

Part 3

Plenary Sessions: 31 December, 2000 & 1 January, 2001

- Acknowledging Church Growth Movements
Toward the Unfinished Task
- Promoting Global Partnership & World Evangelization
- All Night Prayer for the New Millennium
- Worship Night

CM2000 31 December 2000

Plenary Title:

Acknowledging Church Movements Toward the Unfinished Task

Plenary Overview:

Acknowledging Church movements toward the Unfinished Task. Completion of the unfinished task is the responsibility of the Church of Jesus Christ! Many new and powerful church movements now exist around the world, which will be spotlighted as God is raising up new models, resources and ways for His ultimate purpose.

Plenary Speakers:

- **Ross Campbell – National Initiatives** (*panel message not available*)
- **Godfred Bamfo - A Case Study of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana**
- **Joseph Thompson – Apostolic Reformation Churches**

CM2000 31 December, 2000

Plenary Title:

Acknowledging Church Movements Toward the Unfinished Task

A case study of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana

Rev. Godfred A. Bamfo

History

The PCG was founded through the efforts of Swiss missionaries who arrived in our country then called Gold Coast just after Christmas 172 years ago. They were the very first to come specifically to plant the Christian faith in our land. At the time the Danes had to their credit 400 years of brisk business on the coast but without any direct attempt to evangelise. To date, it is on record that some 200 missionaries died in the effort to plant the Christian faith in the Country. Three of the four, who first came, died within four months. The Basel Mission persevered, and has resulted in a history of pain, suffering, death and conquest. The Christian faith was successfully planted in our land. Through the war years and up to the 1940's the Presbyterian Church of Ghana was the major Denomination in the country, being the first to be granted independence from Missionary control in 1926.

The years from the 1930's were difficult years for the P.C.G. The Leadership recognised a decline in membership and spirituality. One Church Leader summed up the situation of that period in these words: "The youth began to lose interest in the church, saying it was dull, devoid of spirit and unattractive. To make matters worse, other churches began...drawing away members...with their prayers, gospel songs, dancing and clapping of hands. The rate at which the Presbyterians were leaving was alarming".

A notable Church Musician captured the trend in a famous revival prayer song that still moves the soul.

Give your church mighty power;
Help us Lord to serve you better;
Holy Spirit on us shower;
Gifts of Grace and ministry;
Let the change start today,
Lord, by your power start in me.

The GEC and New Life for all. A moderator of the Church visited the USA in the early 1970's and interacted with a missiologist and as a result moves began culminating in the birth of Ghana Evangelism Committee in 1974. GEC's early product "New Life for all" was designed to address nominalism in the Christian Churches generally and to stir up church planting. The PCG participated wholeheartedly resulting in the revival of evangelism, and the planting of new churches.

Another product of GEC was its National Church Survey, which unearthed facts about unchurched people groups. As a result of this revelation, the Mono Ethnic Church strategy was

initiated and the PCG along with other churches embraced the idea christened Northern Outreach Programme. (NOP). The PCG has sixteen NOP congregations in Accra alone.

The Bible Study and Prayer Group

Long before the birth of the GEC, some members of Church had been meeting for Bible study and prayer. Eventually the fire of Bible Study and prayer spread through many PCG congregations affecting congregations of other denominations. The PCG after careful study of the movement officially recognised and encouraged it as the evangelistic wing of the Church. The resulting evangelism explosion was due in part to the GEC products, which providentially met the ready task force of the Bible study and prayer movement.

Yet again, the young people who were affected by this revival offered themselves to be trained in ministerial formation. Today the larger percentage of trained Pastors is a product of this revival and includes quite thankfully the lecturers who train them at the Church's seminary.

Growth

The growth of the PCG was accelerated. A small city suburb congregation worshipping in a school classroom in 1968 is today worshipping in a 2500 seat sanctuary. In the capital city another district which had but three congregations within the same time, grew to twenty congregations and preaching points within the same city. And in the same city another district grew from five congregations to thirty congregations. The district head station itself grew from three hundred members in 1976 to three thousand members in 1996. A new sanctuary seating 2,500 has been built, and it runs two services on Sundays. Other city churches have started double services on Sundays.

Once the people caught the vision that the main agenda for believers is to find people for Christ, and for a church to plant other churches, the programme of Praying, Proclaiming the Word and Planting of new Churches grew. In the National Capital which had but 10 churches in the 1960's had 186 churches by the close of the century in twenty-two districts, and still growing. In response to the GEC's revelation that there were 14,000 unchurched towns and people groups the country in 1993, the PCG embarked on an evangelistic to face that challenge. For the past five years an average of sixty churches have been planted every year in the country by the PCG to bring the membership to 450,000 in 1,800 congregation.

The evangelism explosion was due in the GEC product, which providentially met the undercurrent of Bible study, and prayer movement. They were a ready task force. Yet again, the young people who were affected by this revival offered themselves to be trained in ministerial formation. Today the larger percentage of trained Pastors of the Church are a product of this revival and include quite thankfully the lecturers who train them at the Church's seminary.

.....Towards the Unfinished task

The history of the founding Missionaries continues to inspire action. For example, three older women in a District decided to plant churches too. They traded along a route on which they realised there was the need for true Christian witness. One of them could barely read the vernacular Bible, the other two could neither read nor write. They went along with no public address equipment, neither generator nor lamp. Indeed they used a borrowed kerosene lamp and

shared the gospel in an open space in the village. They have since planted three churches in three villages. Even old women can plant churches. Hallelujah!

Today the drift of people from the PCG to find spiritual help in other churches has minimised. Indeed many Presbyterians are returning to the Church. More and more the needs of members are being met. There are emerging Prayer Centres run by Pastors and Lay Leaders who have a specific gift in the area of healing and the casting out of demons, who are encouraged to exercise the ministry to the glory of God.

The movement of the Holy Spirit in the Church continues. The foundation for a major evangelism drive has been laid. The evangelism strategy has been repackaged for another major take-off. The present success is the effort of just 4% of the membership of the church who were committed to evangelism. While we praise God for what has been achieved, we acknowledge that in relation to the unfinished task many more should be mobilised for evangelism and a lot more should be done. Pray for the PCG! As she too faces the unfinished task.

CM2000 31 December, 2000

Plenary Title:

Acknowledging Church Movements Toward the Unfinished Task

Apostolic Reformation Churches

Joseph Thompson

Acts 8: 1 records the following; "...At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles. Acts 1: 8 indicates that this scattering was the will of God, as it says, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." This singular event records for us the birth of the Church. It is interesting to note, though, that persecution was what finally caused the Church to disperse from its central base in Jerusalem. This fulfilled the words of Jesus that they would be witnesses to the furthest corners of the earth.

The mandate is still the same today, and the command is still to be witnesses to the furthest reaches of the earth. Christianity, in its modern day application, has tried to accomplish global evangelization through denominationalism. Apparently, this type of outreach has been mostly unsuccessful in many places, due in large part to the rigid structures of denominations and the ever-evolving needs of our largely secular society. As societies have evolved technologically, economically, politically, culturally and educationally, people have determined that the rigid structures of denominational Christianity are irrelevant to the needs of our post-modern society. Many have therefore looked to Eastern mystic religions, New Age doctrines of pluralism and redefined "Christianity" among others, to fill the void left by what they consider to be "dead religion." It is this changing face of society that has motivated visionary Christian leaders to take a long hard look at the "persecution" of our day and see the need for an evolution in the way we do church. This has led many Christian leaders to establish independent churches as well as para-church ministries that have come to be known as the New Apostolic paradigm. Dr. C. Peter Wagner, in his book, *Churchquake* identifies this movement as the *New Apostolic Reformation*. He further defines this reformation as an, "extraordinary work of God at the close of the twentieth century, which is to a significant extent, changing the shape of Protestant Christianity around the world." It is significantly changing and introducing new forms and operational procedures in areas such as, local church government, missions, evangelism, prayer, financing, worship, the role of supernatural power and other such vital aspects of church life.

For the first time in the history of the Church, we are able to define the task of evangelism on a global scale and divide the world according to people groups and thus document our progress in effectively reaching the entire world. With the advent of ministries like Global Harvest and AD 2000 among numerous others, we are able to strategically target global evangelistic prayer and harness our resources through places like the World Prayer Center, to do a more effective job in communicating global prayer needs for whole nations. This has made the world "smaller" in terms of completing the task of evangelization, and has made it easier to utilize proven techniques and systems through loosely structured apostolic networks, instead of re-inventing the

wheel. This is not to discount the work or the veracity of denominational structures, but to simply say that these changes in our approach to ministry are happening largely among ministries that constitute the new apostolic reformation. Dr. Wagner further states in his book, “In virtually every region of the world, these new apostolic churches constitute the fastest growing segment of Christianity.”

In Lagos, Nigeria, Dr. David Oyedepo recently completed the largest church facility in the world, seating an approximate 53,000 people. In addition to this mega sanctuary, their campus also consists of a Bible college, residential quarters and various other facilities that enhance their outreach to the city. Judging by the more than 47,000 attendees in one service, they are doing an excellent job of impacting their region. This phenomenon is not limited to Africa alone. In the United States, Churches like Bill Hybels’, Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois, TD Jakes’, Potters House in a Dallas suburb, Ted Haggard’s, New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado and many others too numerous to mention, are all examples of new apostolic churches that have an apostolic mandate to their cities and are changing the spiritual climate of whole cities. In addition to these churches are the para-church ministries that are also affecting the spiritual atmosphere of their cities and impacting people on a global scale. James Dobson’s Focus on the Family and Chuck Colson’s Prison Fellowship are just two of such outstanding ministries restoring hope to the family and restoration and love for the incarcerated. In the United Kingdom, the fastest growing churches are the new apostolic churches such as Matthew Ashimolowo’s Kingsway International Church. In only seven years his more than 7,000-member church has impacted the city of London in many spheres of society including the local government. Kingsway has become a significant regional church that is doing a wonderful job of ministering to the African Diaspora in London among many other ethnic groups.

In Kiev, Ukraine, the two largest churches are new apostolic churches. The pastor’s of both these churches are Africans. This global perspective of the church with a strong emphasis on world missions is a mainstay of the new apostolic churches. At New Life Church in Colorado Springs, it is standard practice for the youth group to do at least two international missions trips each year. This serves to strengthen their understanding of the global church as well as the value of their tithes and offerings in fulfilling the call to cross-cultural missions. In South and Central America the new apostolic reformation churches are responsible in large part for what the West has come to recognize as an outpouring of revival. Spearheading this movement are people like Ed Silvano, Claudio Freidzon, Sergio Scattaglini, Pablo Bottari and Carlos Annacondia among others.

Clearly these new apostolic churches have identified the need to become more relevant to the culture and the times in which we live. They are continually exploring new avenues to express Biblical truths that are cross-cultural, and are taking full advantage of technological advancements to enhance the spreading of the gospel message. It is through the use of such modern technology that people like George Otis Jr. have been able to define spiritual mapping. Spiritual mapping improves our ability to pray more specifically for nations and people groups and at the same time measure the effectiveness of our targeted strategic prayer through efforts like praying through the 1040 Window 1 through 4.

The key to the continued success of the new apostolic reformation churches lies in their adherence to the fundamentals of the faith. They are held together by the glue of Biblical methods, not their particular doctrinal statements nor their traditions. Their “new” methods and “new” expressions of worship are not rigid structures that profess to be superior to those employed by denominations, but rather, guidelines to effective forms of communicating the unchanging and timeless truths of the gospel in our continually evolving world.

CM2000 - 31 December, 2000

Plenary Title:

Promoting Global Partnership & World Evangelization

Plenary Overview:

Promoting global partnership and world evangelization. A time for recognizing some of the dramatic blessings God has yielded through global and regional partnerships, existing models and trends, plus praise and encouragement for the future.

Plenary Speakers:

- **Paul Cedar – A Call to Unity and Global Partnership**
- **Steve Hawthorne - Our Vision Lifted: Beyond 2000 to the Glory of Christ**

CM2000 31 December, 2000

Plenary Title:

Promoting Global Partnership & World Evangelization

A Call to Unity and Global Partnership

By Paul A. Cedar

Greetings, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. How delighted my wife, Jeannie, and I are to be participating with you in this historic celebration of our Messiah -- Jesus Christ. How great is our Lord and greatly to be praised!

As we gather together from many nations of the world -- from the north, south, east and west -- we do so in the name of Jesus Christ -- our Savior, our Lord -- and our Leader!

The Prayer of our Lord Jesus for Unity

As you know, one of the highest priorities of our Leader, Jesus Christ, is the *unity* of His Body -- the Church. Perhaps there is no other passage in the entire Bible that reveals our Lord's intense desire for spiritual unity more deeply than the words of His High Priestly Prayer that is recorded in the Gospel of John, chapter 17. Jesus prayed, "I pray . . . that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you sent me (John 17:20-21 NIV)."

The topic that has been assigned to me is "A Call to Unity and Global Partnership." This subject is not optional for any of us who profess to follow Jesus Christ as His loving and obedient disciples. It is imperative -- for all of us!

Unity is the heart-cry of our Lord Jesus. He is calling us to true unity and global partnership. It is not my idea or yours. It is not the original idea of the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement or of WEF or the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization or the newly formed Global Round Table.

It is our Lord's idea -- and it is His deep desire.

As you will remember, Jesus continued His High Priestly Prayer by asking His Father for "all of them to be *one* even as the Father and the Son are *one* (John 17:21-22)." Then follows the crescendo of His prayer for unity. Jesus prayed, "May they be brought to *complete unity* to let the world know that you sent me (John 17:23)."

What a remarkable statement -- and what a vitally important insight for those of us who are committed to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and to be used by Him in fulfilling His mission of world evangelization. The words of Jesus seem to imply -- even clearly state -- that the unity among His followers will be used by God to communicate to the world that the Father has sent the Son. In other words, unity in the family of God brings credibility and believability to the proclamation of the Gospel.

Unity in the Early Church

There are people in the church who seem to believe that the prayer of Jesus for *complete unity* was either symbolic or theoretical in nature. Quite to the contrary, this was and continues to be the fervent and practical prayer of our Lord Jesus for His Body – the Church. In fact, the request of Jesus for the *complete unity* of His followers began to be fulfilled during the events surrounding the birth of His Church.

In the four Gospel accounts of the ministry of Jesus, the words “unity” or “oneness” or “together” are not used to describe the relationship of His disciples. Instead, the disciples of Jesus were often involved in disagreement, discord and disunity. The term “every man for himself” would be a more accurate description of the disciples during the three years they spent with Jesus.

For example, they argued frequently concerning which of them would be the greatest in the Kingdom of God. Each disciple aspired to be the greatest, and, as a result, they were involved constantly in a kind of self-promoting competition.

However, early in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, things began to change dramatically. A new vocabulary was introduced to describe the relationship of the Christian believers. Let me share a few examples from the first chapters of Acts.

When Jesus ascended to Heaven, the disciples obeyed His instructions by returning to Jerusalem. Dr. Luke reported, “They all joined together constantly in prayer. . . (Acts 1:14 NIV).” Those are remarkable words to describe the disciples who had been fractured, self-centered and competitive – “they *joined together* constantly.”

Then Luke continued, “When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in *one place* (Acts 2:1).” Again, that is an extraordinary description. They were *all together in one place*.

Then it happened – just as Jesus had predicted. “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit . . . (Acts 2:4).” Without a doubt, the coming of the Holy Spirit to fill them was key in bringing them to true spiritual unity. It was unity that was spiritual in nature. As He promised, Jesus Christ was no longer living with them in physical form. He was now living in them in the person of the Holy Spirit (John 14 -16).

The first accounts of the early Christians are communicated in the descriptive vocabulary of spiritual unity. “All the believers were *together* and had everything *in common* (Acts 2:44).” “Every day they continued to meet *together* in the temple courts (Acts 2:46).” They broke bread in their homes and ate *together* with glad and sincere hearts (Acts 46).

In summary, they were **TOGETHER!**

During their time with Jesus, the disciples never seemed to be on the same page. They were certainly not “spiritually together.” But now the promise given by Jesus was beginning to be fulfilled. The gift of the Holy Spirit had been given to them. They were filled with the Holy

Spirit – and one of the most immediate, practical results was that they were brought together spiritually and supernaturally by the Holy Spirit. The High Priestly Prayer of Jesus was being fulfilled!

Spiritual Unity in Times of Crisis

The words “together” and “one” are used repeatedly in the Book of Acts and throughout the New Testament. It is helpful to note that these words “together” and “one” are used in the narrative account of the first major crisis experienced by the early church as recorded in Acts, chapters three and four.

As you will remember, Peter and John were going up to the temple one afternoon at “the time of prayer.” Every day the followers of Jesus met *together* in the temple courts (Acts 2:46). This day was no exception.

As they were entering the temple, they were interrupted by a man who was crippled from birth. He asked them for money. Peter said to him, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have, I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk (Acts 3:6).”

And he did!

Instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. And soon he was walking and jumping and praising God (Acts 3:7-8)!

When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him (Acts 3:10). As the people came running to Peter and John, Peter took the initiative to explain that he and John had not healed the man.

He said, “By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through Him that has given this complete healing to him as you can all see (Acts 3:16).” Peter then went on to proclaim the Gospel to the people.

When the priests, the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees discovered what was happening, they were greatly disturbed that Peter was proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. They put Peter and John in jail until the next day (Acts 3: 42-3).

The next day, they were brought before the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law including the High Priest, Caiaphas. They threatened Peter and John and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. Then they let them go (Acts 4:18-21).

As Peter and John departed from the interrogation, they made a remarkable decision. They could have run for their lives or gone into hiding. Or it would have been very understandable if they had returned to Galilee to their homes or at least had gone home to spend some days fishing and recuperating while things “cooled down” in Jerusalem. That would have been a very natural reaction for both of them. In fact was the kind of thing they had done the night Jesus was betrayed and arrested. Both of them had fled and deserted Jesus.

However, they were no longer living merely in the natural realm. They had been filled with the Holy Spirit. As a result, they did the “Jesus-thing” instead of the “human-thing.” “On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. (Acts 4:23).”

They were no longer “lone-rangers.” They belonged to Christ and to each other. They were a part of a community of the followers of Jesus – members of the very Body of Christ. Jesus was their spiritual head – and they were members of His Body.

They were *together*.

The spiritual unity for which our Lord Jesus had prayed for His followers was becoming a reality. And as a result, they were “enjoying the favor of all the people.” And, just as our Lord prayed, people were believing that “the Father had sent the Son.” And He was adding “to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:47).”

When the members of the Christian Community in Jerusalem heard the report from Peter and John regarding what had happened to them, they responded immediately – together. “They raised their voices *together* in prayer to God (Acts 4:24).”

They prayed together for the Lord to enable them – His servants – “to speak His word with great boldness (Acts 4:29).” The events surrounding this remarkable prayer meeting reveal at least four practical insights regarding authentic spiritual unity within the Body of Christ.

1. Gather Together:

Devoted followers of Jesus Christ need to continually “come together.” It is the devil’s tactic to attempt to divide us. It is the Lord’s desire for His people to *come together* in authentic spiritual unity.

The early Christians understood and practiced this principle of unity. “Every day they met *together* in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate *together* with glad and sincere hearts (Acts 2:46).”

And, when they faced a crisis, they no longer separated and ran for cover. Instead, they now “came together” to share their concerns and needs.

As they did so, they grew in their understanding of what the Church is all about. In this regard, the Apostle Paul later wrote to the Church at Ephesus, “. . . we will in all things grow up into Him, who is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held *together* by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:15-16).”

2. Pray Together:

A second principle of authentic spiritual unity is for God’s people to pray together when they gather together. As Christians gather, we have the privilege of communing with God corporately as we commune or fellowship with one another.

As you will remember, Jesus encouraged this kind of corporate prayer. He taught us “Again, I tell you that if two or you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in Heaven. For where two or three *come together* in my name, there am I with them (Matthew 18:19-20).”

As that little gathering of Christians gathered together to pray with Peter and John, they were following the teaching of the Lord Jesus. “They raised their voice together to God with one accord (KJV).” The phrase translated into English “with one accord” is the Greek word *homothumadon* that literally means “unanimous.”

In other words, they prayed to God with “one voice!”

3. They were One in Heart:

As they prayed together, “. . . the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly (Acts 4:31).” The Lord answered their prayers powerfully for the advancement of His Kingdom.

As the result, the Biblical account reports that “All the believers were *one in heart* . . . (Acts 4:32).” What a wonderful description of authentic spiritual unity. Only God is able to provide that kind of unity. It cannot be organized or legislated or mandated. It is a quality of spiritual unity that is provided only by the Holy Spirit.

4. They were One in Mind:

As the narrative continues in Acts four, the passage states that those Christians following that memorable prayer meeting were also *one in mind* (Acts 4: 32). The word translated from the Greek as “mind” can also be translated as “soul.” It is the Greek word *psuche* which comes from the root word meaning “to breathe” or “to breathe together.”

What a great and powerful description of a deep expression of spiritual unity. They shared life together at the deepest kind of spiritual level. This passage continues to describe that kind of unity by stating that “they shared everything they had (vs. 32)” and “much grace was upon them all (vs. 33)” and “there were no needy person among them (vs. 34).” What a way to live!

In Acts 2:44, these early Christians were described in the following way, “All the believers were *together* and they had everything *in common*. Literally, they shared a “common life.” They lived in deep communion with Christ and with each other.

What does this have to do with our topic, “A Call to Unity and Global Partnership?”

The answer is “EVERYTHING!” The foundation of strategic Christian global partnership is authentic Christian unity. There is no substitute. We need partnerships that are predicated on the ministry of the Holy Spirit and based upon the authentic unity that can only be wrought by the Holy Spirit.

At the same time, we need to understand that coming together under the Lordship of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit is not only a New Testament concept. Our Lord has encouraged

and even required such spiritual partnerships from the beginning of human history beginning with Adam and Eve becoming “one” in the sight of God.

Of course, God Himself is the personification of the deepest expression of spiritual unity – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. To recite the words of a great old hymn, “God in three persons, blessed Trinity.”

The Psalmist declared, “How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity (Psalm 133:1).” He then concluded, “For there the Lord bestows His blessing, even life forevermore (Psalm 133:3).”

It is fascinating to realize that our Lord created us not to live independently of Him or one another – but to live in full dependence upon Him and with interdependence on one another. Paul wrote, “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good (I Corinthians 12:7).” He continues by saying, “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you’ (I Corinthians 12:21).”

Paul then concludes that marvelous passage by declaring, “. . . there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it (I Corinthians 12:25-26).”

Our Lord has created us to need Him – and to need each other as we serve Him. This is especially true of fulfilling His mission. It is foolhardy, if not arrogant, to believe that one of us can fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus by ourselves -- or one local church -- or one denomination -- or one parachurch ministry.

The Apostle Paul sounded the clarion call for authentic spiritual unity when he wrote, “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to *keep the unity of the Spirit* through the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:2-3).”

When Jesus rules our hearts and minds and when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, then and only then can we experience true spiritual unity. Paul assumes that truth as he urges us to make every effort to keep or maintain that unity of the Spirit.

It is a very serious matter for us to disturb or destroy the unity of the Spirit. The writer of the Proverbs declares that among the seven things that God hates is “a man who stirs up dissension among brothers (Proverbs 6:19).”

Paul wrote about the same matter when he stated, “Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned (Titus 3:10-11).

I believe that God is calling His Church into strategic partnerships in order to fulfill His mission in the world. The AD 2000 & Beyond Movement has been a wonderful expression of how God can use strategic partnerships to advance His agenda and His Kingdom. As we bid this great movement farewell, we need not despair. Although the AD 2000 Movement is officially coming

to a close, the spirit of unity is not departing from Christ's Church – nor is His clear call to strategic alliances and partnerships.

Unity and Global Partnerships Today

Our Lord is calling His people and His Church to *come together* and to *pray together* and to *become involved in mission together* in most remarkable ways. As we enter a new millennium of ministry, we need to heed the call of our Leader, Jesus Christ, to give a high priority to authentic, practical *spiritual unity* -- in our families, in His Church and in our calling to the ministry of world evangelization.

We have the privilege of living in a day when our Lord is calling His people to *come together* in *unity* and *global partnership* in ways that may be unprecedented in the history of the Church. We have acknowledged that the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement is a wonderful expression of that kind of unity and global partnership.

In addition, we can thank God that a number of global, regional, national and local partnerships are coming together these days under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. For example, in recent years our Lord has used InterDev to serve as a catalyst and as an effective facilitator in helping to form scores of strategic partnerships around the world that are focusing the mission of World Evangelization. Also, the World Evangelical Fellowship is a wonderful coalition of Evangelical church and denominational leaders from all over the world that has been used of God for well over a century to advance Christ's mission on many fronts.

Then there is the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization that was begun some twenty-five years ago which has focused on "The whole Church taking the whole Gospel to the whole world. In the past two years, these global partnerships along with other international and regional partnerships have formed the Global Round Table which is focusing upon "connecting Christ's People to Fulfill His Great Commission in the 21st Century." All of these coalitions are wonderful examples of the great power of unity and global partnerships.

At this time, we are going to hear updates from each of these strategic partnerships. God willing, you will be both encouraged and blessed as you listen to some front line reports of how our Lord is calling His Church to be involved in *unity* and *global partnerships* as we seek to fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As we do, let us commit to pray fervently that the prayer of our Lord Jesus for *complete unity* may be fulfilled in all of our lives and ministries so the world may truly believe that the Father has sent the Son.

Our Lord is calling us to be involved in unity and global partnerships. Let us follow our Leader - - together -- with obedience and joyful expectation. And, as we do, let us *come together* with the understanding and conviction that "There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:4-6)."

Amen!

CM 2000 31 December, 2000

Plenary:

Promoting Global Partnership & World Evangelization

Our Vision Lifted: Beyond 2000 to the Glory of Christ

Steve Hawthorne

We have not come to commemorate the deeds we have done, or to congratulate each other as deed-doers. We have come to celebrate Jesus, Lord of the harvest, and Lord of history.

I know that probably all of you have been touched by Christ in recent years, so that your gaze has been lifted far beyond the chronological date AD 2000. About twenty years ago and again about ten years ago, and even again about five years ago, many of us gathered to consider how to collaborate to complete the task. As we gathered, we were amazed to find that God had given us such similar and overlapping goals, why not walk together? And a coalition was formed with a sense of divine appointment. That sense of God-authored partnership has continued. But something awesome has happened to us while we have worked together. I'm convinced that Christ has matured our vision in two wonderful ways. Our vision has both shifted and lifted.

Vision Shift: Anchored to the End

By vision shift, I mean that our focus has been pushed beyond the chronological date. By focusing on the value of finishing, we have all become less loyal to any particular chronological date. We have become unyieldingly anchored to the future fact that world evangelization must and will be completed. We have not been driven ourselves to frantic efforts in a countdown frenzy. I think it's evidence of our Lord's excellent leadership. We have stopped counting the hourglass sands of chronos time. We have all learned a new word, *kairos*, a word which speaks of time that rises inexorably to appointed crescendos and fullnesses. More than learning a word, we have learned a way of living toward a grand *kairos*. It is a way of living beyond shifting opportunism or simplistic optimism. This movement was never about hurrying. It was always about hoping. After these few years of partnership, we are ruined for anything less than the fulfillment of all of God's purposes. He has set our hearts ablaze with the glad certainty that all of earth's peoples will be evangelized.

Vision Lift: Transfixed on the Person of Christ

We have also had our vision lifted. The year 2000 has served us as a tutor, leading us to a surpassing vision of Christ's glory in an evangelized world. While working together we have seen the splendor of what an evangelized world may be like. There is one astounding reality in a thoroughly evangelized world: Christ is known, honored, worshipped and obeyed.

Christ said "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). Let some of the light of Christ's day reach your heart now. Abraham was summoned to gaze into the night sky to behold the fullness of the blessing among every one of the peoples (Genesis 15:5-6). We don't know if he succeeded in counting the stars or the peoples. But we do know that as he peered into the sky, he believed God. Although it was night, Abraham saw

Christ's day! It wasn't really the stars that God wanted him to see. God wanted Abraham to lift his gaze to behold what mattered most: a coming day when his greatest descendent would multiply blessing to all the peoples of earth.

At this hour God has brought us, like Abraham, to behold the night sky. We have made our effort to number the peoples. The only thing we are sure of is that our list of the people groups is not perfect. But the point may have always been that we fix our vision upon Christ and believe. During this celebration, let the Father lift your eyes to Christ. He shall be named, obeyed, worshiped, and loved in every circle and setting of humanity. Allow the light of Christ's coming day wash over you as we gather. Let God's own glad confidence seep into your soul, instilling inextinguishable hope. His day is more certain than the sun's rising tomorrow.

Christ has brought us to an awesome threshold. Never has the world been so close to being evangelized. Never has Christ been so greatly followed. Never has Christ been so abundantly praised among so many diverse peoples. And yet never has Christ been so vigorously opposed. Never before have so many believers suffered for Christ's name.

At this threshold moment, it is crucial that we reaffirm our resolve to complete the task and to accomplish it together as Christ leads us. But the greater matter is that we allow our Lord to lift our shared vision so that we share a common jealousy for Christ's greater glory. The construct of a millennial close gathered us together with a wide array of differing motives. From this point forward, Christ is calling us to labor together with a motive of love for our Lord and a passion of hope for His glory.

I'm convinced that God is lifting our vision to Christ in order to fill us with a hope that I can only describe as a patient passion for Christ's greater glory.

I call your attention to Paul's letter to believers in Rome. In chapter fifteen, he discloses his purpose: that the believers of his day would join with him to finish the task of evangelizing the world. He knew then, what we must know now: that in order to fulfill the gospel task, God's people must labor together according to a passionate hope in Christ.

In Romans 15:9-12 we find that Paul selected four passages, arranging them in an unmistakable sequence of escalating evangelization, praise, and then, a surprising crescendo.

Of course, no one would suggest that we should mark our calendars by these four verses, as if they divulged a precise timetable of the end of the age. But we can be sure that Paul wanted them ringing like a bell in the hearts of the believers as they stood at a threshold of history which presaged the threshold at which we find ourselves now. Let these passages resound in our hearts so that "the God who gives perseverance and encouragement" of hope would grant that we would "be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus" (Romans 15:5).

There is one word which is found in each of the four passages. It is a word sometimes translated "Gentiles." It is simply the Greek word "ethne," which, when found in its plural form almost always refers to nations or peoples. It is a word describing people groups as they are found across the world: the languages, the lineages, the races or the tribes which comprise humankind.

1. Praise among the nations.

The first passage establishes the venue of our hope. As grand as heaven may be, we are to focus our hope upon what Christ will bring about within this age and upon this earth among the nations:

“Therefore I will give praise to You among the peoples (sometimes translated “Gentiles”), and I will sing to Your name” (Romans 15:9).

What is the hope? That God will be openly worshiped by His people in the view and comprehension of the peoples. This phenomenon of open worship will explicitly glorify God by name. He will not be vaguely honored as a generalized deity. He will be celebrated in accordance with the namesake which God has disclosed in scripture.

Never has this promise been so greatly fulfilled as in the last ten years. Open, passionate praise has filled the streets and open squares of more cities than at any other time. Some of the largest gatherings in history have been God’s people assembling to seek and worship Him.

2. The nations called to join in the joy.

The second passage builds on the first:

“And again he says, ‘Rejoice, O peoples (Gentiles), with His people’” (Romans 15:10).

This is a portrait of the gospel going forth like a song. The peoples of the earth will be invited to worship God in Spirit and in truth. Even now we see it taking place.

At the heart of the gospel is a call to rejoice. For this invitation to be authentic, let’s be sure that the party is on and that there is joy to join. Too long we have been as an older brother coming in from our work in the fields, objecting to the party we found emerging in the Father’s house. Our worship should always emulate the intimate joy of a family party where every person is desired, honored and known. Every Sabbath should be a harbinger of the festive rest when all is completed. May our celebration today establish this desire in our hearts: to welcome the worship of the nations as long-lost brothers and sisters. We can no longer be content with our own worship. Let your heart be moved to truly yearn for the nations to join us in a global celebration.

3. A call to all peoples.

Take note of the increasing magnitude of praise: The open worship will become an open welcome. And then the open welcome-offered to any people-will grow so that there will be some from every people.

“And again, ‘Praise the Lord all you peoples (Gentiles), and let all the peoples praise Him’” (Romans 15:11).

The key word is “all.” It’s not enough to have a few symbolic peoples mixed in the worship. It is not enough to have some from every continent. It was never satisfactory to have some from every country. The party is only complete with an ample representation from every one of the peoples. No clan or caste or culture will be absent from this extravaganza of worship.

This promise provides mandate to labor onward until there are worshiping movements of followers amidst every people. Let's continue to join our efforts around a grand outcome: worshiping movements amidst each of the peoples, which Paul described as "the obedience of faith among all the peoples" (Romans 1:5). Let's pursue the every-people purpose strategic zeal until the task is fulfilled. It must be fulfilled.

4. Christ: the hope of the nations.

What more could we possibly hope for than an entirely evangelized world? There is a hope which surpasses all that we will bring about. God wants our vision transfixed on Christ and Him glorified. The fourth promise that Paul mentions goes far beyond the previous three.

"And again Isaiah says, 'There shall come the root of Jesse, and He who arises to rule over the peoples (Gentiles). In Him shall the peoples (Gentiles) hope.'"

This passage can be understood in different ways. Let me tell you two things that it does not mean. First, I don't think it refers to the very final hour of the age when the skies are opened and Christ descends physically to earth. Instead, I think the hope of the nations will be an enduring, growing phenomenon all over the world during the last days. When Christ does rend the heavens, He will have already displayed the goodness of His governance among the nations. He will have already brought forth a measure of the blessing of Abraham in every nation. He will leave His enemies without excuse. He will have already aroused great expectancy for even greater goodness. His authority and power will be so resplendent and evident, that the peoples will fix their hope in Him.

Secondly, this passage does not suggest that Christians will become so numerous and powerful that they will be able to subdue political and religious systems under their control. There is no trace of such triumphalism in this passage. The nations will spontaneously, ardently hope in Christ.

The rising of Christ to rule will be in keeping with the ways in which He brings His kingdom: not by invasion and conquest, but by demonstrating His love and sensitively declaring the liberating power of truth.

It is crucial that we have a clear vision of Christ bringing the blessing of His kingly rule to every people. The last time the Christian movement crossed a millennial milestone, Christ's glory was confused with military supremacy. The believers of that day were consumed with conquest, and thus the Crusades were launched. This hideous mockery of Christ's kingdom became the greatest crime ever committed against the glory of God and stands today as a stumbling block to many. With that kind of history, it is no wonder that many are looking on this gathering with an expectation that we will parlay our political power into a triumphal conquest of religious domination. I wish that it went without saying, but we must turn from this perversion of hope. The text says that "the root of Jesse" will come, referring to someone like David. We would do well to remember David's hope and what he learned about pursuing that vision. Do you remember the greatest crisis of David's life? It was not the incident of adultery and murder. It was not his son's rebellion. David's greatest crisis came just after he had brought a completion to all the border wars. His passion for God's purpose of worship gave him a dream to build a house of worship, open to the nations for God's glory (1 Samuel 7). This vision was affirmed but went

unfulfilled for years. Eventually David got a taste of his own power beyond his borders and he succumbed to a temptation to perform a census (1 Chronicles 21:1-6). Nothing is wrong with an accurate count of the people, but in that day a census was the way kings mustered armies. Why would David need a greater army when he finally was experiencing “peace on every side?” David was being tempted to launch an imperial conquest, to subject distant peoples under his feet by force. God responded with a devastating judgment, which blocked David from acting out the conquest (1 Chronicles 21:7-30). Miraculously and mercifully, God stopped David at the very spot where he would resume the purpose God had given him: to build a house of worship for all peoples (1 Chronicles 16:23-31, 22:1-19).

Let’s take David’s lesson seriously. Let us lay aside every kind of cheap triumphalism. Consider another passage from Isaiah which can instruct us about how Christ will rise to rule at the end of days and how we must work according to his ways.

“...And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, according to the faithful mercies shown to David. Behold, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. Behold, you will call a nation you do not know, and a nation which knows you not will run to you, because of the Lord your God, even the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you” (Isaiah 55:3b-5).

God declares that He will so marvelously glorify His Son in the end of days that the nations will run to Him. No one will say that they were coerced or manipulated. Those who hate Him will despise Him all the more. But those who have any inclination to follow Him will run to Him. Do not doubt God’s ability to glorify His Son. The Messiah will arise, in the midst of His people. His renown will be great, eclipsing every other luminary and leader. The phenomenon of Christ’s rising will not be a mystical matter for a spiritual elite. The eager obedience of Christ’s followers will reveal Jesus’ character as plain as day. Answers to prayer in His name will bring him glory. Those who suffer for Christ’s name will manifest “the Spirit of glory and of God” (1 Peter 4:14). He will lift His voice like a song. The nations will hear and come. It might appear that they are rushing to hear our messages and to attend our churches. Don’t be mistaken. They really want Christ. The only desire of the nations is the Messiah Himself.

Isaiah says that God will fulfill this everlasting purpose in accordance with the mercy shown David. As David completed the mission God had given him, he was turned from God’s purpose. But God’s mercy restored him. As we come closer to completing the task of evangelization, how can we doubt that we will be tempted to turn away from God’s purpose as David was? Brothers and sisters, we need God’s mercy at this threshold moment. Our hearts are as prone to ascendancy and to conquest as David’s heart was. But Isaiah 55 declares that God will be as merciful as He is faithful. May our celebration at this hour be brightened in hope that God’s transforming mercy will make us like His Son.

Where are we now in this unfolding drama of escalating praise? We have begun to worship Him openly in life-giving ways. As we mark our progress in calling the nations to worship, we should celebrate that Jesus is drawing the true worshipers that the Father has so long been seeking. Our worship here is part of this rising chorus. How can it fail that He will manifest Himself in such a way that He becomes the hope of all the nations?

After recounting the sequence of promises that Christ will fulfill, Paul prays: “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13).

Paul’s prayer may seem to be a matter of private encouragement and positive mental attitude. But the prayer is locked in a context of Christ’s glory among the nations. The abounding hope he seeks for the believers of his day is exactly what Christ desires to impart to us for the awesome days of fulfillment ahead of us. Let the Holy Spirit empower you even now. You need not try to generate joy or attempt to fabricate peace. Your part is to continue believing Him. The God of hope will continue to renew your joy as you believe.

Ongoing Celebration With Christ Our Center

I don’t think this celebration is just an interlude before we go back to work. As Christ presides as never before, all of our endeavors will become celebration. With Christ-focused vision we will find ourselves laboring with greater unity, determination, strategic wisdom and joy.

In Romans 15, Paul continues to describe the practicalities of pursuing Christ-focused mission together.

“Priesting” the Gospel

Paul says that there are three things which must be done regarding the gospel. The first is to “priest” the gospel.

“...ministering as a priest (literally “priesting”) the gospel of God, that my offering of the peoples (Greek “ethne”) might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:16).

The primary matter to Paul is not his activity among the nations. The main point is that something takes place unto the living God. Mission is for God, and secondarily for people. The essential outcome of our work is a worship gift of the nations (“peoples” once again, instead of the obscure translation “Gentiles”) being offered to God, sanctified (we might say, “transformed”) by the Holy Spirit. Let’s lift our worship during this celebration as a prophetic foretaste of the lavish worship which will be brought to God.

Christ purchased some from every tribe and tongue, not merely to fill the grandstands of heaven, but so that the Father would receive the distinctive treasure and glory of each of the peoples. Listen to the songs and prayers of this unique gathering. See if you don’t hear God being honored in the languages and with the cultural beauties of diverse peoples. May God receive our worship offering during this gathering as a prayer of hope. We offer Him these songs with joy that is mingled with a holy dissatisfaction. We won’t rest until He receives the sanctified glory of every people.

“Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God” (Romans 15:17).

As we give ourselves to worship, let us refuse to boast about what we have done for the world. Instead, with Paul, we simply celebrate how greatly the world’s peoples are loving God. Such

God-focused celebration frees us to speak with unabashed clarity about what Christ has accomplished through us.

Fulfilling the Gospel

The second aspect that Paul mentions is to “fulfill the gospel.” Paul was not driven by urgent needs or pressing opportunities. He did only what God gave him to do (the “grace” mentioned in verse 15). He carried out the part God gave him with a vision for the entire task to be fulfilled. He knew his assignment and monitored his progress so that he could assess how far and how well he had done.

“...from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached (literally “fulfilled”) the gospel of Christ” (Romans 15:19).

It wasn't as if Paul had preached to everyone in that area. But a foundation had been laid. There was a sturdy, thriving church which could completely evangelize the region. Launching this beginning was, to Paul, “fulfilling the gospel.” As we draw closer to fulfilling the task, we may find different ways of assessing our progress. But Paul's example is enough to settle the legitimacy of tracking our progress in terms of the person of Christ. Consider the practicality of the Christ-focused criteria that we see in Paul: Is Christ named (verse 20)? And is Christ obeyed (verse 18)? By the way, this is no different than the Great Commission. Paul's criteria are clear in Matthew 28: We know we have discipled a people when two things have been accomplished: First, Christ is named throughout a community by those who are baptized into His name; and second, Christ is obeyed by believers trained to live loyally under His Lordship. Preaching the Gospel.

This movement has long had a double goal before it: First is the vision of a church among every people. Second is the work of bringing the gospel to every person. We see both these goals in Romans 15. Both of them are worthy of pursuing as a global movement. Both of them can only be done if we are emboldened in hope.

“And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation; but as it is written, “They who had no news of Him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand”” (Romans 20:21).

To aspire is to act with vision. Paul allowed his aspirations to follow the promises of scripture about Christ. His work was a matter of destiny more than it was a duty. Those who had not yet seen would see. Those who had never heard would hear.

As Christ captures our vision and fills us with hope, we will find ourselves working together because we will be working with Him. As for “priesting the gospel,” Christ is our great priest. He will bring the nations to the Father. As for “fulfilling the gospel,” He is the author and finisher of our faith. He will not leave the task undone. As for “preaching the gospel,” Christ is the one of whom the Father Himself declared, “This is my Son! Listen to Him!” When the Messiah we celebrate raises His voice, He will be heard.

May the Father fill us with His own love for Christ, and shed the light of His coming day upon us.

CM2000 - 31 December, 2000

Plenary Title:

All Night Prayer for the New Millennium

Plenary Overview:

Time of prayer and worship to usher in the new millennium.

Plenary Speakers:

- **David Bryant- Messiah Supreme: Among Us, For Nations:
A Night Of Prayer For The Ages**
- **Pavle Cekov – The Temptation of Jesus**
- **Sam Lal – Celebration Of Messiah's Transfiguration
And Its Significance Today**
- **Beverly Pegues – Celebration Of Messiah's Resurrection
And Its Significance For Today**

CM2000 31 December, 2000

Plenary Title:

All Night Prayer for the New Millennium

***Messiah Supreme: Among Us, For Nations:
A Night Of Prayer For The Ages***

David Bryant

JERUSALEM. New Year's Eve 2000. 1500 leaders from over 100 countries. Eight hours of concerted prayer throughout the night. The purpose? To pray the supremacy of Messiah into the nations. The occasion? CELEBRATE MESSIAH 2000. The vision? To reproduce this prayer meeting all over the world. The result?

Should God answer us, nothing short of true biblical revival!

From December 27 to January 3, 2001, the Ad2000 & Beyond Movement hosts its grand finale. After a full decade of extraordinary mobilization worldwide toward reaching unreached peoples, this international mission coalition ceases to exist (as originally planned), to be replaced by scores of international networks and projects to keep the heartbeat of the AD2000 MOVEMENT alive for years to come. What a story this is!

CLEARLY, IT'S AN ANSWER TO THE RECENT GROUNDSWELL OF PRAYER FROM MANY.

NATIONS. In fact, prayer itself has dominated the AD2000 MOVEMENT from its inception, maybe more than any similar coalition in church history.

That's why Luis Bush (AD2000 International Director) and his team felt compelled to set aside an entire night for prayer at the Jerusalem congress, designating it a full plenary session to be attended by ALL delegates, not just prayer leaders. We have called it, "MESSIAH SUPREME: AMONG US, FOR NATIONS" (Colossians 1:24-29 is a foundational text for the words of our theme.)

THINK OF IT! In the very place where Messiah gave the Great Commission! In the very place where a ten-day corporate prayer meeting became the divine fountainhead for major Kingdom advances in the very place where a "great awakening" unfolded that transformed a first-century empire in the very place where New Testament-style revival marked its claim - THERE, possibly the largest ever global prayer meeting uniting thousands of Christian leaders who will seek God for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit on this generation. As we do, we will welcome the dawn of the true third Millennium (January 1, 2001), anticipating a harvest of extraordinary proportions in the coming decade.

Praying the supremacy of Messiah from Jerusalem into the Church and the nations - THAT'S OUR PURPOSE.

Defining our prayer agenda around eight major themes of Messiah - THAT'S OUR STRATEGY.

Reproducing that prayer meeting within many other places - THAT'S OUR VISION.

But how will this work itself out practically? More importantly, what can this mean for you?

FIRST STEP: WE WILL OPEN AND CLOSE WITH HOPE-FILLED WORSHIP...

worship that not only focuses on what God has already done in world evangelization but also on what we sense He is preparing to do to establish more fully Messiah's supremacy throughout the earth. Such worship can arise from songs, reports and testimonies as well as a litany of verbal praises. The final season of worship will also glorify God by expressing to Him our confidence that He will answer us. Shouldn't EVERY prayer meeting encourage such worship?

SECOND: FOUR MAJOR INGREDIENTS WILL OCCUPY US as we work through each of the eight major themes. Three biblical expressions of prayer capture elements critical to ANY successful prayer meeting:

- (1) **Celebration** (as we praise God for promises related to the specific prayer theme of the eight, for that particular segment);
- (2) **Preparation** (as a brief meditation is given to sharpen our biblical understanding of what praying for that specific theme entails);
- (3) **Intercession** (as we pray facets of the selected theme into the Church, locally or worldwide, and then into the nations, including our own);
- (4) **Consecration** (as we dedicate ourselves more fully to Messiah, to live more consistently with what we have prayed as well as be part of the answers to our prayers no matter what it may cost us).

In Jerusalem, these four elements will be repeated, in that order but with creative variety, hour by hour. (You should try it sometime!)

THIRD: FIVE THEMES WILL HELP US PRAY MESSIAH'S SUPREMACY INTO THE NATIONS. These come from the five major events in His life and ministry, from incarnation to second coming. Fundamentally, our prayers will seek the Father TO REPLICATE each theme, by the Spirit's power, throughout the current worldwide advance of the Gospel, both among Christians and for the unreached.

In summary, here's what 1500 leaders will address on the Night of Prayer:

- **INCARNATION** that God would replicate through His people, for the sake of nations, works of revelation, identification, invasion - all of which marked Messiah's Incarnation.
- **CRUCIFIXION** that God would cause the Church to revisit the cross, embracing its full work for us and increasing our desire to preach Messiah crucified to all who are lost.

- **RESURRECTION** that God would revitalize Christians' experience of being buried and raised with Messiah to walk in newness of life, so that the unreached might believe our claims about His defeat of death.
- **ASCENSION** that God would confirm and vindicate, in innumerable ways, the supremacy of Messiah within His Church and over all the peoples of the earth.
- **RETURN** that God would reawaken Christians everywhere to the great hope of the Consummation, placing in us a readiness to do whatever it takes to complete the Great Commission and bring back the King.
- Central to everything that happens will be the over-arching focus: the **SUPREMACY** of Messiah in God's Plan for the Ages. This Night of Prayer is about a **FRESH ENCOUNTER** by the Holy Spirit with the very Savior whose presence and power we sought on behalf of so many others. Is that too much to expect? Not at all! Let me tell you why.

In the Fourth Century, St. Athanasius wrote in his treatise entitled, "On the Incarnation", words that speak directly to our expectations about the CM2000 Night of Prayer: "You know how it is when some great king enters a large city and dwells in one of its houses. Because of his dwelling in that single house, the whole city is honoured, and enemies and robbers cease to molest it. Even so it is with the King of all. He has come into our country and dwelt in one body amidst the many, and in consequence the designs of the enemy against mankind have been foiled. The Son of God has come among us to put an end to death."

Think of it: "The Son of God has come among us." When He dwells in His people and whenever He dwells among the nations as the King He is everything is radically altered, including us.

That's what will be the overflow of our Night of Prayer on December 31st. That's why we have sub-titled it, "AMONG us and FOR nations". During those eight hours of corporate intercession and worship, many of us believe CM2000 will raise up to heaven a prayer meeting for the Ages a prayer meeting that will directly impact RIGHT NOW the life of the Church and the advance of the Gospel. Yes, right now, as Jesus enters into all that we pray for.

HAVE YOU HEARD THE SUMMONS? Psalm 50:5 says, "Gather to me my consecrated ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice."

On December 31st, the entire assembly at Celebrate Messiah 2000, along with Christians around the world, is summoned to welcome in the Third Millennium the way the First Millennium began! For eight hours we will form our own Acts 1 "upper room", praying with the same magnificent vision of Messiah and for the nations that the early disciples shared and doing it right where they gathered, in Jerusalem! As we do so, in a sense, the mission of Christ launched in Acts 1 will come full circle.

Surely it is no coincidence that on the evening of 2001, united in the city that currently holds the most intensive focus throughout the whole world, we will be bound together in prayer for a movement toward world evangelization that has experienced more advances in the past decade than ever before.

WITHOUT A DOUBT, GOD HAS SUMMONED THIS PRAYER MEETING!

As it says in the fuller rendition of Psalm 50: “the Mighty One, God, the Lord, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to the place where it sets. From Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth. Our God comes and will not be silent ‘Gather to me my consecrated ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice ‘The world is mine, and all that is in it’. Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.”

Notice the summons comes from JERUSALEM. It is grounded in a BLOOD COVENANT. God has in view the establishing of HIS SUPREMACY AMONG THE NATIONS as He answers those who CALL upon Him. All of this is fulfilled in MESSIAH. That’s why His supremacy is what our Night of Prayer is all about at CM2000. Could any of the hours we spend together at CM2000 be more strategic than this for His sake?

Yes, YOU are summoned! To the right place, at the right time, for the right reason, to do the right work, the work of concerted prayer! As we “fast” a night of sleep together, we will, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, establish by our prayers a new beachhead for the advance of Christ’s Kingdom, from Jerusalem (where we pray) to the ends of the earth (where we will return).

Listen! The summons has been issued! It comes from the living God at the cost of His own son: Messiah! Supreme!... among us (in revival) for nations (in world evangelization).

R.S.V.P. with our whole heart and soul. Do it the way Jesus did when He prayed in Jerusalem 2000 years ago: “Father, the time has come. Glorify the Son, that the Son may glorify You.” (John 17:1)

CM2000 31 December, 2000

Plenary Title:

All Night Prayer for the New Millennium

The Temptation of Jesus

Rev. Pavle Cekov

Text: Matt.4: 1-11

Introduction:

Jesus Christ was tempted by the Devil throughout his ministry. The Bible says: "...but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are -- yet was without sin." (Heb 4:15) The temptations of Jesus were real. The Bible says: "Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." (Heb 2:18) From the temptations of Jesus in Matt.4: 1-11 we can learn two important things: First, to know the process of temptation, and Second, how to overcome temptation.

I. TO KNOW THE PROCESS OF TEMPTATION

Knowing the process of temptation is very important for us if we want to overcome our temptations. Jesus Christ was tempted in the same way as Adam and Eve. We are all tempted in the same way too. It doesn't matter if we are members of the local church or Church leaders. The process of temptation is the same. So let us look at the process of temptation:

A. First: temptation starts with doubts (Matt. 4: 3-4) "if you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." The first temptation was on the level of His physical nature, to turn stones to bread. He was hungry and the devil gave him a suggestion of what to do. The devil tempted Jesus through his human physical wishes. In the same way Adam and Eve were tempted. We church leaders are tempted too. But for Jesus God's will was more important than the satisfaction of His hunger. Every day the devil is bringing before us doubts regarding our physical needs. Especially those who are far away on the mission field. Can God provide your physical needs? What about world evangelization? Can God provide all our physical needs in order to fulfill the task? We need to depend and trust on Him. Let us learn the lesson from the people of Israel in the desert. Each day they needed to learn to trust and depend on God.

B. Second: The temptation was to deny the word of God. (Matt.4: 5-7) "Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. If you are the Son of God, ... throw yourself down. For it is written: He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

The second temptation was on the level of His spiritual nature to prove His faith in God. At the same time it was an appeal to manifest Himself spectacularly to Israel. Jesus was not willing to depart from the will of God in the spiritual realm. Jesus depended and believed in the word of God. Israel was tempted in the desert in the same way. God promised to them the land of Canaan but they denied God's word. Because of it, that generation died in the desert. When we

reject the word of God as leaders and do not trust and depend, than we will fail for sure. Adam and Eve fail because they do not keep and trust the word of God. "The righteous will live by faith." (Romans 1:17)

C. Third: temptation was to defy the person of God (Matt.4: 8-10).

"Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. All this I will give you, he said, if you will bow down and worship me." The third temptation was on the level to defy the person of God. This temptation involved the purpose of His coming into the world. Jesus came to redeem men, not to rule them. Satan's way, still followed by many, required no suffering and death, but Jesus chose God's way, the way of the cross.

II. HOW TO OVERCOME THE TEMPTATIONS?

We know that the first Adam failed and did not overcome the temptation. Why? Because he was weak spiritually. But we praise the Lord for the second Adam who is the Lord Jesus Christ. He triumphed over Satan. How did the Lord Jesus Christ overcome temptation?

A. First: By the leadership and power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 4: 1)

"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert..." The Holy Spirit led Jesus. With his leadership and power He was able to overcome this temptation. Jesus was not led by His natural desires (sinful nature) but He lived in accordance with the Spirit desires. It was not the same with Adam. He was led by his flesh and not with his spirit or by the Holy Spirit. "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace." (Romans 8: 5-6) As leaders, we need to live in accordance with our spirit and not our natural desires if we want to overcome temptation. Also God gave us his Holy Spirit. With His power we can overcome the devil.

B. Second: by the power of the word of God (Matt. 4: 4, 7, 10)

"It is written: Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." Jesus was able with the power of the word of God to overcome the devil. There is such a power in the word of God. Apostle Paul experienced the power in the word of God. That is why he is saying: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentiles." (Romans 1: 16) The word of God is our sword with which we attack our tempter. "...the sword of the Spirit, which is word of God." (Eph 6: 17)

C. Third: By the power of Prayer and Fasting (Matt. 4: 2)

"After fasting for forty days and forty nights, he was hungry." Jesus was known for his prayer. Very often He was praying. Look in (Mk 1: 35). Jesus was praying and fasting and therefore he was able to overcome the temptation. We leaders today need to learn this lesson from Jesus.

CONCLUSION:

- Let's go out and do the same thing
- Let's teach others to do it.

CM2000 31 December, 2000

Plenary Title:

All Night Prayer for the New Millennium

Celebration Of Messiah's Transfiguration And Its Significance Today

Rev. Samuel Hilel Lal

Greetings in the matchless and glorious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus the Messiah!

Today I am overwhelmed with the joy of the Lord and am excited to be with His saints in His glorious presence on this once in a life time and historic night, worshiping our Glorious Messiah, Jesus the Supreme Lord! Hallelujah !!

Before I start sharing on the topic-"CELEBRATION OF MESSIAH'S TRANSFIGURATION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE TODAY"- I want to share a very significant personal story, which will make a difference, as it has made in my personal life. I was born in answer to the prayers of God-fearing parents, where my Daddy was a Pastor and Mummy a teacher. They named me Samuel. They led me to the Lord when I was a little boy. I had a desire to grow and serve the Lord with my Pastor Daddy. It so happened when I was 13 years old, my Daddy was called Home by the Lord. He was hardly 44years at that time. Though I have the Christian hope for the believers who sleep in the Lord, but my dream and desire was shattered as I had lost my father. That day I prayed for two things to become reality in my life. FIRST-God, I have lost my father, and I want to experience you as my father in reality, as you were to my Lord Jesus Christ. SECOND- Father God, I do not come from rich family, but I have a desire to visit the place and preach, where your Son Jesus was born, served the people, suffered, died and rose again. He answered both my prayers and TODAY I AM HERE!

One day I will be in heaven, thank Him for becoming my father and helping to preach in the world and also in the place where Jesus preached. Glory!

I. THE MESSIAH: JESUS

Now let us see the gracious FATHER revealing His glorious SON, **Jesus the Messiah**. He was born of the Spirit. At the time of Baptism, Holy Spirit descended and **first time the Father spoke**, "*He is my Beloved son in him I am well pleased*". Note Jesus pleased his Father, even before starting his public ministry and received the commendation.(Luke 3:22). He came to Nazareth, where he was brought up, he was given a chance to read from the book of Isaiah, He read, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel---heal the broken hearted,---set the captives free --- (Luke 4:18-22).It was not simply reading but it started happening ,as He began his ministry. Acts 10:38 says," How God **anointed Jesus** of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil---.

Jesus was at the peak of his ministry .One day he asked his disciples. “ Who do men say that I am ?” Disciples said that people thought that he was a prophet or so and so. Jesus asked them, “ But who do you say that I am?” Peter replied, “Thou art the **Christ (MESSIAH)**, the Son of the living God.” (Matt.16: 16). This truth was not revealed by flesh and blood but by the Father, in heaven. **He was the Messiah for a specific mission of His Father.**

II. GLORIOUS MESSIAH: JESUS CHRIST

Jesus had become very famous, people wanted to see him, but he started sharing with his disciples about the purpose for which he had come. At that time certain Greeks came and requested Philip saying, “Sir, we would see Jesus.” Jesus answered and said, “The hour has that the Son of man should be glorified.” (John 12:21 & 23). He gave the example of the corn of wheat falling in the ground, dying alone and rising to bear much fruit. He started sharing with his disciples about his suffering and death, which would be glorious. There we see a second time the FATHER speaking, “*I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.*” (John 12:28). Jesus further said,“ If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me.” He was signifying what death he should die. People who heard him could not understand and said, CHRIST (MESSIAH) abides forever, and how could he die?

He was the glorious Messiah, the Son of God, but all this manifestation was to reveal the divine purpose of God in saving the mankind, for which he had to come and die. Let us see some verses about the glorious Messiah Jesus:

“God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believes on him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16),

“who being the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person”. (Heb 1:3a)

“and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the father, full of grace and truth”. (John1:14b).

“ no man has seen God at any time, the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the father, he has declared him”.(John 1:18).

“being in the form of God---made himself of no reputation, took the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men---he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also has highly exalted him and given him a NAME which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow--- and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord , to the glory of God, the Father.”(Phil.2:6-11).

The secret of MESSIAH’S glory was suffering and sacrificing all for mankind. This glory can be explained something like this. When we heat some metal, it becomes hot, but when the heat is increased, it starts glowing. First red hot, then glittering golden and when it is very hot it turns bright white, radiating like the sun. This happened to the transfigured Messiah.

III. THE TRANSFIGURED MESSIAH :

All the synoptic gospels record the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ.(Matt.17:1-9, Mark9:1-9, Luke 9:27-36). Jesus took three of his disciples (Peter, John and James) with him on the mountain to teach the secret and purpose of his transfiguration:

- **INTENSE PRAYING: As he was praying** he was transfigured. Matthew says that his face did shine like the sun and his raiment was as white as the light. Mark says that he was transfigured and his raiment became shining, exceedingly white like snow. Luke says that the appearance of his countenance was altered and his raiment was white and glistening. He was getting ready to suffer and die for saving the mankind. In prayer he was intense and he was seen in His true form.

He created an atmosphere where, Moses and Elijah appeared in glory and talked with him, They spoke of the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31) . The revelation was glorious, the great leaders of their times appeared and Jesus was seen all glorious---

- **THE PURPOSE:** These three, Jesus, Moses and Elijah were sharing the divine purpose, **How will this glorious Messiah, suffer and die.** On the other side these three, Peter John and James, were heavy with sleep, and when they awoke, they **saw His Glory** but could not understand , what talk was going on. Peter told Jesus, “Master, it is good we pitch three tents,--- not knowing what he said”. (Luke 9:32-33)

Indeed the appearance was glorious and there is no doubt, if we were there, we too would have liked to pitch a tent to live with him in that glory. The revelation is good , but do we know the purpose and the meaning behind it ?

There came a cloud and a voice out of the cloud, saying, **a third time FATHER spoke** “*This is my Beloved SON, hear him.*”(Luke 9:34-35). We too get excited when we experience such things, but do we know the meaning of the message? Are we ready to hear what our Master has to say ? Do we need a cloud and a voice from above to make us know our GLORIOUS MESSIAH JESUS and his mission for us TODAY?

IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF MESSIAH’S TRANSFIGURATION TODAY:

The transfiguration of Jesus was to show that He is God supreme, his disciples could see a glimpse of His glory, and Jesus Christ was there getting the final information, how he will suffer and die for the salvation of mankind. That was not the place to settle down but a place from where to march forward to fulfill the mission for which Jesus had come.

Jesus told his disciples not to tell about this vision to anyone “until the Son of man is raised again from the dead”(Matt17:9b) .It was a glorious experience but the message discussed was serious. They had to keep quiet till the Son of man was lifted up on the cross, glorified and “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinance that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross, and having spoiled principalities and powers, has made a show of them openly, triumphing over them ---”(Colo.2:14-15). Jesus died, rose again, glorified and declared, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of Hades and of death.” (Rev 1:18). These disciples were the witnesses of His **glory** and also **His agony**.

PETER DECLARED: Peter saw the vision , understood the message and when Jesus was risen from the dead, Peter shared about this glorious Transfiguration vision. He declares, “ we were the eye witnesses of His majesty. For he received from God, the Father, honor and glory, when there came a voice to him from the excellent glory, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.”(II Peter 1:16-18).

WE APPLY IT TODAY:

We have heard the significance of the Transfiguration of the Messiah Jesus our Lord. Let us apply it in our lives. Jesus calls us to experience Him and His mission:

- 1. ALONE WITH JESUS IN PRAYER (WORSHIP MESSIAH):** Let us spend quality time in His presence worshipping Him, watching and waiting in prayer .It will renew our vision, strengthen us. We will enjoy in his glorious presence.
- 2. INTERCEED FOR THE LOST:** Let us get this vision, take his commission and intercede for the Lost around us. Sacrifice all to reach them with the Good News.
- 3. HEAR HIS INSTRUCTION AND OBEY (WORK FOR MESSIAH):** This glorious Messiah has completed His mission and He gives us the call and commission to go and declare the Good News. JESUS is the Messiah, the Savior, the Lord and the God Almighty. He is alive and is coming back soon as the *KING of KINGS* and *LORD of LORDS*, to receive us into His glory forever and to judge the world.

HALLELUJAH!

CM2000 31 December, 2000

Plenary Title:

All Night Prayer for the New Millennium

Celebration Of Messiah's Resurrection And Its Significance For Today

Beverly J. Pegues

"The Gospel He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding His Son, who as to His human nature was a descendant of David and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 1:3,4)

Christ's virgin birth and resurrection from the dead are two of the most controversial teachings for unbelievers. They are, however, the two foundational and central truths to believers validating that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Here we will elaborate on the significance to the believer of the Messiah's Resurrection.

What is the Significance of the Messiah's Resurrection for Believers?

- 1. The Resurrection Proves The Messiah is the Son of God.** Through His virgin birth, life of performing miracles, suffering on the cross, death, burial and resurrection we are shown that the Messiah is set apart from all other men.
- 2. The Resurrection Guarantees our Resurrection.** Those who have received Christ as their Lord and Savior can live in union with His resurrected life, and are guaranteed to reign with Him throughout all eternity. (Romans 6:4-10)
- 3. The Resurrection Validates the Truth and Fulfillment of Scripture.** He fulfilled everything that was written about Him in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms (Luke 24:44). Our Messiah fulfilled the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures perfectly. He is the "hope" for all people, nations and generations.
- 4. The Resurrection is Proof that Wicked Men Will Be Judged.** As it is written in Acts 17:31: *"For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the man He has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising Him from the dead."*
- 5. The Resurrection is the Foundation for the Holy Spirit.** The resurrection made way for the gift of the Holy Spirit to enable believers to live a life imbued with power from on high. It also paved the way for the Messiah's ministry of heavenly intercession on behalf of all believers (Hebrews 7:23-28).

6. **The Resurrection Establishes Promises to Believers.** It assures eternal life, heavenly inheritance (I Peter 1:3-4), and resurrection or caught up when the Messiah returns (John 14:3; I Thes. 4:14). We can face and overcome every trial and tribulation because Jesus is interceding for us and we have the same power that raised Christ from the dead living in us. The Word of God tells us that Christ causes us to be triumphant in Him (2 Corinthians 2:14) because greater is He who lives in us than he who lives in the world (I John 4: 4).
7. **The Resurrection Guarantees Christ Daily Presence in Our Lives.** The resurrection of the Messiah guarantees the availability of His daily presence in our lives and His power over sin in our everyday experiences. Christ promises that He will never leave us or forsake us.
8. **His Resurrection Validates Women.** He emphasized the important part women play in ministry immediately after His resurrection. The women were diligent and courageous to follow Joseph and Nicodemus to know where they laid Jesus, because they had a plan to come back and care for His body. It was natural, for they were accustomed to being attentive to His needs (Matt 27:55 and Luke 8:2,3). The women had the courage and the heart to continue to care for His needs even after His death. Christianity is the only belief that is based upon an individual relationship with God and not a set of religious rules and practices or some type of religious hierarchy. For this reason, women are co-laborers with men and equal partakers of the eternal promises of God.
9. **The Resurrection Signaled:**
 - a. The start of humanity expanding the knowledge of Him in the earth
 - b. The beginning of the “Spirit of God” moving in the earth
 - c. That believers would move in the same power and authority as Christ
 - d. The start of the preparation of the bride
 - e. The beginning of a new covenant between God and man
 - f. The beginning of man’s choice to receive the free gift of salvation and walk in the fullness of his redeemed inheritance.
10. **The Resurrection Ensures that We Have the Ability Through Christ to Fulfill “The Great Commission.”** (Matthew 28:19, John 20: 22). Therefore, we must preach the Gospel message to humankind everywhere.
11. **We celebrate the resurrection of the Messiah in remembrance** of what He did for us on Calvary's Cross. We obey His commands and fulfill the purpose He has for our lives (Act 17:26, 27). We remember Him in His life, death and resurrection for He forever lives to make intercession to the Father on our behalf.
12. **Since our risen Messiah is living and interceding** on behalf of those who come to the faith, let us tap into His prayer meeting and exercise our royal inheritance and responsibility to take the Gospel to those who have never heard the Good News.

- a. How can the unreached people groups know what their inheritance is if they have never heard the truth? There are 1.6 billion who have not chosen the Messiah because they have not had the opportunity to hear the Gospel message even one time, in their own language, in a culturally sensitive and relative manner. They have yet to hear of the vast richness of the inheritance, which is available to them.
- b. Because the Messiah has resurrected from the dead with all authority, we have His royal authority to go into every people group of the earth and preach the Gospel message. We can go forth, exercising our authority over demonic forces that are keeping the Gospel from unreached people groups. Those forces would try to keep us in our own “bless-me club” and unaware of a dying world going to hell without knowing or having an opportunity to know our risen Lord.
- c. Matt 28:20 ‘...I am with you...’ This promise is Christ's assurance to those involved in winning the lost and teaching them to obey His righteous standards. Jesus arose, is now alive and is still personally interested in each one of His children. He is with you in the person of the Holy Spirit, and through His Word. Because Jesus lives, we can face and overcome every work of iniquity. His resurrection power is more powerful than the powers of darkness. “*He Who Knows All Things*” would not have told us to go into the entire world with the Good News of the glorious Gospel if He had not prepared the way.
- d. Because our Messiah lives and He is with us, it is our responsibility to make Him known to all nations. The significance of the Messiah’s resurrection is that we belong to and serve the Son of the Living God and we have been called to go into the entire world to preach the Gospel.

13. Salvation is the Most Significant Event for

14. Every Tribe and Nation on the Face of the Earth!

CM2000 1 December 2001

Plenary Title: Worship Night

Worship Realities For A New Millennium

Dick Eastman

I had a vision of Africa. Perhaps some might prefer to call it an unusual, Holy Spirit-inspired mental picture, but regardless of how it might be defined, it has profoundly impacted my thinking about the role of worship in the transformation of nations and the ultimate completion of the Great Commission.

It happened just a few months ago, during March of this year, as our Every Home for Christ staff gathered around a field team going out to the Zambesi River region of Southern Africa. They were to participate in village-to-village home-to-home evangelism as well as survey results in the region from more than a decade's work. We had already heard of how entire villages of the area were turning to Jesus.

As hands were placed on the team, and just as I was about to pray, I suddenly felt as if I had been transported to a ridge somewhere in that very region of Africa, and I was looking out over a vast expanse of bush and jungle. As far as my eyes could see the smoke of village after village rose into the early morning sun.

At once I remembered the historic words of a sermon by missionary Robert Moffat from Africa, that he preached to the London Missionary Society in 1839. In the crowd was a young missionary candidate, David Livingstone, who would respond to that message, and go to the very region of Southern Africa where Moffat had established a mission. Livingstone would even eventually marry Robert Moffat's daughter, Mary.

The penetrating words of Moffat in that sermon in 1839 remain today as some of the most memorable in all the annals of missionary challenge. Moffat declared: "I have sometimes seen, in the morning sun, the smoke of a thousand villages where no missionary has ever been."

So, here it was March of the year 2000 as we laid hands on this team headed to the very region where Moffat and Livingstone had planted the first gospel seeds, there along the Zambezi.

And now, in this vision-encounter I could see smoke rising—not of a thousand villages, but what I imagined to be tens of thousands. As another staff member continued praying over the team, I quietly said, "Lord, are there still that many thousands of villages where no missionary has ever been?"

The reply came instantly, 'No, that is not what you are seeing. You are seeing the smoke of the incense of worship rising from village after village that have turned entirely to my Son, from every tribe and tongue and people in the region. What you are seeing is the fragrance of worship rising before my throne!'

You can imagine the joy that filled my heart. Was that day very far off? I wondered.

Instantly I realized this experience had a clear biblical basis and backing. Isaiah 11:9 tells us, "The earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (NIV). The New Living Translation uniquely translates this: "And as the waters cover the sea, so the earth will be *filled with people who know the Lord*" (NLT).

I immediately recalled the powerful picture of heavenly worshippers in Revelation 5:8-10 as they sing a song of the redeemed who are purchased by the blood of the Lamb from "every tribe and language and people and nation" (NIV). These worshippers, interestingly, come before the Lamb holding "harps" (a symbol of worship) and "bowls" (containers filled with the prayers of the saints). It is clear in this passage that worship and intercession are vital to the ultimate global ingathering of the lost.

In that moment I became even more convinced of something that had been stirring my heart for many months, that worship-saturated intercession would be the key to the final great thrust of completing the Great Commission.

John Piper, a wise mission strategist and noted author, summed it up in one powerful statement in his excellent book *Let the Nations be Glad*. He wrote: "Missions exists today because worship doesn't. Missions is a temporary necessity but worship goes on forever. Therefore, worship is both fuel and the goal of missions."

In subsequent days following my unusual vision encounter, the Lord distilled in my heart what I saw as "Seven Great Commission Worship Realities." With each of these came a simple principle. I'll share just two of these in this brief segment, and the remainder a little later as we continue tonight's worship celebration.

1. The first worship reality is this—**WORSHIP ENTHRONES GOD**. This reality is clearly foundational to all the others.

Let me state it in the form of a principle—bearing in mind that a principle is "truth that is a foundation to other truths." Our first principle is this:

"Worship provides a place for God to dwell on earth in all His fullness."

Note Psalm 22:3 from a literal Hebrew translation:

"You are enthroned Oh God, upon the praises of your people."

This is to say, worship and praise bring the very throne of God's presence into all we do. John Piper is right. Worship is, indeed, both fuel and the goal of missions.

I especially like the literal Japanese translation of Psalm 22:3.

"When God's people praise Him, He brings a big chair and sits there!"

Notice how Psalm 9:11 ties the enthroning of God into proclaiming the Good News among the nations. We read: "Sing praises to the Lord, enthroned in Zion, proclaim among the nations what he has done" (Psalm 9:11, NIV).

2. Then, consider with me worship reality number two: **WORSHIP ENCOUNTERS GOD**. Our second principle is this:

"Worship provides an opportunity to encounter God in all His fullness, first-hand."

Notice the challenging words of Psalm 46:10 where we see an act of worship linked once again to fulfilling the Great Commission. In Psalm 46:10 God declares: "Be still [which is an act of worship] and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." To "be still" creates the climate "to know" and to know provides the conditions to encounter!

Proverbs 9:10 in the Living Bible has this paraphrase: "The fear and reverence of God are basic to all wisdom. Knowing God results in every kind of understanding."

The great Bible teacher and scholar A. W. Tozer wrote:

"The Christian is strong or weak depending upon how closely he has cultivated a knowledge of God."

I am convinced that the degree to which we encounter God in all His fullness through our worship, will be the degree to which we will see God exalted in the nations.

So as we move tonight into the early hours of a new millennium, let us corporately and individually seek to "fervently" **ENTHRONE GOD** in all of our plans and strategies so that we might "passionately" **ENCOUNTER GOD** in all of His fullness and thereby see Him exalted among all peoples.

3. **WORSHIP ENLARGES GOD** (Repeat) Let me state that as a principle: "Worship provides an atmosphere to expand and increase our knowledge and understanding of God in all His fullness." (Repeat)

Note the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 34:3

"Oh magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together" (New King James Version). When Mary, the mother of Jesus, heard from the Angel that she would give birth to the Messiah she sang this song: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior" (King James Version).

The word "magnify" means to enlarge something or make it bigger. Of course, we cannot make God bigger than He already is. But I like what A. W. Tozer says: "You can't make God big. But you can see Him big!"

To expand and increase our knowledge and understanding of God is critical because it increases our faith to believe He will lead us to total victory in fulfilling the Great Commission. And that's something worth shouting about—PRAISE THE LORD!

4. Next on our list of worship realities—Number Four—is: **WORSHIP ENJOYS GOD.**

We could sum this up with the following principle:

"Worship provides a place of entry into the delights and pleasures of God's presence." (Repeat)

How many here long for much more of the "delights and pleasures of God's presence?"

The psalmist said in Psalm 16:11 "In God's presence is the fullness of joy, at His right hand are pleasures for evermore" (King James Version)

Elsewhere in the Psalms (Psalm 65:4) we read King David's words: "What joy awaits those you choose to bring near, those who live in your holy courts; what joys await us in your holy temple" (Psalm 65:4, New Living Translation).

We recall the old Presbyterian catechism that suggests: "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever!"

Look again at this fourth principle: "Worship provides a place of entry into the delights and pleasures of God's presence." May our worship tonight provide us with a new zeal to find that place of entry and swiftly go through it.

5. **WORSHIP ENLISTS GOD.** This could be stated in the following principle:

"Worship provides our primary means to mobilize and release the resources of God into the needs of the nations." (Repeat)

Look again at that great hymnal of the Old Testament—The Psalms. Psalm 77:14 declares: "You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples." Worship clearly enlists all of God's power and resources into our needs and circumstances.

We see this in the powerful lesson of God's people under King Jehoshaphat in ancient times as recorded in II Chronicles 20:21-22: "After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord, and to praise Him . . . As they went out at the head of the army . . . (v. 22) As they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir . . . and they were defeated" (NIV).

Here we see how worship clearly enlists God in all His fullness and thus leads to total victory.

And that brings us to an especially interesting worship reality—worship reality number six:

6. **WORSHIP EXCITES GOD.** Let me enlarge that in a simple principle:

"Worship provides the only true position from which we might bring God pure pleasure."

What is it that we can offer God to truly bring Him joy or delight? Listen to this thought from Psalm 149:3-4 (New Living Translation): "Praise His Name with dancing, accompanied by tambourine and harp. For the Lord delights in His people; He crowns the humble with salvation."

Interestingly, this expression of praise in verses 3 and 4 is followed only a few verses later with a linkage to the nations. Verses 6 and 7 read: "Let the praises of God be in their mouths, and a sharp sword in their hands—to execute vengeance on the nations . . ."

Consider also Zephaniah 3:17 from the New Living Translation: "For the Lord your God has arrived to live among you. He is a mighty Savior. He will rejoice over you with great gladness. With His love He will calm all your fears. He will exult over you by singing a happy song."

Notice that last phrase again: "He will exult over you by singing a happy song." The New International Version includes this expression in verse 17: "He will take great delight in you!" (NIV) What we are doing here tonight truly brings God pure pleasure. And with that, we come to our final worship reality—worship reality number seven:

7. WORSHIP EXALTS GOD In a sense, all the other worship realities are summed up in this reality because all that worship is, truly exalts God.

Our final principle, stated in a single sentence, is this: "Worship provides the platform and power necessary to exalt God in the nations!" The psalmist emphasized this very powerfully in his declaration of Psalm 57:9-11 . . .

"I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples . . . Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth" (NIV).

The role of worship in fulfilling the Great Commission is perhaps better summed up in Psalm 67 than any other single chapter in the Bible.

Notice in particular verses 1, 2, 5 and 7: "May God be gracious and bless us and make his face shine upon us, that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. (v. 5) May the peoples praise you, O God; May all the peoples praise you. (v. 7) God will bless us and all the ends of the earth will fear him."

The Living Bible paraphrases this last verse: "People from the remotest lands will worship Him!" Can you imagine with me tonight this Psalm becoming a global reality? Can you picture the incense of tens upon tens of thousands of villages and towns, cities, barrios, neighborhoods—rising in awesome adoration of Almighty God!

May God, tonight, amplify these realities of worship in our hearts, not as we comprehend them intellectually, but as we practice and apply them passionately.

Worship enthrones God! It encounters God! It enlarges God, enjoys God, enlists God and excites God . . . But most of all . . . worship exalts God!

O, let everything that hath breath, praise the Lord. May our heart's passion be like that of the 16th century monk, Brother Lawrence, who said: "The thing we ought to purpose to ourselves in this

life is to become the most perfect worshippers of God we can possibly be, as we hope to be through all eternity."

Come, let's practice up for eternity. Let's sustain God's praises over the nations tonight as we continue our worship.