerly had before her separation from Jehovah.

C. She is now exhorted to rejoice, and to sing aloud, in her new condition, as other nations and people are converted and added to the family of God as adopted children.

D. The figure of speech is that of a tent having to be enlarged to accommodate the larger family of adopted children.

Increased population of ~~other~~ after the return under Ezra & Nehemiah. ~~after~~

## 2. The Coming of the Servant of Jehovah

- A. It is significant that the portion follows immediately upon the Servant passages and esp. Isa. 53 when the Servant of Jehovah suffers vicariously for the sins of the people.
- B. He, then, is the direct cause of the singing and rejoicing and blessing of ch. 54.
- C. In 42:1-4, God had said, "Behold My Servant, in whom my soul delighteth: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles; and the isles shall wait for his law."

## 3. The spiritual recovery of the Ideal Zion after the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

- A. Multitudes were converted from idols to the living God.
- B. There were more of God's people found in the Gentile Church than were ever in the Jewish church.
- C. The bounds of the church were extended much further than ever before.
- D. It was the business of the apostles to make disciples of all nations, to stretch forth the curtains of the church's habitation, to preach the gospel where Christ had not yet been named, to leaven with the gospel those towns & countries that had been strangers to it, and to lengthen the cords of this tabernacle, that more might be enclosed, which would make it necessary to strengthen the stakes proportionably, that they might bear the weight of the enlarged curtains.
- E. It was a proof of divine power going along with the gospel that in all places it "grew and prevailed mightily". It broke forth, as the breaking forth of waters--on the right hand and on the left. The gospel spread itself into all parts of the world. The spiritual seed of the true Israel of God did inherit the Gentiles, and those destitute of the knowledge of God came to know the saving name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## II. The Principles Stated.

1. Enlarging the area of occupation,  
"Enlarge the place of thy tent"
2. Expanding the program of service,  
"Let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habita-  
tions" (tent hangings)
3. Intensifying the effort, "Spare not"
4. Extending the outreach, "Lengthen thy cords"
5. Strengthening the home base at the same time,  
"Strengthen thy stakes." (tent pegs)

## III. The Progress that Follows, v. 3.

1. Increase in every direction.  
"Thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left" (see Gen. 28:14)
2. Securing the future prospects of our faith  
in every nation.
  - A. "Thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles"
  - B. This certainly followed the missionary expansion  
of Xty after Carey's time.
  - C. Missionary advance is imperative in our time.
3. Present losses regained,  
"The desolate cities shall be inhabited"

Norwood B.C. 8/26/82

H.M.B.C. 11/10/87

## Extending the Limits of Missions, Isa. 54:2-3

Introduction - 1792 - Wm. Carey's sermon;

- 2 great propositions: (1) Expect great things from God.  
(2) Attempt great things for God.

- I. The background of the metaphor suggested by the language.
  - A. a tent can be enlarged in several ways.
  - B. The second phrase repeats the same idea -  
"curtains" <sup>(tent)</sup> can be stretched out,  
by being added to & extended
  - C. Center poles, <sup>and side poles</sup> can be raised higher
  - D. This means the ropes from the center poles to  
the sides of the tent must be lengthened
  - E. This means also that the stakes in the ground  
must be strengthened to support the added weight  
and force on them, otherwise they will come  
out of the ground & the tent will fall.
  - F. Illustration of tent meeting in a - & faithful  
old black man "Jim" who would come to help  
us when we attacked him.

- II. Wm. Carey used this passage <sup>with</sup> ~~as~~ a missionary applica-  
A. many others have drawn a narrow & circumscribed  
limitation around the missionary cause -
- B. The church always languishes when she neglects missions.
- C. The church grows & prospers when she supports missions

## III. The Missionary Principles Stated:

IV. The Progress that follows Missionary Expansion, no. 3.