



A History of Missions

Video of Church Spreading

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Gp-ZsUagc>

70-300 AD – Summary

From the Beginning to an Official Religion of the Roman Empire

The growth of the early Church was without precedent or comparison.

These few Galileans spread their good news across the entire known world.

They did it without all of the things we think of as necessary for missions now:

- Clear Theology
- Knowledge of other cultures
- Administration and organization
- Funding

If in 70 AD the Church had ceased to exist, no one would have known or cared. By 300 AD, Christians made up almost 10% of the Empire.

Key Missional Factors: Small house churches, lay missionaries, individual witnessing, charity, martyrs.

300-500 AD Summary

- From an Official Religion to the Fall of the Roman Empire
- Tremendous growth for the Church, yet through turmoil.
 - The Church becomes a recognized religion of the Roman Empire (persecution stops), then then religion of the Roman empire, then the Roman empire is destroyed – all in 200 years.
 - Growth is both in numbers, clarity of theology, and administrative structure.
 - Church is diluted by influx of pagans.
- Tremendous growth for the Church, yet without normal missionary efforts.
 - The Church grows through cultural adoption (even by barbarians).
 - The Church grows by conversion of leaders of countries and people groups.
 - Focus is on theological debates and combating heresy, not witnessing to pagans.
- We see the predecessors for future missionary efforts.

Key Missional Factors: The legalization of Christianity, its recognition as the official religion of the Roman Empire, and the attractiveness of Roman culture.

500-1200 AD – Summary

From the Fall of Rome to the Height of the Church in the Middle/Dark Ages

Tale of Two Enemies – the Muslims and the Barbarians

The Church during this time experienced unprecedented growth, yet through conquest.

- At 1000 AD, the church was at the height of its global reach and influence.

The sword/conquest had the greatest impact on the spread of Christianity.

- We see this everywhere from the conquest of the barbarians to the Crusades, to the destruction of the Eastern Church

Key Missional Factors: Conquest, conquest, conquest, royal favor, martyrdom, and monasticism.

- Conversion often begins with the rulers.
- Priests and church leaders are willing to go repeatedly into areas where their predecessors were martyred.
- Monasteries lead the way.

1200-1500 AD – Summary

From the height of the Church to its fall - the destruction of the Eastern Church and the fall from material power of the Western Church.

- In spite of this, we see the Western's Church's legalism reach its heights with the Crusades, inquisition and indulgences.

We once again see God preserving the Church from the Mongols and the Muslim Empire.

Multiple reformers are rejected by the Church.

But, we see the groundwork being laid for not only the Reformation, but a major Roman Catholic missions movement.

Key Missional Factors: Attractiveness of Eastern Liturgy, conquest/crusades/inquisition.

1500-1800 - Summary

At the beginning, the Protestant Reformation brings new, revolutionary ideas about the church and its structure.

But, these new churches are not missional. They are Calvinistic, believing that evangelism is unnecessary, or otherwise focused on survival against the counter-assault by the Roman Catholic Church.

The Church as a whole, remains largely tied to national governments.

Protestants and Catholics are at war in Europe with each other for almost a century.

Missionaries in this time are largely Catholic or Russian Orthodox. We do see some protestant missionary activity among the Native Americans and by the Moravians.

At the end of this time, the Great Awakening advances Protestant theology, with a focus on repentance of sin, a conversion experience, and sanctification.

Key Missional Factors: Expansion of nations (for Catholics and Orthodox and Native Americans), Catholic Orders in Asia; non-missional attitude of Protestants.

- To the extent that Protestants took over from Catholics, or vice versa, it was frequently done as part of national warfare.

1800-1900 - Summary

Protestant Christianity went from a tottering religion to a world-wide force.

The view of missions as something to be done by God (Calvin) or the state was exchanged for the view that missions/evangelism was the responsibility of every Christian.

The common church member became excited about and a supporter of missions.

Thousands of lay Christians went, supported by millions, bringing the gospel to tens of millions.

Key Factors: Voluntary conversion, missional support from a large percentage of Christians, suspect theology, legalistic (or human based) goals and methods.

- The Gospel was frequently combined with western culture.
- Missionaries frequently participated in the destruction of native culture, at best, and abuse of the natives, at worst.
- The theology of why they were going was suspect and frequently wrong.
- Discipleship is largely missing.

1900-Present – Key Dates

1910 – Edinburgh Missionary Conference

1914-1918 – World War I

1921 Founding of International Missions Council (IMC)

1932 – Re-Thinking Missions: A Laymen's Inquiry After 100 Years

1939-1945 – World War II

1945 – Evangelical Foreign Missions Association formed by denominational missions boards.

1951 – Communist Government of China kicks Christians out.

1961 IMC integrated into the World Council of Churches (WCC).

1972 – American Society of Missiology Founded.

1989 – The Lausanne Congress II on World Evangelization and Lausanne Covenant

2010 – The Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization

Opposing Forces

World Wars

- Nationalism
- Nazism – exalted the state.
- Communism – worshipped the party.

Liberalism

Secularism

American Democracy – revered the individual and his rights.



World Wars

To the rest of the world, it looked like Christendom was fighting itself.

- “The Moral pretensions of the West were shown to be a sham; ‘Christendom’ was exposed as being no more than a myth. It was no longer possible to speak of the “Christian West.”

1917 Russian Revolution – Marxism

- Was this not better than colonialism?

Nationalism in Asia and Africa

- A response to the West.



Liberalism

Note: This was strongly represented at the second great World Missionary Conference in 1928.

The liberal was not sure that Jesus was the last word for unsaved peoples.

Key Tenants:

- Exclusivity of Christianity was bad.
- Tolerance became the most popular of virtues.
- Conversion was just one phenomenon of religious experience.

1910 – Edinburgh Missionary Conference

WMC 1

There are certain methods which are indispensable, and have been standardised as essential to effectiveness, and have everywhere been identified with the missionary successes of Christian history. (1) **The preaching or teaching of the revealed Gospel, including and based upon the historic facts of the incarnation and atoning work of our Risen Lord, cannot be regarded as otherwise than indispensable.** The chief aim must ever be to persuade human hearts everywhere that Jesus Christ is their Saviour, standing ready in an attitude of love, compassion, and power, to realise to them, upon condition of repentance and faith, all that the Gospel promises to do for a soul that receives it.

1932 –WMC 2

The message of Christianity presents a way of life and thinking which the Christian conceives, not as his way alone, but as a way for all men, entering without violence the texture of their living and transforming it from within. The goal to which this way leads may be variously described; most perfectly, perhaps, in the single phrase, Thy Kingdom come.

In more literal phrasing, the aim of Christian missions to-day in our conception would take this form: To seek with people of other lands a true knowledge and love of God, expressing in life and word what we have learned through Jesus Christ, and endeavoring to give effect to his spirit in the life of the world,

It is clearly not the duty of the Christian missionary to attack the non-Christian systems of religion it is his primary duty to present in positive form his conception of the way of life and let it speak for itself. The road is long, and a new patience is needed; but **we can desire no variety of religious experience to perish until it has yielded up to the rest of its own ingredient of truth.** The Christian will therefore regard himself as a co-worker with the forces within each such re-ligious system which are making for righteousness.

Response to Liberalism

Christianity Fractured:

- Evangelicals
- Fundamentalists

Evangelicals Led by:

- Preaching of Billy Graham
- Apologetics of C.S. Lewis
- Philosophy of Karl Barth



Secularism

One can clearly distinguish the religious from the non-religious. And the non-religious is better.

The goal of this movement is to restrict what is religious and restrict its influence.

Western culture is rapidly become christophobic. The irrational fear or hatred of Christianity.

But, just as disturbing is the indifference to Christianity – large swathes of population seem not to care.





Individualism

This is the idea that the goal of every man should be independence and self-sufficiency.

- Ideally, you don't need anyone else.

Self-actualization – or becoming all you can be – is a goal.

1900-Present - Churches

Decline of Mainline Denominations

Growth of Evangelicalism

Super-growth of Pentacostals

- Mostly developed from Holiness movements in the early 20th century.
- At their best, they appear to have a special gift of making the Christian message heard where human suffering is at its worst.
- At their worst, they are the health and wealth gospel.

Growth of Mega-churches or seeker friendly churches.

- Appealed to individualism.

Growth of smaller, community-oriented, emotionally focused, churches.

- They emphasize feelings over emotional thought.



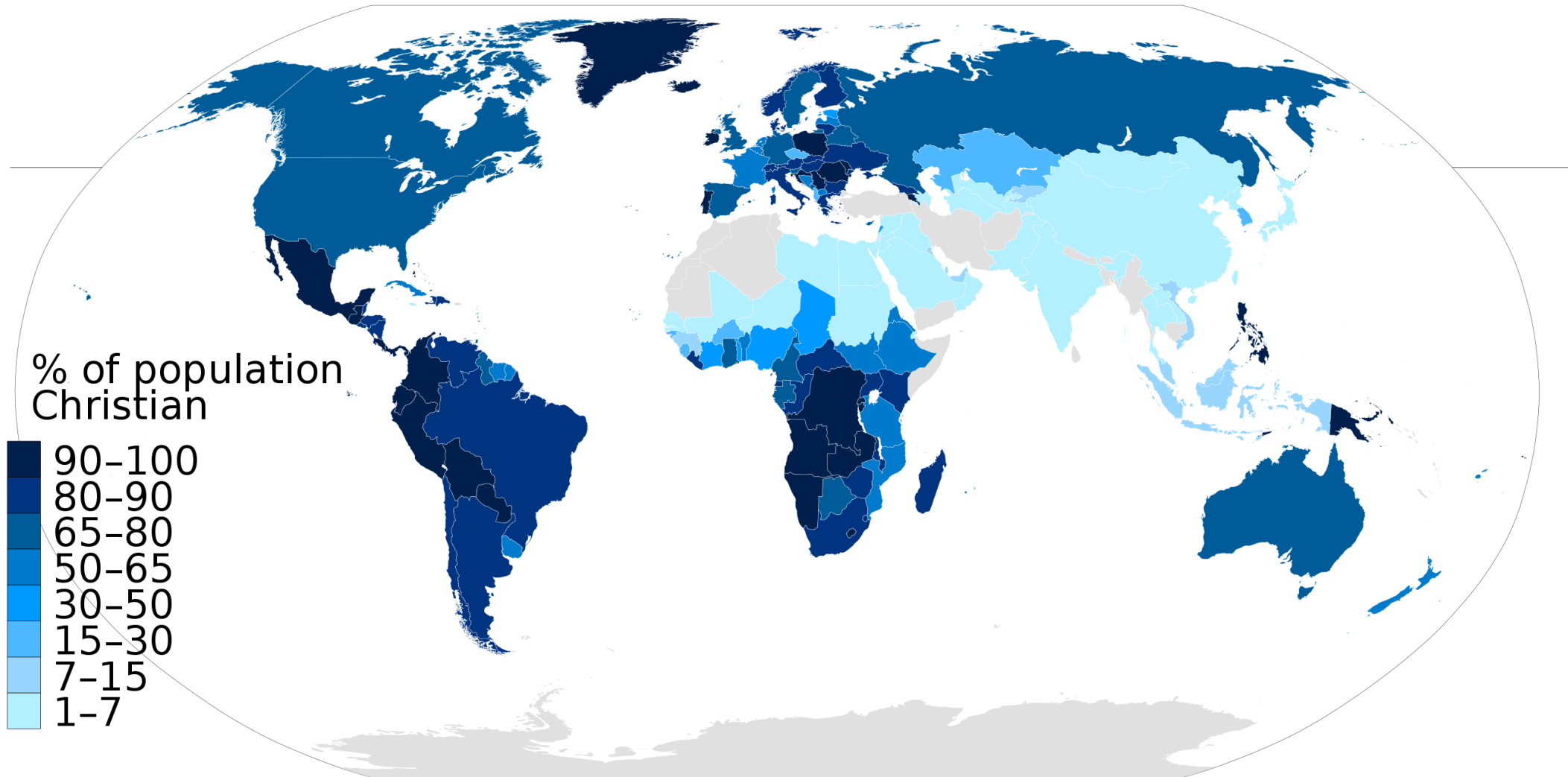
1900-Present - Christians

In 1900, only 10% of Christians lived on continents south and east, but a century later, 70% of World's Christians live there.

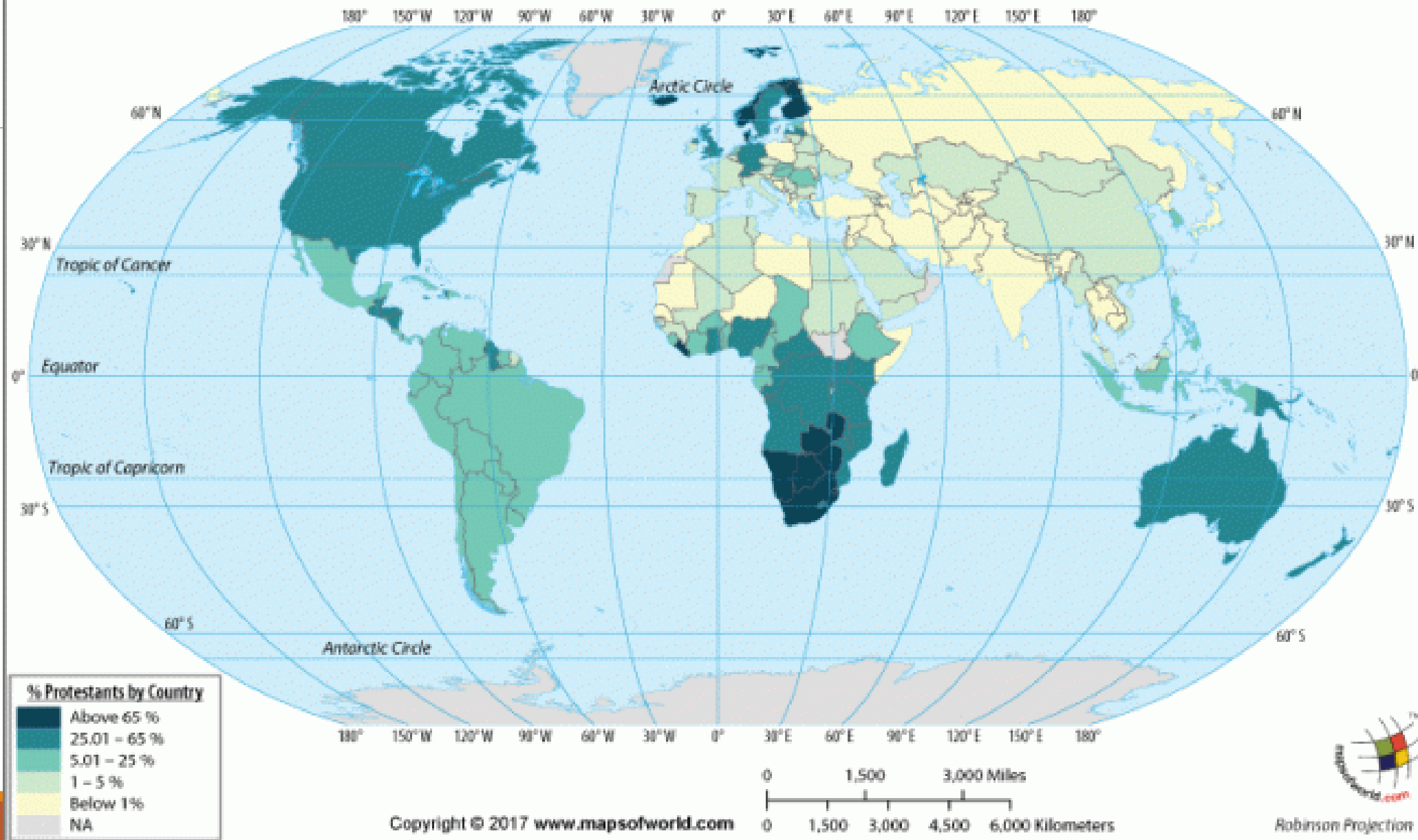
- More Christians worship in Anglican Churches in Nigeria than in all of Europe, Britain and North America combined.
- 10x Assembly of God Members in Latin American than in the US
- More Baptists in the Congo than in Great Britain.
- More people in church ever Sunday in Communist China than in all of Western Europe and North America, combined.

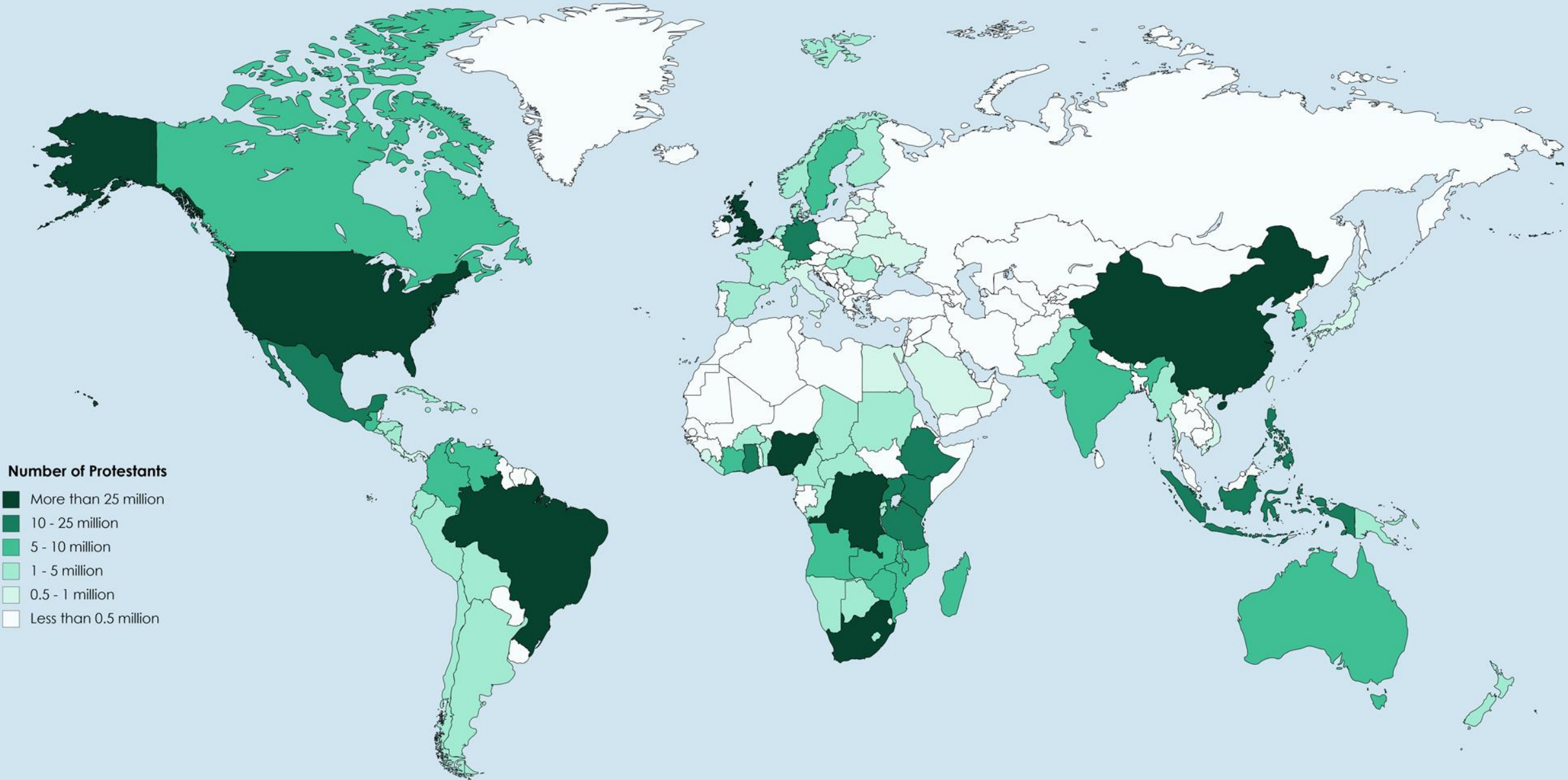
More than one in four Christians is charismatic.





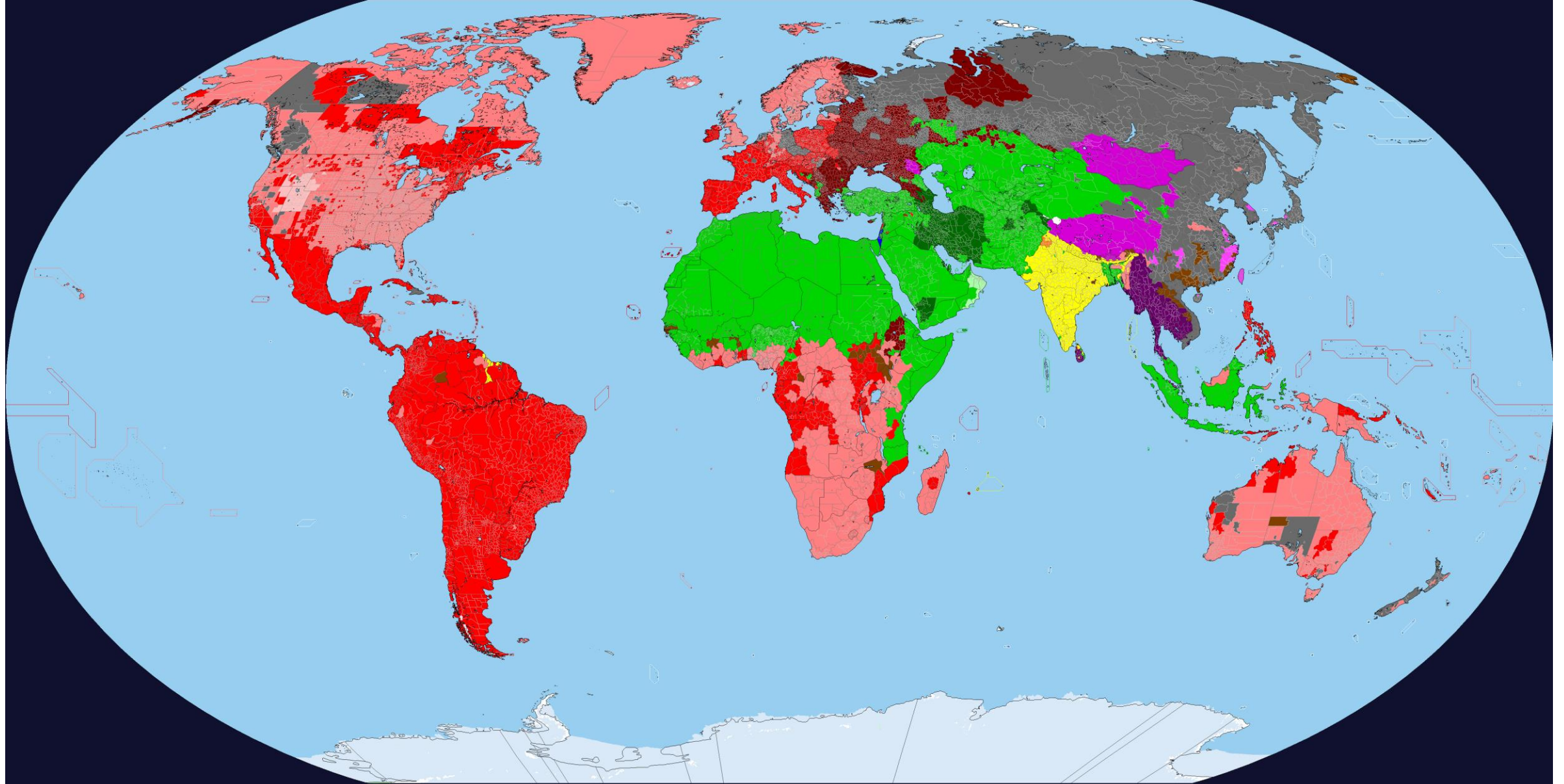
What countries are Protestant?





Number of Protestants

- More than 25 million
- 10 - 25 million
- 5 - 10 million
- 1 - 5 million
- 0.5 - 1 million
- Less than 0.5 million



Christianity:

- Catholicism ■
- Protestantism ■
- Orthodoxy ■
- Mormonism ■

Islam:

- Sunni ■
- Shia ■
- Ibadi ■

Buddhism:

- Theravada ■
- Vajrayana ■
- Mahayana ■

Hinduism:

- Judaism: ■

Sikhism:

- Folk religions: ■

No religion:

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1900-Present - Christians - Global South

Read the Bible with a sense of urgency, as it is written directly to them.

- Westerners see a historical distance
- Classic dispensationalism sees certain parts as not applicable.
- Don't believe in cessationism – miracles and gifts have ceased.

See the spiritual world as very real.

Poor.

Social injustice influences many of their doctrines.

Approach to Salvation

- Evangelical: Christ as a substitute to accomplish salvation for our individual sins.
- Liberal: Christ addresses our incapacity to receive and share love.
- Eastern: Jesus addresses the bondage we experience. Human family faces oppressive evil and a personal spiritual enemy, and sin that we are unable to defeat in our own strength. Jesus, and his death and resurrection, broke this grip of death and defeat, and anyone who has solidarity with him will share in his victory.

Community and Solidarity.

1900-Present – Missions - Overview

Huge Shifts

- From mainline Protestants to Evangelicals.
- Missionaries went from being from main universities to Bible Institutes.
- From Post-Millennial View to Premillennial view.

Growth in People Reached Continues.

Growth in Number of Missionaries continued to increase.

Opportunities continue to increase.

Strategy looks mainly the same as the 19th Century, although there is a focus on church planting and faith missions.

Horrible associated tragedies continue.

- From Colonialism to child abuse and sexual abuse incidents.

1900-Present – Huge Shift – From Protestants to Evangelicals and Pentacostals

Traditional denominations missions did not grow during the 20th Century.

Growth came from non-denominational churches and organizations.

- Southern Baptist was the exception.

Four largest mission organizations in the world today:

- Wycliffe – Founded in 1947
- Campus Crusade or CRU – Founded in 1951
- New Tribes – Founded in 1942
- Southern Baptist Mission – 1845

Missionaries were largely now from Bible Institutes instead of the old demonimational colleges, like Harvard and Yale.

1900-Present – Huge Shift – From PostMillennial Confidence to PreMillennial Hopelessness

During the 19th Century, the primary eschatology was that of post-millennialism.

- The idea was that the Church, through its own efforts, could evangelize the world and once the world was evangelized, Christ would return.
- Motivation: Witness to bring about God's kingdom.

After/during the World Wars, this changed (at least in evangelical churches) to largely pre-millennialism.

- This idea was that the world will continue to go downhill until Christ is forced to return in judgment.
- Motivation: Witness to save all we can before Christ's return.

1900-Present - Growth in Missions



Foreign missionaries went all over the world from the biggest cities, to the smallest tribes.

They were mainly from the US.

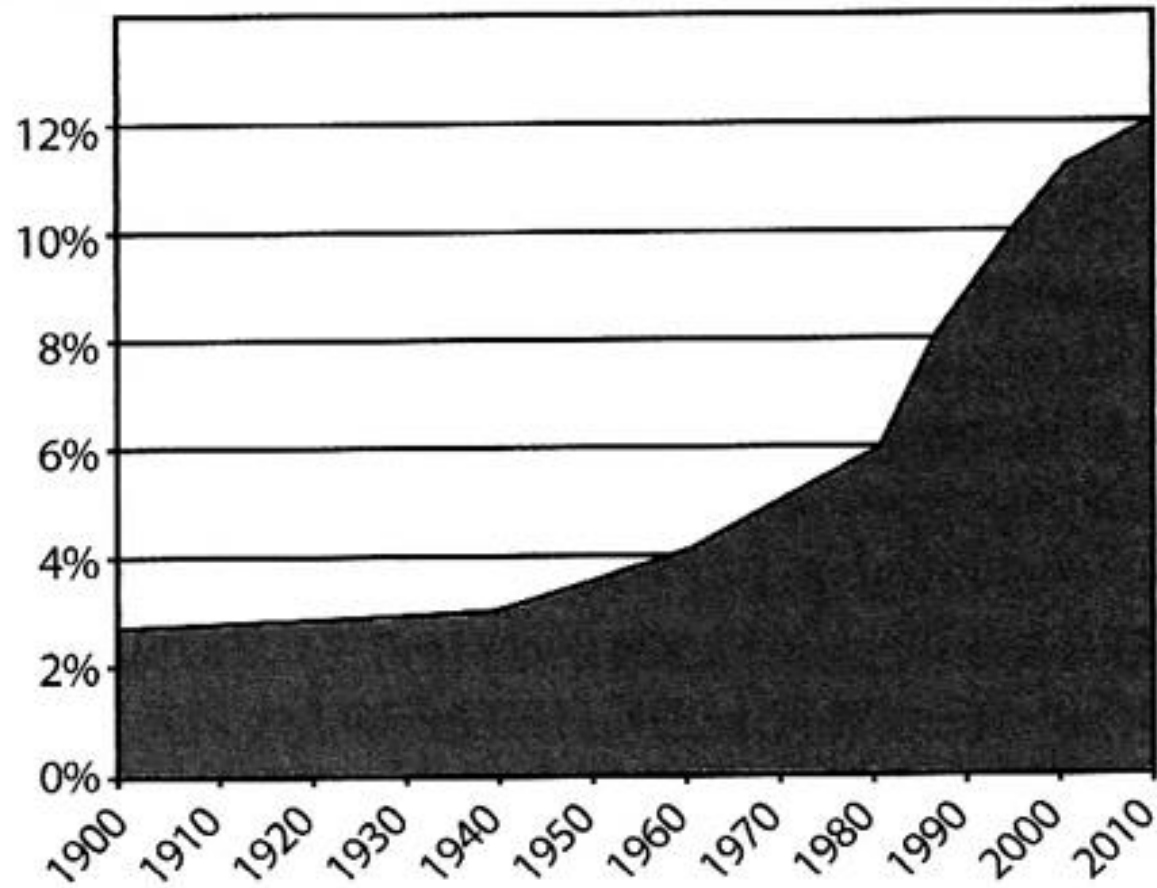
Very few unreached people groups during the 20th Century.

- Missions of the 19th century were so effective in this regard.

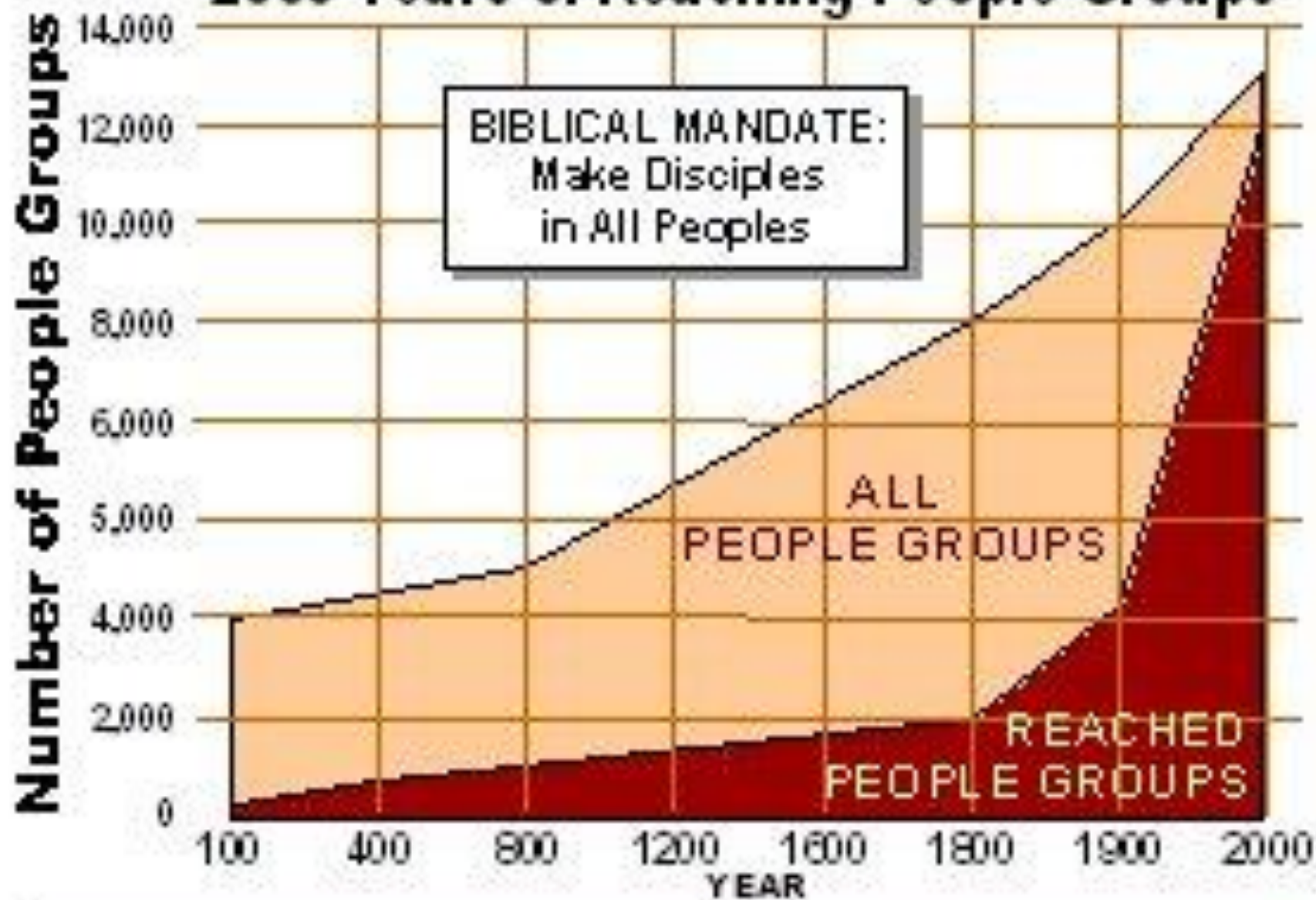
Churches that were started in the 19th century continued to grow.

Each country is a separate story of struggle, growth, pain, difficulty, and varying degrees of success in numerical and spiritual growth.

Practicing Christians as a Percentage of Total World Population since 1900



2000 Years of Reaching People Groups



FROM: Patrick Johnstone, *The Church is Bigger Than You Think*, pp. 85. Charles Four Publications 1990

© Reaching People 2000

Growth of Missionaries

In 1900, there were around 10,000 Protestant Missionaries.

In 1958, there were around 43,000 Protestant Missionaries

By 1985, this number had shrunk substantially, but this is probably due to a loss in mainline Protestant missionaries.

We don't have data from then on, although we expect it has increased due to our increased knowledge of China and their missionaries.

1900-Present – Mission Strategy

Mission strategy stayed mainly the same in the 20th Century.

Evangelicals began struggling with the same things the mainline denominations were struggling with in the past – humanitarian concerns, the influence of culture, and dealing with other religions.

Faith Missions – going without support and trusting God.

Church planting replaced evangelism as the primary focus in the later 20th century.

- Around 1955, Evangelicals recognized that the goal was to plant churches, not just evangelize.

Industrials or mass produced ideas of evangelization and training come to the forefront.

- Ex: Billy Graham.

Lausanne Conferences



The **Lausanne** Committee
for World Evangelization

Also, known as the First International Congress on World Evangelization

2,700 Evangelical Attendees from 150 nations in July of 1974.

Headed by Billy Graham.

Created the Lausanne Covenant:

- Doctrinal covenant created by John Stott that laid out the beliefs of evangelicals related to Evangelism.

Somewhat similar to the language from the 1910 Edinburgh Conference.

- Themes of reaching the world, using national pastors, social justice, education, respect for culture.

But, much more focused on combatting liberalism.

- Inerrancy of scripture and necessity of evangelism were included.

Followed by Conferences in 1989 and 2010.

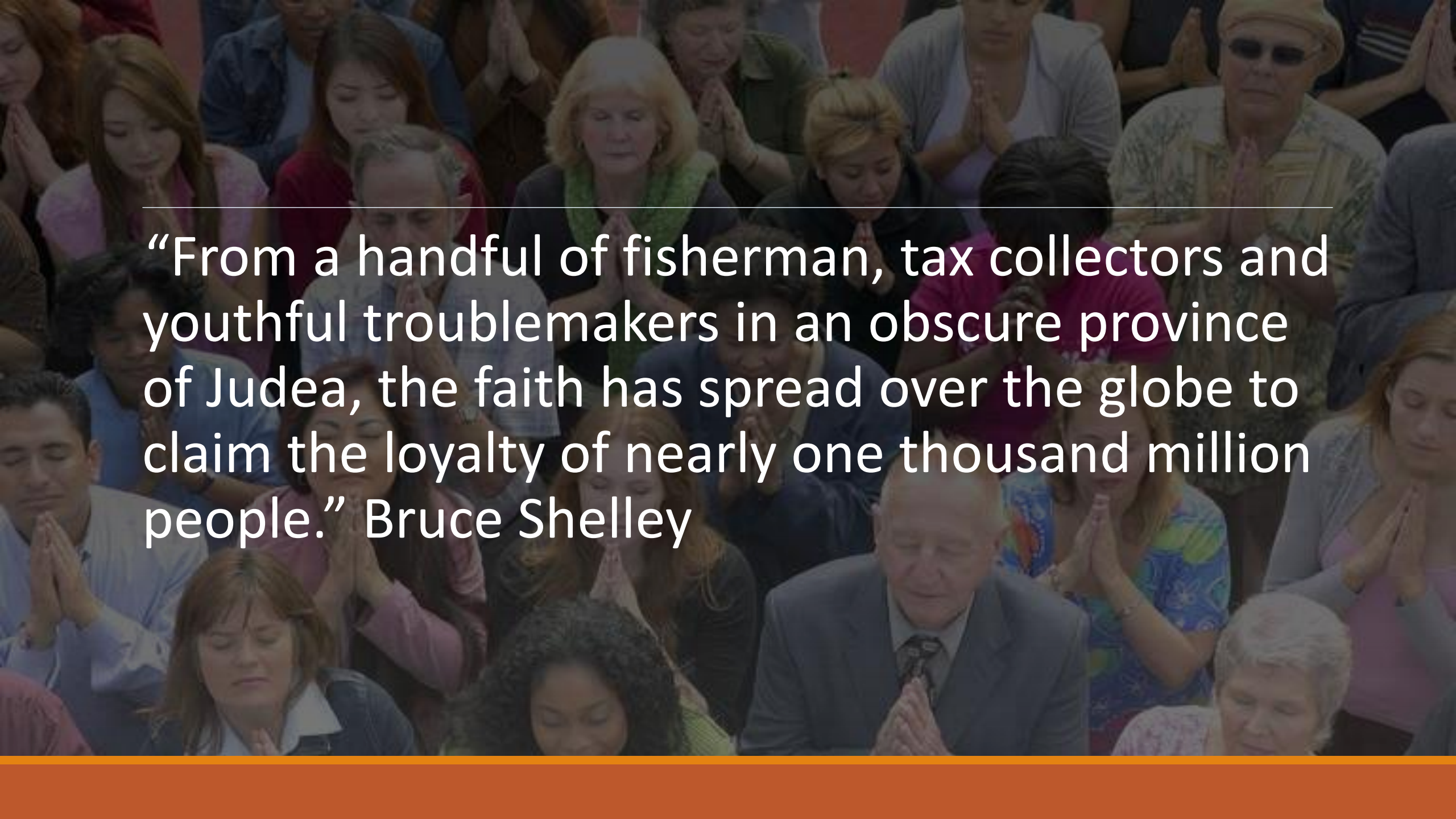
1900-Present - The Abuse

Child and sexual abuse occurred many times and is now indelibly linked with evangelical missions organizations.

The worst thing wasn't that it happened – the worst thing was the cover-ups. Which led to more abuse and devastating emotional harm to those who were abused.

1900-Present Success/Impact

“In the twentieth century, for the first time, there was in the world a universal religion – the Christian religion. Christianity acclimatized itself in every continent and in almost every country. In many areas, that hold might be precarious and its numbers small, yet in country after country the Christians evinced the power to be a dynamic minority. It took root, not as a foreign import, but as the church of the countries in which it dwells.” Stephen Neill



“From a handful of fisherman, tax collectors and youthful troublemakers in an obscure province of Judea, the faith has spread over the globe to claim the loyalty of nearly one thousand million people.” Bruce Shelley

Impact of Christianity

Women – Christianity offered women far greater security and equality than any other culture.

Children – Christianity banned infanticide and has been consistently pro-life and opposed to abortion.

Slavery – Christianity was crucial in ending slavery and Christians were the first to oppose slavery systemically.

Cannibalism – Christians are credited with stopping this in many primitive societies.

Charitable efforts – there was no charity until Jesus. Compassion, helping the needy, and alleviating distress in distant places comes from Christ.

Education – Christians have also focused on education, and education for the masses began in the Protestant Reformation.

Science – Our modern Science could not have arisen without the Christian ideal of a rational creator.

Equal Rights – from the idea that God created men equally, not survival of the fittest or similar pagan ideas.

Art, Music Literature – too vast to describe.

1900-Present - Summary

The attacks were unprecedented.

Continued numerical and geographical growth of the Church.

Continued growth of number missionaries.

But, huge shifts:

- From Protestant to Evangelical.
- From America/Europe to Africa, South America and Asia for the largest amount of Christians.
- From America to the World in sending nations.
- From Evangelism to Church Planting.
- From Colonialism to Child Abuse.

As a result of these shifts, the missionaries did not have the institutional knowledge or structure that prior missionaries had had.

The methods were slow to adapt, and even still, haven't completely adapted, and we see worrying trends of industrialism creeping in.

Summary of Periods

70-300 AD – Home churches, lay missionaries, individual witnessing, charity, and martyrs.

300-500 AD - The legalization of Christianity, its recognition as the official religion of the Roman Empire, and the attractiveness of Roman Culture.

500-1200 AD - Conquest, conquest, conquest, royal favor, martyrdom, and monasticism.

1200-1500 AD – Limited focus on missions, except for more conquest (Crusades/Inquisition); Attractiveness of Eastern Liturgy.

1500-1800 AD – Missions tied to expansion of nations (for Catholics and Orthodox and Native Americans), Catholic Orders in Asia; Protestants aren't generally interested in missions.

1800-1900 AD - Voluntary conversion, missional support from a large percentage of Christians, suspect theology, legalistic (or human based) goals and methods.

1900-Present –Voluntary conversion, missional support from a large percentage of Christians, church planting instead of evangelism, lack of institutional knowledge and structure, mass production of Christianity.

Conclusion: God (not man) is building His Church.

Matthew 16:18 Jesus said: “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hades will not overcome it.”

Key Point 1: The overall growth of the Church both in terms of geography, numbers, and knowledge of God is nothing short of amazing.

- From a handful of fisherman, tax collectors and youthful troublemakers in an obscure province of Judea, the faith has spread over the globe to claim the loyalty of nearly one thousand million people.

Key Point 2: The Church is inexorable – nothing stops it.

- Not the Roman Empire, not the Barbarian Hordes, not the Mongols, not the Catholic Church at the height of its power, not the philosophies of rationalism, Marxism, communism, or the internal attacks of liberalism and secularism.

Key Point 3: God’s way of building His Church is not how we would build the Church.

Key Point 4: Man’s efforts and part in this growth of the Church are awful, yet God uses even this.

God is building His Church.

Each time the church encounters something, an empire, a movement, an idea, a culture, that should logically, in our eyes, destroy it, it conquers it, and comes out stronger, with a better view of God.

To get a proper understanding of missions is to understand the imperfect, misguided actions of Christians, combined with the wills of empires, philosophical forces, and culture movements, as all being used by God to build His church, not in the way that we think, but as a monument to

His skill and ability.

Glory to God

The history and growth of Missions includes:

- Weakness of human attempts
- Sinfulness and pettiness of the missionaries
- Blind selfishness of missionaries and churches
- Niggardliness of support given to missionaries
- Mistakes that have been made by missionaries and churches
- Treacheries, catastrophes and crimes by missionaries and churches.

“And yet, the Church is there today, the Body of Christ in every land, the great miracle of history, in which the living God himself through his Holy Spirit is pleaded to dwell. The splendour of the purpose of God is such that it far surpasses the power of human imagining!”

Romans 11:33-36

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

³⁴ “For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?”

³⁵ “Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?”

³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

How is God building his Church?

Easy Answers:

- Not numerical.
- Not institutional.
- Not political or governmental.
- Clearly spiritually.
- Clearly maturing believers.

Option 1: A force for righteousness, to usher in a new Millennium.

- Not completely wrong – the Church has caused tremendous good.

Option 2: To save a pre-known group (the “elect”) before judgment.

- Not completely wrong.

Option 3: God is teaching us, the community of believers, about Himself and about ourselves.

God is teaching us, the community of believers, about Himself and about ourselves.

Question: What do we see about ourselves and about God through the history of the Church?

About Ourselves

- Christians are awful.
- Self-centered, egotistical, self-focused.
- Unable to build the Church on their own.

God's power is clearly seen in the growth of the Church.

- His omnipotence.
- His redemptive power.

God's goodness is seen in the impact of the Gospel and the Church.

He is not done teaching us.



Key Question: In the light of history, how should we at FBCVA view missions?

Applications:

1. Remember, always, that God is building His Church in His way and in His time.
 - The community of the Church will change geographically, culturally, theologically, but it will always conquer through Jesus Christ.
 - Values: Christ Centered, Holy Spirit Led.
2. Recognize the Mistakes of the Church historically:
 - The biggest one: being fascinated with our own story, or the story of our family, or the story of our local church, or the story of our mission agency, or the story of our nation.
 - Misunderstanding of the Great Commission – discipleship and teaching.
3. Expect disappointment from the humans involved.
4. Recognize where we are in history and where we are culturally.

FBCVA Mission Values: Christ Centered, Holy Spirit Led, Biblically Based, Enduring Relationships, Leadership Development

Our Place Historically and Culturally

Most of the world is open to the Gospel and converts exist among most people groups.

Most of the Christian world is weak in doctrine and discipleship.

“To be a Christian in a half-Christian or post-Christian society... is not the same task as to be a Christian in an area which has never heard the gospel before.” Stephen Neill.

We no longer need the foreign missionaries of the 19th Century. They are national pastors who can reach their countrymen better and more easily than foreign missionaries.