

AN EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF ACTS 1:6-11 AND ITS
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE
OF THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION

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ABSTRACT

Those who wish to be involved in Christian missions in real sense must face series of challenges such as policy formulation for missions, planning strategies for missions, and contextualization of the gospel message and its bearer for the target people to clearly understand the content. The success of any group, church, or denomination will be determined greatly by the way these challenges have been handled. Consequently, it is necessary to consider the pattern set forth in the Bible to see certain essentials for successful missions endeavour. A good place to start is the book of Acts of the Apostles, which gives both the commissioning process and the response of the early church in carrying out the command.

Acts 1:6-11 gives a clear indication of the place of world evangelization in the agenda of the church, the power with which it must be carried out, the method to be used as well as the area of coverage. The missionary endeavour of the Nigerian Baptist Convention is not an exception; for success to be recorded in its missions efforts, basic principles underlining this essential nature of the church must be followed. The writer uses exegetical tools to deduce the essentials of missionary works as seen from Acts 1:6-11 and then discusses them as applied to the missions thrust of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. The conclusion is that if the Nigerian Baptist Convention would follow these principles, its missionary efforts can result in indigenous churches which are self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating and self-theologizing.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study is that Acts 1:6-11 comprises basic missiological principles that cannot be avoided by any organization, such as the Nigerian Baptist Convention, that wishes to succeed in its missionary enterprise. Such basic truths must be taken into consideration in planning and implementation of missions policies for the Nigerian Baptist Convention. When properly done, the desired goal of kingdom growth will be accomplished. For this to be possible it is necessary to consider the various recommendations that relate to these pertinent principles.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Stemming from the implications of this study, it would be necessary for the NBC to assess its missionary programme with a view to overhauling certain aspects and amending others in a way that will make it to conform to the principles outlined for effective missionary efforts. Consequently, the following suggestions could be considered in order to make the efforts of the NBC both effective and efficient:

Firstly, the NBC should establish a school of missions whose main focus would be to train people for cross-cultural missions. Toward this, the Centre for Missionary Development in Okebola, Oriire local government area of Oyo state, and the one in Malumfashi, Katsina state, should be upgraded to full-fledge colleges of missions, rather than being dry season schools which they are at present. Such upgrading should include their curricula, structures as well as in the provision of experienced missionaries as

trainers. This will help the Nigerian Baptist missionaries to be able to meet up with the various postmodern challenges of world missions. As a matter of urgency and because of cost implications, one of the existing colleges of theology can be converted to such a school. An alternative to this is getting the NBC missionaries trained through other agencies like Calvary Ministries (CAPRO) and Nigerian Evangelical Missionary Institute, both located in Jos, Plateau state.

It should also be noted that training of missionaries should be an on-going affair. This is because missionaries face new challenges everyday. So, every missionary should be given the opportunity for such refresher courses in the form of seminars and specialized workshops. The GMB should package such training for its missionaries.

Secondly, since the NBC is formed around the vision for missions, it is necessary that every Nigerian Baptist minister passes through a training that makes him see the centrality of missions in whatever he or she is doing. So, the NBC should make all its theological schools to tailor their curriculum to this goal. This will also mean that the NBC will have to source for experienced missions professors. This can also be done through relationships with foremost institutions like the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the U.S. Centre for World Mission.

Apart from the area of training, the NBC needs to consider other areas of partnering with other missions organizations working in certain areas of interest. In such partnership, one organization may be supplying the personnel while the other supplies the structures or other needed non-human resources.

Also, the NBC should move from the era of career missionaries alone to the era that raises tent-making missionaries who both have their secular professions and are

trained as missionaries. Such missionaries can use their secular profession to secure acceptance in areas where there is prohibition or restriction on the gospel. It is also a means of marketplace evangelism. For instance, raising missionaries from among the trained nurses or physicians, or training missionaries as community health workers. To do this, there must be enough teaching, mobilization and motivation at local church level.

Furthermore, the funding system should change from that which makes all the burdens to be on the GMB to that which makes individuals, families, churches, etc to be directly responsible for specific missions field, missionary or missions project. Such adoption gives a sense of ownership to the adopting organ. The implication of this is that the GMB serves only as a link between the fields and the supporting groups.

Apart from adopting a different kind of funding strategy, suffice it to say that the present funding system can also be improved upon by ensuring that a larger percentage goes directly to the fields. This will both serve as a precept for the conferences, associations and churches of the NBC as well as giving them confidence that their cooperative contributions are correctly used for missions, as designated. This is necessary because there are insinuations from churches and individuals that missions is not being funded as supported or as provided for. Others even believe that the funds meant for missions are spent lavishly by the leaders and those in the office. It will be necessary to create a good feedback system wherein the local churches are given adequate account of missions fund.

In view of the fact that most of the missions stations are led by uneducated laymen, it would be necessary for the GMB to employ more trained workers who would

be able to teach the new believers the whole counsel of God. This will also mean that the working conditions will be improved considerably for people to be willing to go.

Moreover, the NBC should ensure that there is a policy which keeps the administration of missions in the hand of those who, in addition to training, have also gained field experience as missionaries. Administrators with such qualifications will be able to relate well with the field workers from personal experience and also ably represent the fields before the people at home.

In addition, there should be frequent communication with the fields in order to be kept abreast with information that could be used to raise prayer and financial supports. This is an area where the web site of the GMB also needs proper administration. At present, the web site is so scanty that one cannot really be moved to pray by reason of its information. This has to change.

Finally, there is the need for the NBC to set up a special committee which will formulate clear policies for its missionary operations. For such policies to be realistic, the formulating body should be made up of some past and serving missionaries of the NBC, missiologists, theologians and theological educators, local church pastor, GMB director, GMB missions coordinator, and directors of the different departments of the NBC. The resulting policies should be explicit and accessible enough for every Nigerian Baptist to understand and work with. Failure to do this could lead to haphazard operation at the detriment of the entire work. It is believed that if all these recommendations are considered in overhauling the missionary programme of the NBC under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the result will be tremendous.