The Gospel's Missionary Journey: Introduction; the Missionary Impact of the Apostle Paul; the Early Missionaries: Ulfilas, Martin Bishop of Tours, Patrick, Columba, Columbanus

The Gospel's Missionary Journey

Shreveport Bible Conference
September 16–18, 2014

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I. Introduction:

The signing of our nation's Declaration of Independence occurred 238 years ago. Over that period, the American people have come to enjoy the most phenomenal period of prosperity experienced by mankind since the garden of Eden. The major reason for this is the presence of divine viewpoint in the souls of so many of her citizens.

This week we are going to examine—unfortunately, much too quickly—the impact the mature believer has on world history.

The ebb and flow of our human drama is controlled by Jesus Christ and the lone criterion He uses to determine whether to prosper or curse a Client Nation is the size of its Pivot. Consequently, wherever you find the largest accumulation of positive believers at any moment of history is where you will usually find the highest degree of prosperity and blessing.

National prosperity began in Jerusalem under the reign of **King David** and subsequently, by means of Gentile Client Nations, meandered its way across Europe until in 1620 when William Bradford and the Pilgrims sailed the Atlantic to North America.

The first Gentile Client Nation was S.P.Q.R.: *Senatus Populusque Romanus*: the Senate and the People of Rome. From the fall of Rome to the Reformation is known as the Middle Ages, or better, the Dark Ages. But before the fall of Rome, missionaries under the protection of the Roman Eagle took the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout Europe.

It is missionary activity that is the link between the Protestant church in America and the New Testament apostles. And the greatest of these men is Paul who is also the most successful of the missionaries.

II. The Missionary Impact of the Apostle Paul:

Paul points out in Romans that he had been commissioned to minister to the Gentiles:

Romans 15:16 - That I should be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the good news of God, that the offering consisting of the Gentiles might become acceptable, having been sanctified by the Holy Spirit. (EXT)

Romans 15:18 - I will not presume to speak about anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in obedience of the Gentiles to God by <u>word</u> **[gospel teaching]** and by <u>occupation</u> **[missionary activity]**. (EXT)

Although Paul was the first missionary commissioned to take the gospel to the Gentiles, he was not the original missionary.

The original missionary thrust occurred in Jerusalem led by the apostle James whose ministry was directed toward the Jews.

But the center of missionary activity later changed to the Anatolian Peninsula, or Asia Minor, under the leadership of the apostle Paul.

The Bible refers to the Incarnation of our Lord and the introduction of the Church Age as "the fullness of time":

Galatians 4:4 - When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son …

Our Lord has no reason to enter human history during the time of Israel's predominance as a Client Nation. But Israel had shirked its duty as a Client Nation. Although there were some great efforts on the part of some, Israelite missions never made much of an impact far beyond its own borders.

What was needed was an empire with borders that encompassed many peoples and nationalities. "The fullness of time" indicated that God was ready to include the Gentiles in a worldwide missionary outreach compatible with the inauguration of Gentile client nations. S.P.Q.R was the far-reaching empire required for such activity.

The Roman Empire was so establishment oriented in its laws and government that it provided the necessary protection required for Christianity to flourish.

Paul conducted four missionary journeys, the first of which took him to Antioch in the central region of Anatolia. This area was heavily populated by what the Greeks called the Κελτοί *(Keltoí)*: "Celts" and the Romans called the Gauls.[1] These people migrated from the British Isles and settled in the central area of Anatolia and became known there as the Galatians.

On his Second Missionary Journey, Paul expanded his ministry by crossing the **Aegean Sea** into **Macedonia** and **Greece**. Romans 15:19 tells us the places he had gone on this second journey:

> **Romans 15:19 -**   By the power of signs **[to the Jews]** and miracles **[to the Gentiles]** in the power of the Holy Spirit; so that I **[Paul]** from Jerusalem, on a circuit as far as Illyricum **[** Ἰλλυρικόν *(Illurikón)*[2] **]**, I have fulfilled the good news of Christ. (EXT)

The Second Missionary Journey was a critical event in the history of Western civilization. This is when Paul took his missionary outreach out of the Middle East and into Europe where the Gentiles were open to the gospel and ready to respond to orthodox theology. Romans 15 describes this turning point in the history of Western civilization:

> **Romans 15:16 -**   That I should be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might have become acceptable, having been sanctified by the Holy Spirit. (EXT)

When Paul crossed the **Hellespont**, he left Asia and the Middle East and entered Europe with the gospel for the Gentiles. Back in the Levant, the Jews and their heathen neighbors were negative which created an environment ripe for the advent of Lucifer's counterattack, the religion of Islam. Neither the Middle East nor Europe would ever be the same again.

The missionary thrust had now officially changed from the Jews to the Gentiles. Positive volition by the various Gentile peoples of the West would bring prosperity to Europe while apostasy and degeneracy would dominate the East.

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[1] "Celt: a member of a division of the early Indo-European peoples distributed from the British Isles and Spain to Asia Minor. A modern Highland Scot, Irishman, Welshman, Cornishman, or Briton" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.v. "Celt").

[2] A Roman province of southeastern Europe lying along the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea and west of Macedonia" (Spiros Zodhiates, gen. ed., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. [Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993], 773).

The Roman Catholic Church provided the original impetus for successful missionary activity through the power of orthodox doctrine. The momentum generated by the early missionaries was able to carry Christianity through the Dark Ages.

The **Nicene Creed** was formulated in A.D. 325 in **Nicaea, Anatolia**, at a church council called by Constantine. This was a doctrinal statement which sought to clarify orthodox doctrines of the Christian faith.

An individual could be guided to an orthodox church by learning whether or not it subscribed to the Nicene Creed. From such churches came the early missionaries who evangelized Europe.

This orthodoxy remained stable until the 6th century when a controversy arose between the Latin and Greek areas of the Greco-Roman world. The argument stemmed from John 15:26 over whether the Holy Spirit was sent to Church-Age believers by God the Father or by both the Father and the Son.

The issue, known as the **"Filioque \fil-i-ō′kwe\ Dispute,"** was never resolved between the two, resulting in a split in the church. The Eastern Church subscribed to the incorrect notion that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father only, while the Western church insisted on the orthodox doctrine of procession coming from both the Father and the Son.

This split resulted in the formation of the Greek Orthodox Church in Constantinople. The Western church was not long to remain orthodox itself.

Following Pope Gregory the Great, the Roman Church began an inexorable slide into degeneracy from which it has never recovered and which issued in the Dark Ages. The decline began in the late 5th and early 6th centuries under a series of popes who began to dabble into politics rather than remain loyal to the truth. A Greek pope named **Zacharias** was the one who started the apostate ball rolling.

The **Lombard**s, Germanic people from what is today Northwestern Germany, had taken over the old Roman Empire. These people were ruling northern Italy in 749 when the Lombard king, **Astolf \as′tälf** decided to invade the papal territories.

Zacharias sought the protection of **Pepin the Short** (714–768) who was mayor of the palace in France. The pope promised Pepin if he helped him in his battle with the Lombard king he would grant him the crown of France.

This was the first step toward the creation of a Western empire where the political head of state was granted his power from the ecclesiastical head of the church in Rome. This resulted in the eventual creation of the Holy Roman Empire under Pope Leo III in the year 800. The first Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire was **Charlemagne**, king of France and son of Pepin the Short.

This unholy alliance between church and state existed until 1806 when the triumph of **Napoleon Bonaparte** as Emperor of France brought an end to the Holy Roman Empire. An empire described in the 1700's by French author **Francois Voltaire** as being "neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire."

Regardless of these setbacks, the fact remains that the Apostle Paul took the gospel to positive volition among the Gentiles and that positive volition was found in the West, not in the East.

III. The Early Missionaries:

A. Ulfilas \ul'fa-las\ (311-382)

The **Goths** were a Germanic people made up of two groups called the **Ostrogoths** and the **Visigoths**. These tribes lived north of the Danube River from the Black Sea north to the Baltic Sea.

Around 320, the Ostrogoths captured the family of a young Cappadocian boy named Ulfilas. They killed his family, but raised him as a Goth.

At age 30, the Goths sent him as an emissary to the Roman emperor. While there, he was consecrated by the bishop at Constantinople as the bishop to the Goths. Ulfilas then returned to his adopted country as a missionary.

Since the Goths had no written language, he first reduced the tongue to a Gothic alphabet. He then translated the Bible into Gothic. From that point on he spent his life preaching the gospel, teaching doctrine, and training pastors.

B. Martin, Bishop of Tours (316-397)

Martin was born of pagan parents in an area which is now modern Hungary. He was saved at age 10. When he was old enough, he joined the Roman army.

After several years of service he decided to go out from the Roman Catholic Church as a missionary to Gaul, modern France. The region was being infiltrated by a number of various peoples including the Goths, the **Burgundians**, the **Alemanni \ăl-ă-man'nē\, the Celts**, the **Arabs**, and the **Moors**.

In the year 360, Martin settled at **Poitiers \pwä-tyā'** and began evangelizing these various Germanic soldiers. When they responded, he organized them into classes for training in doctrine. When he was satisfied they understood the gospel well enough to witness, he sent them out to bring back others.

In 371 he was made bishop of **Tours \tür** and that same year he established a monastery which he called **Marmoutier \mar-mou'tē-ā**, between Tours and Poitiers. This monastery would be the site of one of the most important battles in western history when in the year 732, **Charles Martel**, king of France, halted the Islamic invasion of the continent by the Moorish general **'Abd ar-Raham \ab-dur-räk-män**.

This Muslim leader had invaded the Frankish kingdom from his stronghold to the south in Spain. By crossing the Pyrenees Mountains, he hoped to blot out Christianity in the west and install Islam in its place.

He stormed into southern Gaul and was working his way north. One of his objectives was to destroy the Marmoutier Monastery near Tours and thus cripple the Christian center for educating theologians.

Upon arrival there, he got word that the army of Frankish leader Charles Martel was in route to intercept him. Although 'Abd ar-Rahman had a superior army and knew it, he was unwilling to fight Charles at this point.

He wanted to retreat to the Pyrenees so he could guarantee the safety of the large booty he had collected in southern Gaul. However, after a short while, he decided to send the booty on with a small group of men and prepare to fight Charles.

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Visual #1:
MAP-France
Battle of
Poitiers

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The fight that resulted is called the Battle of Poitiers. The invaders were Muslims, followers of the satanic religion of Islam.

Islam is the genius invention of Lucifer which he established as a polemic against Christianity. The easiest way to defeat Christianity is to present doctrines which, if accepted, preclude Jesus Christ from being anything more than just a nice Guy.

Consequently, in the year 610, an obscure Arab merchant named **Abu al-Qasim Muhammad \ä-bū al-qā-sem mü-häm′mad** became the agent for leading this attack against our Lord, sound doctrine, and the church.

Under the influence of demon possession, Muhammad was deluded to believe he saw a vision in which he received a prophetic call from God. Until his death, he allegedly received constant revelations from God, some 650 of which were reduced to writing. This collection became the Qur'an, the Islamic bible.

The word "Islam" literally means surrender and contains the fundamental principle of Islam: the Muslim must "surrender to the will of Allah."

The Muslim profession of faith is, "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet."   Consequently, this basic tenet denies the Trinity made up of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Consequently, Muhammad supersedes **Jesus Christ** as Prophet, Priest, and King of the Church since Mohammad is considered as god's prophet.

Islam accepts all previous revelation as divinely inspired, including the Bible, but the Qur'an is said both to complete and supersede biblical revelation wherever there is conflict.

Muhammad is said to be the last of a series of prophets including Adam, Noah, Moses, Jesus, and others. As a result, the Trinity is denied, Christ is reduced to the status of an apostle,[3] and the Bible is presented as an anachronism.

By the 6th century, this cult had gained widespread momentum in the Middle East and in North Africa. Christianity called these people **Saracens**, which is a Latin term meaning "Easterners."

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[3] "Christ Isa the son of Mary was an apostle of Allah ([Qur'an] surah 4:171)" (Ergun Mehmet Caner and Emir Fethi Caner, *Unveiling Islam* [Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2002], 244).

The army 'Abd ar-Rahman brought over the Pyrenees into Gaul was a Saracen hoard made up of Moors, which was an Arab-Spanish mix, Arabs, and **Berbers**, who were the peoples of North Africa. The clash between these two armies at the **Battle of Poitiers** resulted in 'Abd ar-Rahman being killed in action and the Arabs being pushed back into Spain.

Charles Martel's triumph over this army halted the western advance of Islam and freed Western Europe of Muslim influence to this day, while insuring the continuation of Christian missionary function in its own.

C. Patrick (mid-400's)

Patrick was an aristocrat born in Britain to a Celtic-Roman family of high rank. At age 16 he was kidnapped by Irish raiders and taken to Ireland where he served as a slave for 6 years. It was during this time that he accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.

After 6 years as a herdsman, he escaped back to Britain. It was there that he dreamed about his former Irish captors imploring him to return to them. Patrick interpreted this as his call to become a missionary to the Irish.

Because he felt unqualified educationally for the task, he put off his return for 14 years. During that time he prepared for his ministry in **Auxerre \ō-seer'**, France.

Once back in Ireland however, Patrick was an instant success. It is estimated that Patrick probably won over one million Irishmen to Christ. He established local churches and founded a monastery at **Armagh \är-mä'** which became a famous medieval school of theology.

Patrick taught the doctrine of the Trinity by using the three-leaved clover as a visual aid. Today, the Irish consider Patrick as their patron saint and the shamrock as their national flower.

D. Columba (521-597)

One of the fruits of Patrick's ministry to Ireland was a great Irish aristocrat and professional soldier named Columba. He is given credit for converting Scotland to Christianity.

His ministry started in Ireland where he set up over 40 mission stations. He trained his missionaries as if they were soldiers and even taught them close-order drill.

In 563, Columba got involved in a dispute over a copied manuscript of the **Gospel of John** and in the resultant brawl one of the men involved was killed. Columba was found innocent, but it was suggested that his health might suffer if he didn't leave Ireland. Following that advice, he took twelve of his missionaries and left for **Pictland**, known today as **Scotland**.

Columba and his men landed on the Pict island of **Iona \ī-ō′na** where he established one of the greatest mission stations of all time. There was no Scotland at the time. There were two major powers fighting for control of the area when Columba arrived.

One group was the savage **Picts (Celts)**, their name coming from the Latin *Picti* which means "painter," an apt description of their propensity to cover their bodies in tattoos.

The other group was of the kingdom of **Dalriada \dal-rē-ā′da** known as the Scots.

Columba sized up the situation and began evangelizing the people winning over both Picts and Scots. Later his first cousin **Aidan \ād′n\,** joined him from Ireland and the two formed and trained an army which eventually brought the warfare to an end.

Over 85 percent of the population was said to have been converted to Christianity by the missionary work of Columba.

Aidan was established as the king of Dalriada. He was the great-grandfather of **Kenneth MacAlpin** who founded Scotland. Kenneth finally conquered the Picts and incorporated his kingdom of Dalriada into Scotland in 841.

It is interesting to note that Patrick is given credit in Irish mythology with driving all the snakes out of Ireland. Not to be outdone by this, the Scots insist that Columba went down to Loch Ness and killed the monster.

Columba spent his latter years on the island of Iona directing and training his missionaries. He died in 597 and was buried on Iona.

E. Columbanus \käl-um-bā′nas\ (543-615)

By this time the impact of Martin of Tours had worn off in France and the country was ravaged by warfare among the various peoples gathered there.

Columbanus, like Columba, was an Irishman and well-trained in the biblical languages. He came into France in the year 590 and began a missionary outreach which again brought stability to the region.

On arrival in France, Columbanus was well received by **Guntram \gün-tram**, king of Burgundy. Gaul was divided into four parts at this time, one of which was **Austrasia \au-strā′zha**.

The king there was a minor, **Childebert II**, therefore Austrasia was being ruled under the regency of his mother Queen **Brunhilde \brün-hil′da**.

She was an arrogant woman who opposed Celtic Christianity which was orthodox and supported the French Roman Catholic clergy which was not.

In fact, Brunhilde and her husband, Sigebert I \zē′ge-bert\, were inspirations for Richard Wagner's four Ring Operas: *Das Rheingold, Die Walküre, Siegfried, and Götterdämmerung*.

Together with the clergy, Brunhilde forced Columbanus out of France. Positive volition being shut down there, Columbanus moved on to Switzerland where he continued his missionary work there until he died in his 70s.