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**Eschatological and Missiological Dimension in
Matthew 24:14 and its Implications for the
Contemporary Church in Nigeria**

**An Essay submitted to the Department of Missiology, Faculty of Theological
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ABSTRACT

Mission has been described as the heartbeat of God, especially in the eschaton. This study, therefore, examines the eschatological and missiological dimension of Matthew 24:14 and its implications for the contemporary church in Nigeria. Through library research and qualitative analytical methods, it discusses the task of mission in the Old and New Testaments as well as the biblical bases of mission, the role of the church in mission, missions in church history, and Nigerian Baptist Convention missions. It examines some eschatological theories such as the premillennialism, postmillennialism and amillennialism. It considers the exegesis of the text in terms of contextual, contentual, grammatical and semantical analysis. The findings reveals that the goal of evangelism is to offer a witness or testimony for world inhabitants in the exclusive sense and that missions is the church's means of spreading the gospel. Moreover, the study states the implications of these findings for the end-time missions and contemporary church in Nigeria. Among other things, the study recommends that the Global Missions Board of the Nigerian Baptist Convention has the responsibility to recruit, train and supply missionaries for the advancement of Baptist missions work in Nigeria.

5.2 Conclusion

Perhaps, the real global missions started with the persecution of Christians in Jerusalem after the martyrdom of Stephen. The Antiochian church was the first church to send out missionaries in the persons of Paul and Barnabas. Based on this Pauline model, churches have been sending out missionaries through formation and establishment of missionary societies. Thus, mission agencies or bodies become essentially church's means of missions to and in the world. The church remains the sender of missionaries but through mission agencies. The church should co-operate together for the purpose of fulfilling Christ mandate. Good sense of stewardship of resources (time, money, talent, influence, etc) is necessary in order for the church to spread the gospel to every part of the earth. The task of world evangelism is that of the church and not that of mission agencies. Mission agencies only help the church to fulfill this task.

This study has examined the missiological and eschatological dimensions of Matthew 24:14 and has explained its implications for the contemporary church. The exegesis clearly revealed that just as the second coming of Christ shall take place at God's appointed time so also shall global evangelism. In other words, worldwide evangelism shall be completed at God's own time and in God's own way with the instrumentality of the church. Whenever, the church completes the task of worldwide evangelism that is when Christ's second coming shall take place. This means that the time of Christ's second coming shall immediately follow the completion of the task of

global evangelism. The church, therefore, needs to take evangelism and missions very seriously. Genuine New Birth experience, holiness of life, obedience to Christ, and Pentecostal experience are pre-requisites for fulfilling the Great Commission. Stewardship of resources and adequate mission strategies are also required for quick and effective completion of global evangelism.

5.3 Recommendations

To finish this unfinished task, the contemporary church in Nigeria has to overcome some external and internal problems/challenges. The external challenges facing the church in the twenty-first century and beyond include globalization (the internationalizing of our shrinking world due to rapid communication towards a common culture); racial tension: pluralism (the co-existence within the one political community of groups who hold incompatible views regarding religion); illiteracy (especially, in the developing countries like Nigeria); post-modernity (exhaustion of modernity that celebrates diversity, fragmentation, ambivalence), religion, fundamentalism (especially common in Northern Nigeria); injustice caused by persecution or political opposition; technological advances; materialism/distraction; unreached linguistic and ethno-cultural peoples; unreached geographic areas; unreached social groupings (such as the youth, lepers, prostitute, drug addicts, prisoners, etc); Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and other major diseases; relevance of the Christian faith; food, water and others (Stott 23). Adequate missiological solutions have to be provided to these problems if the church will fulfill the task of evangelizing the world.

Some internal obstacles which confront the church in its effort to participate effectively in world evangelization have to be overcome as well. Such obstacles

include lack of money; lack of effective leadership lack of vision and understanding or burden for mission; lack of workers; lack of training of workers; opposition to mission efforts from inside the church family issues; lack of united prayer; lack of good research and information on the remaining task; lack of effective cooperation and coordinated action between mission agencies; lack of common goals or strategies for world evangelization; unhealthy churches that are not able to reproduce themselves (Olonade 5). These obstacles, among others, will have to be addressed and overcome if mission efforts in our time will be accelerated.

Moreover, the church, according to Wilson (43), can do the following in evangelization and Christian missions:

- Preach the gospel to every person using personal evangelism.
- Make the scriptures and gospel message available in every language for both literate and non-reading by radio, television, the Jesus film, Bible translation and distribution and by Compact Disk (CD).
- Set goals for their ministries.
- Seek social transformation. That is, seeking positive change in the whole of human life materially, socially and spiritually, by recovering our true identity as human beings created in the image of God and discovering our true vocation as productive stewards.
- Be a prophetic voice in the world.
- Establish an indigenous church planting movement within every people group on earth.
- Reach the unreached social groups such as the youths, prostitutes, lepers, prisoners, area boys and so on.

- Involve in ethnic reconciliation by using the power of the gospel to correct social and ethnic ills.
- Develop regional and global mission-field partnerships for mission agency cooperation and coordination.

The church's mission in the world is missions. It would take the global church to do global mission. "In the twenty-first century, Christian missions has become the responsibility of a global church" (Escobar 10). "In our century the resulting new ecumenical reality is a Christian movement, global in extent, diverse in parts yet one in Christ, given a common mission in the world" (Thomas 16). The Church's vision should no longer be parochial but global. It is time for mission, not for maintenance of the status-quo. It is time to embrace shared ministry (involving all believers and become discontented with clericalism. It is time to be more of mission catalyst than mission analyst. Global perspective of mission has become very necessary. The goal of globalization is to build an inter-disciplinary team of persons committed to globalization instead of parochialism.

"Missiology ought to play the role of catalyst in Seminaries and challenge theological education to be faithful to its true calling" (Thomas 16). Scherer himself has said 'missiology, out of self-interest, has a positive duty to call the church to its foundational convictions in biblical eschatology apart from which neither the church nor its mission in the world can long survive as instrument of divine purpose (407). The Global Missions Board of the Nigerian Baptist Convention has the responsibility to recruit, train and supply missionaries for the advancement of Baptist missions work in Nigeria and outside. The practice and theory of the Global Missions Board need to be re-evaluated and changed to encourage and help mission students find more fulfillments in missions.