



A VISION for the NATIONS

Chiu Eng Tan

Looking at the missiological development of the early church under the leadership of Peter the apostle, it took God Himself to speak to Peter in a heavenly vision before Peter really gained a vision for the nations (Acts 10:9-23) and understood the missiological implications of Acts 1:8. To gain a vision for all the nations starts with the breaking of our own preconceptions and partiality leading to the paradigm that the gospel is for all peoples, Jews and Gentiles.

In Acts 10:9-23, the vision given to Peter was new and revolutionary, breaking scruples (beliefs and values) of the deepest kind, compelling, irresistibly and undoubtedly missiological in its intentions—revealing the very heartbeat of our God who says “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean!” It was indeed a heavenly vision for the nations and God sent that very one to Peter. He, the chief apostle, the key leader of the Jerusalem Church badly needed that vision. Unless it was given to Peter, the gospel would have remained forever in the courts of the Jerusalem Temple. That heavenly vision appeared to be the comma which came after the word “Samaria” and before “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8), a pause which allowed Peter and the Jerusalem church to understand the hindrance to gain the vision for all nations. Let us take a closer look at the development of Peter’s missiological understanding in Acts 1:8.

Peter's Life is Pious

Acts 10:9-10 showed that Peter, an

ideal and good Jew, lived an exemplary pious life. He continued with his good habit of praying three times a day. In fact, some think that 12 noon was not the regular time for Jews to pray. But, Peter prayed. Peter was also exceptionally pious because he had never “eaten anything impure or unclean” all his life (Acts 10:14). Indeed, he followed every letter of the Mishnah by modeling an ideal prayer life and his diet was thoroughly kosher. What an example of Jewish piety. Impeccably Jewish!

Peter's Ministry is Powerful

In Acts 1, we see Peter, the chief apostle and leader of the Jerusalem church. His Spirit-filled ministry was relentlessly powerful in the Holy Spirit. The first nine chapters of Acts is an impressive list of Peter mightily unleashing the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter addressed the first sermon in the first prayer meeting, presided in choosing an apostle to take the place of Judas, preached the first evangelistic sermon where 3,000 were saved. He performed the miraculous healing of the crippled beggar followed by a powerful sermon in the Temple resulting to church growth (Acts 2, 3, 4). The powerful preaching and healing ministries of Peter alarmed the priests, temple guards and Sadducees and Peter ended up in jail that night! But the prison walls could not hold him. The High Priest asked Peter: “By what power or what name did you do this?” and Peter’s answers left everyone totally dumbfounded. Not even the most

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Plans, Plans, Plans

Dennis Yam

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITY

By now some of our readers may have browsed through BSOP's website (www.bsophil.org). We intend to make our presence known through the World Wide Web as we come to our first year of being in cyberspace.

As an arm to the Filipino-Chinese churches in furthering the gospel, we are extending our help to the churches to publish their ministry needs to the Chinese community, even to the whole world.

A Ministry Opportunity page has been added to the website to list down the different needs churches have: pastor, choir director, Christian teacher for the school, etc. With BSOP's wide coverage of audience, maybe one of these days someone may answer your ad. This is a FREE service to you and there is no obligation whatsoever.

Please feel free to submit these opportunities to us through our email address: bsophil@bsophil.org

COORDINATED UNIVERSAL TIME

The clocks in BSOP are set according to the international time standard established by the British Astronomical Society which is the Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) or currently known as the Coordinated Universal Time (UTC). Since different television and radio stations disagree on the official time in the Philippines, we have taken the initiative to follow the international set standard.

For more information on synchronizing your watches or clocks to the UTC, go to:

www.greenwichmeantime.com

<http://nist.time.gov>

We hope that all churches shall adjust their time likewise.

DISTANCE EDUCATION FOR THE CHURCH (TEE on the WEB)

Please pray for a plan to place theological education (TEE) online. As we all know internet access in every city in the Philippines is becoming more and more convenient. In line with this, we hope to bring BSOP nearer to you by offering TEE courses through our website. Lessons can be downloaded from our site, and the student may interact with a faculty member through e-mail or through internet relay chat (IRC, e.g., ICQ). Since the Fil.-Chinese churches are scattered all over the archipelago, this is a great opportunity for BSOP to extend help in the area of theological and biblical education of your church. Please wait for further announcements and feel free to give us your feedbacks regarding this matter.

TESOL AT BSOP

BSOP, in conjunction with Asia's Center for TESOL (Teach English to Speakers of Other Languages), will launch the Summer Program on May 5-31, 2003, with venue at BSOP campus. Faculty include Mr. Sam Kuka (director, TESOL), Ms. Hester Bucy, and Mrs. Rosa Smith. Please register with Mrs. Ruth Yam. **Hurry—this is limited to the first 16 qualified applicants!**

On-going TEE and CMTc Courses

Diamond Jubilee Evangelical Church	Prof. Allen Lim	<i>Inductive Bible Study</i>
Gerizim Evangelical Church	Dr. Chiu Eng Tan Rev. Wilson Go Kiao	<i>1 Peter Prayer</i>
St. Stephen's Parish	Dr. Jane Chuaunsu	<i>1 John</i>
United Evangelical Church of the Phils.	Dr. Joseph Shao Rev. Dennis Yam	<i>Genesis Issues in Theology</i>

FACULTY ON THE MOVE

Dr. Joseph Shao, Dr. Vicente Sia, and Dr. Tan Chiu Eng will represent the Board and visit Davao Evangelical Church on February 7-8, 2003, for a dialogue with our alumni and their elders/deacons.

Dr. Joseph Shao has been invited to be the keynote speaker during the 50th Anniversary of Davao Christian High School on February 12, 2003. Dr. Shao's dissertation on *A Study of Akkadian Royal Hymns and Prayers* has been published in Chinese by the Alliance Publishing House in Hong Kong.

VISITING FACULTY

We were privileged to have Dr. Samuel Ling, President of China Horizon, come and teach two courses from January 2-10, 2003. *Studies in Apologetical Theology* was taught in Mandarin, while the course *The Gospel and the Multi-cultural Diaspora Chinese* was given in English.



Dr. Ling with BSOP students



Rev. & Mrs. Moses Keng

Another visiting professor is Rev. Moses Keng, former pastor of Jubilee Evangelical Church and also formerly an adjunct teacher at our seminary. Rev. Keng is teaching *1 and 2 Timothy* and *Spiritual Growth* from February 3 to March 16. He has just retired as pastor of the Chinese Christian Fellowship Church in Chicago where he ministered for 21 years.

ALUMNUS ORDAINED

Congratulations and praise God for another ordained alumnus. Bernardo Que (Class of '95) was ordained on January 26, 2003 at the United Evangelical Church of General Santos.

NEW OFFICERS FOR 2003

New officers for 2003 are: Ptr. Harg Timothy Ang (president), Rev. William Huang (vice-president-PRO), Dr. David Cheung (secretary), Rev. Albert Ong (business manager), Ptr. Billy Arcayan (treasurer). New alumni will be welcomed on March 13, 2003 at UECP Daniel Room at 6:30 p.m.

44TH COMMENCEMENT



Do reserve March 30, 2003 for attending our 44th Commencement Exercises. The time is 3:30 p.m. and the venue is at BSOP Auditorium.

Titles Available from Our Bookstore

Brown, Driver, Briggs. *Hebrew and English Lexicon*
 Seow. *Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*
 Ling, Samuel. *The Chinese Way of Doing Things*
Chinese Intellectuals and the Gospel
 Sandy & Gises. *Cracking Old Testament Code*
 Sailhamer. *The Pentateuch as Narrative*
 Kwantes, Anne C. *Chapters in Philippine Church History*
 Henry, Jim. *The Pastor's Wedding Manual*
 Head, Al Caden, Jr. *The Minister's Manual for Funerals*
 Aldridge, Marian D. *The Pastor's Guide Book*
 Yancey, Philip. *Finding God in Unexpected Places*
The Bible Jesus Read
The Gift of Pain

Where is God When It Hurts
Fearfully and Wonderfully Made
The Jesus I Never Knew
Reaching for the Invisible God
Disappointment with God
 McKenzie, Alyce M. *Preaching Proverbs*
 Sonderman, Steve. *How to Build Life Changing Men's Ministry*
 Ramientos, Nene. *Devotional Commentary on the Gospel*

Also available,
 The Amoy Bible in CD (produced by BSOP)

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learned and influential man in Jerusalem could contend with Peter! How could these unschooled, ordinary men talk so persuasively and so powerfully? Peter also implemented the first act of church discipline in Acts 5. As he unleashed the power of the Holy Spirit in his ministries up to Acts 9, Peter had yet to be set free from the deep and obstinate influence at work in his inner life—his Jewish preconceptions and partiality toward Gentiles.

Peter's Preconception is Resistant to God's Heavenly Vision

Peter's deeply rooted preconceptions and partiality toward Gentiles are never illustrated in a more forceful way than through the encounter with the heavenly vision in Acts 10:9-16. In that encounter, the Lord commanded Peter to eat non-kosher "impure" food. Three times the Lord commanded, "Get up, Peter, kill and eat" and three times he disobeyed the Lord by saying "Surely not, Lord. I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." Peter repeatedly, adamantly and passionately rejected God's heavenly vision. Obviously, even God himself had a hard time dealing with Peter's obstinate preconceptions!

The obstinacy of Peter's preconceptions maybe seen in a more forceful way when the three rejections are rephrased in conversational mode. The first answer might have been "Of course not, I am not going to begin now to eat non-kosher food." Then, "What? Of course 'No' is the answer! I am not going to begin now neither will I ever eat them even though I am very hungry now. I will not eat, Lord! (Not at all Lord, lit., *medamos*, a strong negative in Greek.) There are two refusals: *Medamos, medamos!* Peter not only refuses, he stubbornly resists the heavenly vision and chooses to disobey God the second time. By the third time, Peter is really annoyed and says: "I told you already Lord—I

will not begin to eat, I will never ever eat them, really, I will not eat them."

Peter's obstinate preconceptions reached an unyielding level because each of his rejection was preceded by the command of the Lord Himself who commanded "Get up, Peter, kill and eat." He simply chose not to obey the Lord because he preferred his deeply-entrenched preconceptions! Peter was more Jewish than Christian! Peter refused, resisted and rejected God's command, adamantly and stubbornly disobeying the heavenly vision. Peter could not understand the vision and because he was a captive to his own preconceptions and partiality toward non-kosher and everything Gentile! His partialities and prejudices, tenaciously gripped his innermost being. Like any other human, Peter was not exempted.

Humans have always struggled and dealt with the complexity of ethnicity. The kosher issue in the heavenly vision illustrates such significant words as religion, ethnicity and civilization as we enter the 3rd millennium. Dealing with civilizational/cultural differences, Samuel Huntington in *The Clash of Civilizations and The Remaking of the World Order* argues that perceived cultural differences are rooted in (1) feelings of superiority toward people who are perceived as being very different, (2) fear of and lack of trust in such people; (3) difficulty of communication as a result of differences in language and what is considered civil behavior; (4) lack of familiarity with the assumptions, motivations, social relationships, and social practices of other people! Peter the chief apostle was surely no stranger to Huntington's suggestions. The Bible in Acts 10 had long ago seen and dealt with this deep complex human problem.

In the kingdom of God, we all the more need a missiological understanding of ethnicity, religion and the like without which the gospel shall be doomed to stay within the

courts of the Jerusalem Temple! The heavenly vision and the divine voice in 10:11-15 are God's way of showing Peter that although he can boast of his perfect piety, he is still unconsciously captive to his stubborn preconceptions. Peter, the apostle filled with the Holy Spirit, the healer of many, the performer of matchless feats in the ministry is but a slave to his own prejudices. He needs a developed view of mission, i.e., a paradigm and a vision that the gospel is for all nations.

Peter's Paradigm is a Missiological Breakthrough

While it was legitimate for Peter to continue with kosher practices, God allowed him to rediscover the riches of the gospel in Jesus and a deeper understanding of what God was doing, that he was at work in the lives of non-kosher people, because His salvation was for friend and foe, Jews and Gentiles. The gospel was indeed for all nations. That heavenly vision and divine voice were needed by Peter to break through his preconceptions and to rediscover the gospel. As he reflected on the heavenly vision and when Cornelius visited him the next day, Peter gained a new paradigm. He has now broken all his partialities toward the Gentiles [Gentiles were perceived to be lewd, idolaters, even utensils bought from them are unclean!] and understood that God is impartial to all. Only then could Peter gain a missiological breakthrough and a vision for the nations. Finally, Peter, enlightened by the vision, yielded and invited the Gentiles into his house (Acts 10:22).

At the end of the day, we are still puzzled by this big word called ethnicity or civilization as prophetically suggested by Huntington. We realize that it is human to hate. However, may we add: it is divine to love in Christ—i.e., to disregard our ethnic markers and gain a vision for all nations.