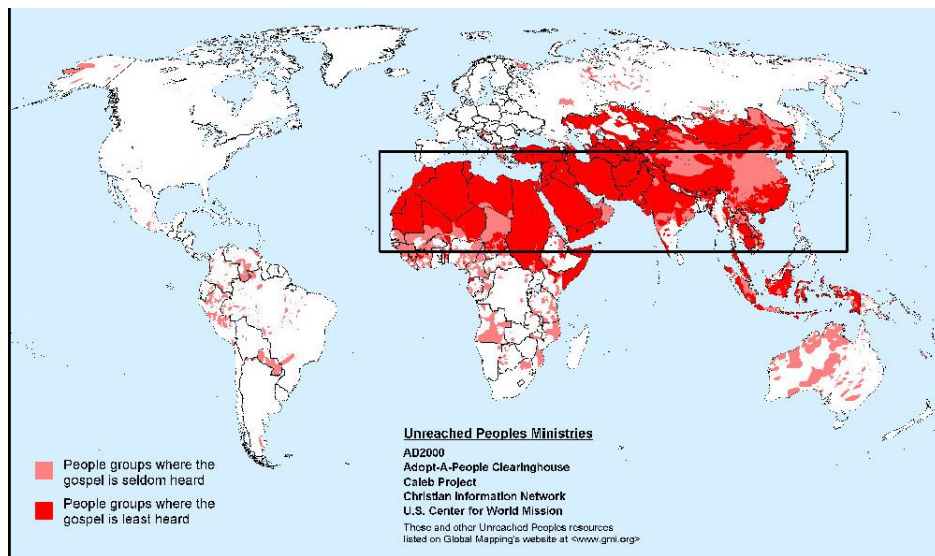


Foundations – Missions/End Times

Identity - "I am the salt of the earth. I am the bride of Christ."

I. Missions: Make the Hurting Stop

- Why does God allow pain and suffering? (John-Michael's testimony)
- Matthew 24:14 – "And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." (ESV)
- Jesus will not return until every _____ has received a chance to hear the Good News (Revelation 7:9-10).
- A picture of missions: The 10 – 40 Window...



- Where the Gospel started; where it is going; and where it will end...
- Matthew 23:39 – "For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." (ESV)
- The Great Commission and what every Christian is called to do:

II. End Times

- 1 Thessalonians 5:2 – "For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." (ESV)
- Haggai 2:9 – "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former..." (ESV)
- The pure church and the pure evil – Matthew 13:24-30, Mark 4:29

- The Antichrist and his religion (Revelation 13:5-17):
- Matthew 24:21 – “For then there will be great _____, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.” (ESV)
- 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 - Pre-Tribulation or Post-Tribulation?

III. New Identities!

- I am the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13).
- I am the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2).

IV. Small Group Questions

- 1) How can you obey the Great Commission in your own life? In what ways can you help missions?
- 2) Most religions teach that there are many different ways to get into heaven. What do Christians believe (see John 14:6)? Why can it only be through Him?
- 3) Every religion except Christianity teaches that we must earn our way into heaven or enlightenment through good works and obedience to the laws of the religion. They teach that we must work our way up. Only Christianity teaches that God *came down* for us. Only Christianity teaches that by grace we are saved (read Ephesians 2:8-9). Understanding that salvation is by grace and not by works, what type of people do you think would be most receptive to the Gospel?
- 4) Read Revelation 22:17. When have you felt the Holy Spirit stir in your heart to pray for Jesus to come? How do you feel in God’s presence?
- 5) What are the 22 identities we have covered so far? What does each mean for us?

Memory Verse of the Week –

Foundations – Missions/End Times (Master)

Identity - "I am the salt of the earth. I am the bride of Christ."

I. Missions: Make the Hurting Stop

- Why does God allow pain and suffering? (John-Michael's testimony)

As I grew in prayer God began to give me greater sensitivity to the people I was praying for. When I would pray for friends who had been abused or hurt or were in sin, I would begin to feel their hurt. I would also pray for lost nations and feel the pain of the oppression and darkness over the countries. I would also feel God's deep love and compassion for them, and it would be more than I could handle. Amidst tears, I would plead with God to just make the hurting stop. I knew that the only way for the pain to truly stop is for Him to return. When Jesus comes "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4, ESV). So everyday I began praying, "Come, Lord Jesus! Make the hurting stop!" I wondered how such a loving God could allow such pain and evil to continue to rule the earth. I began to study the Scripture and ask God why.

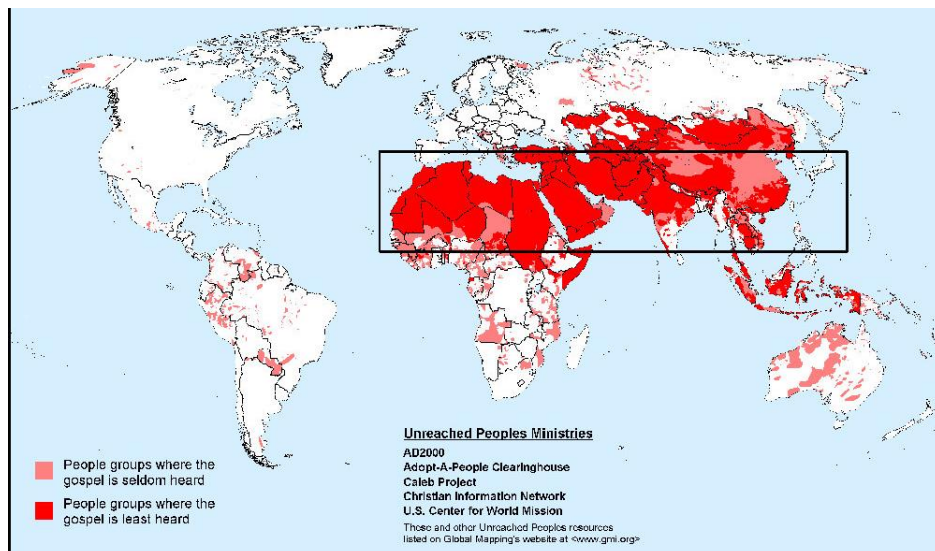
- Matthew 24:14 – "And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." (ESV)

When will the end come? (when the Gospel has been preached to all nations)

- Jesus will not return until every people group has received a chance to hear the Good News (Revelation 7:9-10).

I realized I had been very selfish in praying for Jesus to simply return. While Jesus' heart breaks for my friends and relatives who have difficult lives, His heart breaks even more for the lost. He wants all to be with Him in heaven. He will wait until everyone has received a chance. He loves us too much to not give us this chance.

- A picture of missions: The 10 – 40 Window (10° latitude below equator, 40° above)



The dark colored areas are places where nearly all the people have not heard the Gospel. The lightly colored areas are places where only a few have received the Gospel. As you can see, nearly all the

places without the Gospel are within the 10 – 40 Window. Most of these places are either Muslim or Communist.

- Where the Gospel started; where it is going; and where it will end

Where were the disciples on the day of Pentecost? Jerusalem. The Gospel started in Jerusalem, which happens to be near the middle of the 10 – 40 Window. *Have the group place a mark on their map where Jerusalem is.* The apostles took the Gospel up through Turkey to Italy and Spain, down to Ethiopia and North Africa, and east into India and even China. As the Roman Empire declined, the missions movement declined and only parts of Southern Europe and the Middle East retained a somewhat Christian identity. It was not until the Reformation in the 1500's when Martin Luther and other greats like John Calvin lived that Christianity began to grow again in Europe. Then in the 1700's there was the Great Awakening in America. *Have the group draw arrows from Europe over to North America.* It was later in the 1900's when revival began to go to South America, the southern area of Africa, and even Korea. *Have the group draw arrows from North America into those areas.* As you look at the arrows, can you get an idea of where missions and revival is headed to next?

- Matthew 23:39 – “For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” (ESV)

Jesus speaks these words to Jerusalem. Many people believe that the Gospel will go through North Korea into Asia and the Middle East, and also up through Sudan and North Africa before finally returning to Jerusalem. Once the Gospel has gone through these areas and has returned to Jerusalem, the spreading of the Gospel to unreached nations will be completed.

- The Great Commission and what every Christian is called to do:

Jesus' last words to His disciples were, “Go and make disciples of all nations...” (Matthew 28:19-20). Jesus never told His followers to find a church and stay in that church until they died. Jesus wants His lost sheep gathered. He wants the Church to be His hands and feet and reach out to the broken. So what are we called to do? Not all have a calling to go and be a missionary, but every Christian has a calling to be involved. God tells us to pray for the hurting and for the lost. He tells us to support His workers financially and to encourage those who are serving Him. He tells us to reach out to the widow, the orphan, and the homeless in our community. God has called the church to actively pray and prepare for His return. God is not the reason there is still pain and suffering in the world. WE are the reason there is still pain and suffering. It is our duty as sons and daughters of God to serve the broken, heal the hurting, and deliver the oppressed. We are called to be His ministers.

II. End Times

- 1 Thessalonians 5:2 – “For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.” (ESV)
- Haggai 2:9 – “The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former...” (ESV)
- The pure church and the pure evil – Matthew 13:24-30, Mark 4:29, John 14:12

God will not harvest the earth until the harvest is perfectly ripe. In John 14:12, Jesus tells us that His people will do even greater works than He did on earth. And while the apostles and early church experienced great miracles, most would agree that the degree of their miracles did not surpass the works of Jesus. Jesus also says, “Whoever believes in me,” not just referring to His 12 disciples.

What should be expected in the end times is a church that is pure, holy, and powerful in God. And we should also expect evil like never before. Just as a harvest of wheat will be tall and beautiful, so will the weeds all around it be tall and loathsome. Many believe that temptation and compromise will increase so much in this world that most Christians will fall away. False doctrine, selfishness, and attacks of the Enemy will be greater than ever before. Both sides, good and evil, will be preparing for the great final battle. Only those truly worshipping in Spirit and in truth will be able to overcome.

- The Antichrist and his religion (Revelation 13:5-17):

At the very end times, the Antichrist will come to power. Just as God took the form of a man, so will Satan do the same. This man will rule over the world. Revelation clearly states that aside from the Christians on earth, everyone will worship the Antichrist. Just what type of religion he sets up is unknown, but many believe that it will be a mix of religions, particularly New Age, Buddhism, Taoism, and other Eastern religions. New Age has steadily been invading society through Japanese animation, yoga, psychics, horoscopes and other means. New Age encourages meditation and getting in touch with one's "spirit guides" (which essentially are demons). Psychiatry has proven that if someone repeats the same words over and over (a mantra), their mind will gradually empty. It is in this state that demons are able to speak clearly. New Age also encourages a fatalistic, "All roads lead to the same destination" mindset. New Age encourages mixing religions and beliefs. With these mindsets, it can be easy for them to condemn anyone who believes differently as someone who is arrogant, wrong, and even evil. Likely only those firmly entrenched in the Word and filled with the Holy Spirit will be able to defend themselves and overcome.

- Matthew 24:21 – "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be." (ESV)

The great tribulation will be a time where the Antichrist will be given the power to reign over the earth and wage war against the saints. These will be the darkest days for the earth. Most Christians believe that the Antichrist will reign for seven years and that the tribulation will begin halfway through his reign, making it last a total of 3 and a 1/2 years. And then Christ will return! As they say, "It is always darkest just before dawn."

- 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 – Pre-Tribulation or Post-Tribulation?

Many Christians believe that before the tribulation begins, Jesus will take up all of the Christians. This is the "Pre-Tribulation" belief. They believe God will not let His people suffer through the horrible end times. Many other Christians believe that we will indeed have to endure the tribulation and will not be brought up to heaven until the time when Jesus comes to destroy evil. This is the "Post-Tribulation" belief.

III. New Identities!

- I am the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13).

Throughout history, salt has been used for many things. Salt brings taste to food. Salt preserves food and keeps it from rotting quickly. Salt was so important in ancient times that it was used often in trade, leading to the phrase, "worth his salt." We are called to bring life to this world. We are called to preserve society from rotting. In God's sight, we are extremely valuable. As God's salt, we are to bring a thirst into this world for God. As people are around us, they should long for God's Living Water. We are the salt of the earth! Please repeat after me, "I am the salt of the earth!"

- I am the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2).

Jesus Christ is the bride-groom of the church. Every person who professes Christ as God has pledged themselves to Him. We are called to abstain from worshipping other gods or giving our bodies over to sin. As the bride of Christ, Jesus loves us deeply and is jealous for us. He longs to be with us and will protect us and stand for us. Please repeat after me, "I am the bride of Christ!"

IV. Small Group Questions

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Memory Verse of the Week – Matthew 5:13a