

Mission and the Justice of God

2023 FIEC Leaders Conference

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The justice of God in the nations - Isaiah 34

cf Jeremiah 23:23-24:

The justice of God and motivation for missions

"To establish the proper basis of missions, it is necessary to reflect upon the motivation behind the missionary enterprise and to ascertain the true scriptural motive of missions.

Is it to be found in the sympathy we feel for those who do not know Christ? Or is it simply in obedience to God's commands that we send missionaries?

The history of missions shows a great diversity in motivation. Some missionaries were motivated by an ascetic view of life, and chose missions as a form of self-denial; others were stimulated by a desire to hasten the return of Christ; and frequently missionary work has been connected with a tendency to spread Western culture, regarded as far superior to all other forms of life. At times missionary activity became a part of colonialism, a task of the government more than of the church. History certainly presents a medley of motives and ideas. But which ones are authorized in Scripture?"

Bavink, JH, *The Science of Missions*, 1960,

Colonialism and mission

"When the missionaries came to Africa, they had the Bible and we had the land. They said, 'Let us pray.' We closed our eyes. When we opened them, we had the Bible and they had the land."

“Over the course of the nineteenth century, more than 60 million Europeans migrated from Europe to other parts of the world. Christian missionaries were involved in the exploration of the continents and in the colonizing of the nations, as well as the Christianizing of the people; [...] Before any serious fruit of the European missionary efforts of the early 1800s began to register, Europe’s attitudes and opinions about her relationship with Africa and Asia shifted from ‘Christianize and civilize’ to ‘Christianize and colonize’. It was no longer enough to Christianize them and thereby set them free to be equal members of the Christian commonwealth. Europe had to colonize Africans, Indians, Asians and others, often justifying their acts by believing that it was for the good of those colonized.”

Kwiyani, H; Multicultural Kingdom: Ethnic Diversity, Mission and the Church,

“It is estimated that two million people go on short-term mission trips every year and spend about four billion dollars per year. That figure is the same as Haiti’s annual budget, for the whole country. If in fact the system was in place to serve the ‘poor’ it would have worked, as there is no lack of finance or people willing to serve. But it is clear that it in fact serves the goer at the expense of the poor. Phrases such as ‘giving to the poor’, ‘helping the least of these’, and ‘giving a voice to the voiceless’ often accompany pictures of Black and Brown kids being held by white teens. This asserts to one group of people that their self-actualization lies beyond the ocean where those struggling to find their daily bread live. They are sold a lie that God’s desire for them is to go and be ‘the hands and face of Jesus’, as if Jesus were not found among other economic circles and apart from their material possessions.”

Haddis, M; A Just Mission, Laying down power and embracing mutuality

God is a missionary

“God is a missionary. It was mission that led God to create the world in the first place. [...] In essence, the Triune God is a missionary! If Jesus, the head

of the church is a missionary, automatically, his body will have to be a missionary people (Ephesians 5: 25-32). It is within this understanding that the church must see her mission. We are only joining in with God's mission and not ours."

Theology of Reverse Mission, Israel Olofinjan

"The mandate for the mission of the church is not in the attributes of God and the fact that God himself is considered a missional God. The focus is more precisely in redemptive history - in salvation accomplished in fulfilment of the covenant by the one who was sent."

Wells, P; in A Covenantal Vision for Global Mission

GROUP TASK

Who was the last person your church SENT - or RECEIVED as an overseas missionary - and what were some of the reasons for that - which were good and which were less than ideal?

Applying God's justice

WE ARE ALL THE SAME

"British teenagers in Manchester explained to me that, as far as they could tell, it was not possible for white people to be Christians. Many of them were detached by two or three generations from Christianity and therefore had no close Christian friends... They associate the word 'Christian' with the Bible-carrying, tongue-speaking Nigerian Pentecostals who rent their school halls for church services, or the Polish Catholics who have made the Mass viable again in their neighbourhood parish."

Kwiyani, H; Multicultural Kingdom: Ethnic Diversity, Mission and the Church,

WE HAVE SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO SAY

"...missions is that activity of the church – in essence it is nothing else than an activity of Christ exercised through the church – through which the church in this interim period, in which the end is postponed, **calls the peoples of the earth to repentance and faith in Christ, so they may be made his disciples and through baptism be incorporated into the fellowship of those who await the coming of the kingdom.**"

Bavink, JH, The Science of Missions, 1960,

JUSTICE DEMANDS THE WORLD HEARS

Mt 25:24–27.

Ac 4:18–20.

1 Co 9:16.

1 Pe 2:9.