

ASCENSION MANDATE AND NIGERIAN BAPTIST RESPONSE TO CITY
EVANGELISM. A CASE STUDY OF FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY,
ABUJA.

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ABSTRACT

There have been many research works on the mission efforts of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. However, the mission statement of the Convention to break new frontiers, stirs up this writer to consider an assessment of the evangelistic efforts and impacts of NBC at the Federal Capital Territory in view of the Ascension mandate. It has been observed that there are many estates and satellite towns in Abuja metropolis with only few corresponding and renowned Baptist Churches to provide the spiritual nourishments for the people. The locations of these few famous Mega Baptist Churches are not only far from the residential settlements; the Baptist worship centers in the satellite towns are not adequate. This is not only a pointer to the decline in mission endeavors within Abuja metropolis but also a call to break new frontiers. Hence, this work studied the historical development of mission work in Nigeria, with special focus on the Northern part of Nigeria and Abuja in particular. It examined the extent of missions and assessed the mission strategies employed thus far. It also presented the impact as well as the contemporary challenges militating against the growth or proliferation of Baptist Churches in Abuja. It was discovered that while Baptist work is over two decades in Abuja, with over seven million population density, the number of Baptist churches in the FCT – the ‘heartbeat’ of the nation - is quite small compared with the evangelistic demands and mission opportunities. Exegesis cum exposition of the Ascension mandate in Acts 1:6-11 was also attempted and implications were drawn for Baptist Churches in Abuja and NBC at large. From the exegetical analysis, it was observed that NBC still lag behind in carrying out the mission mandate in Abuja. The theological implications of the mandate demand that the NBC uphold and promote sound doctrines, as people of the book. In the light of this, the doctrine of Christ’s life, suffering, death and resurrection should be promoted as the core of the gospel. The moral life of Baptist believers in Abuja is equally essential for carrying out this mandate. This will enable Baptist Churches in Abuja to effectively fulfill the social implications of the mandate, meeting needs of the displaced people and establishing Churches in the satellite towns where they now reside. The place of the Holy Spirit and appropriate mission strategies were also highlighted in the work. The disciples succeeded in evangelizing and winning their world because of their encounter with the Holy Spirit, their lives and ministry changed, they preached with boldness, lived a holy life and wrought miracles. Christ will eventually return to the world for the harvest of souls the same way he ascended. This is the eschatological implication of the ascension mandate. Hence, Baptist believers must endeavour to witness the gospel to unbelievers and invite them to platforms where they could be reached. They should also be accommodating, enabling house care fellowships to thrive in their homes/community and giving necessary support to the planting of new churches in Abuja and its environs. If Nigerian Baptists under the umbrella body of Nigerian Baptist Convention is ready to pay the price of the ascension mandate and the foregoing recommendations, her impact will be felt in her Jerusalem through winning more souls and establishing more churches in FCT. There is a great need for NBC to plant more Baptist Churches in FCT and each residential settlement.

5.2 CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that Christianity has come to stay in Nigeria, and that Nigerian Baptists are doing well to expand the kingdom of God by all means. Gone are the days when the Baptist attitude to evangelism lacked aggression however, the

Baptist will do well to fall in line with the context of Acts 1: 8. The Holy Spirit gives boldness to believers and authenticates the gospel message, to convince and transform sinners without which all efforts will be a waste of time. This essay will help the Nigerian Baptist under the umbrella of NBC to adopt better and suitable strategies to evangelize and build more churches especially in Abuja. It is thereby suggested for further study that such a study be carried out in every state of Nigeria in order to improve on Baptist works in her Jerusalem. This write up therefore encourages Nigerian Baptists to contribute earnestly, consistently, and rightly to kingdom expansion. It is expected that if the following strategies and recommendations are prayerfully and faithfully implemented, then Christ's kingdom will be established in FCT (Nigerian Baptist Jerusalem) and from there to the outermost part of the earth.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

With respect to the study of ascension mandate in Acts 1: 6-11, the following suggestions are recommended in order to make the effort of Nigerian Baptists under the umbrella of NBC effective and efficient in evangelizing, winning and building more churches for worship of the Most High God in FCT her Jerusalem:

1. Nigerian Baptists should devote more time in evangelizing larger cities like Abuja. This is because most influential and high-class reside in cities. When this people are adequately evangelized, the mission work of the church will gain strength to influence the smaller towns and villages around. The church will also have enough financial resources to support the mission work for the salvation of the un-evangelized ones.
2. Nigerian Baptists should make themselves available to the power of the Holy Spirit. The empowerment of Holy Spirit is responsible for changed lives, ministries and world. Hence, Nigerian Baptists should also teach their

members the act of waiting upon the Lord and living a pure life which gives free access to the Holy Spirit to fill them for action.

3. Nigerian Baptist member and ministers should live a life of integrity. The Holy Spirit will not identify Himself with the unclean or unconsecrated life. Life of holiness and total dedication to God is very vital for everyone God will empower for efficiency and effectiveness in these present days. More so, the contemporary Baptist ministers should teach others in respect to a moral standard which is godly. Our actions/morals also speak as much as our words.
4. Nigerian Baptists should be faithful Disciples of Christ. In the ascension mandate, Jesus' promise was to his disciples and their task is to help others to become Christ disciples as well. The task of preaching is not restricted to any time or place; hence Baptists in Abuja should be encouraged to disciple others faithfully.
5. Since the disciples were trained by their Master, adequate training must be given to every missionary that will be sent by the church. This adequate training will be helpful to the missionary to contextualize the gospel in the way that the prospects will understand.
6. The Nigerian Baptists should seek the face of God earnestly in the cause of carrying out her mission work. This will give room for extra ordinary to happen in her mission endeavor.
7. Team work should be exercised by the Nigerian Baptists. It is easy to give up missionary activities without co-workers in the face of challenges. "We cannot become what we need by remaining what we are."- John C. Maxwell.
8. Baptist churches in FCT and their Associations in partnership with NBC should be ready to invest greater percentage of their income on evangelism

