

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary

The Impact of a Functional Understanding of the Image of God on Mission

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Introduction

There is an ongoing debate among missiologists and church leaders about the nature of the mission of the church. This debate centers around two general positions. The first understands mission as primarily a spiritual endeavor concerned with evangelizing the lost. Dr. Christopher Little represents this view in his article, “What Makes Mission Christian?” Citing various scholars, Little argues that evangelism is the greatest and central work of the Church.¹ This is his final analysis in an article where he critiques the concept of holistic mission and argues rather for a doxological mission focused on evangelism.

Likewise, DeYoung and Gilbert make a similar argument in their book, *What is the Mission of the Church?* They argue that the mission of the church is to proclaim the gospel, which they define essentially in terms of justification, and to make disciples.² They go on to argue for a stark distinction between the mission of the church and the *missio Dei*. Their premise is that the church does not participate in God’s mission, but instead proclaims what God alone is doing in the world.³ With this understanding, they differentiate between mission and good works that seek to address suffering in God’s creation.

In contrast to this understanding of mission is the second general position, which sees the mission of the church as holistic, or comprehensive, in nature. Proponents of comprehensive mission understand the mission of the church to include all areas of life. For them this understanding is the natural result of discipleship, as believers are called to obey all that Christ

¹ Christopher R. Little “Christian Mission Today: What Makes Mission Christian?” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/25_2_PDFs/Little.pdf (accessed November 19, 2013), 70.

² Kevin DeYoung, and Greg Gilbert. *What is the Mission of the Church?: Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission*. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 26.

³ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

has commanded. In this regard, comprehensive mission can be generalized by the following statement:

The Christian community must chatter, discuss, and proclaim the gospel; it must express the gospel in its life as the new society, in its sacrificial service of others as genuine expression of God's love, in its prophetic exposing and opposing of all demonic forces that deny the Lordship of Christ and keep men less than fully human; in its pursuit of real justice for all men; in its responsible and caring trusteeship of God's creation and its resources.⁴

Contrary to the view held by DeYoung and Gilbert, proponents of comprehensive mission understand the church to be participants in the *missio Dei*; thus her mission encompasses not only what she says, but what she does.

In part, this debate regarding the mission of the Church exists because there is a disconnect between the recent work of biblical scholars and missiologists regarding the *imago Dei*. Old Testament scholars have a propensity to be submerged in the detail of their own discipline and are often reluctant to apply their work to other disciplines like missiology.⁵ Some church leaders, as is the case for DeYoung and Gilbert, develop their theology of mission after Genesis 3. Often those in favor of the primacy of proclamation focus the discussion on the Apostle Paul's writings, while those in favor of a comprehensive understanding emphasize the Gospel accounts of the life and ministry of Christ. However, to truly understand the mission of God's people, we must begin with God's creation purposes for humanity found in the first two chapters of Genesis.

The creational purpose, or original mission, of God's people can only be understood in light of humanity's creation as the *imago Dei*. There has been much work done by Old

⁴ Ad Hoc Group. "Theology Implications of Radical Discipleship." *Lausanne 1974 Documents*, <http://www.lausanne.org/docs/lau1docs/1294.pdf> (accessed November 19, 2013), 1294.

⁵ Richard J. Middleton. *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1*. (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), 30.

Testament scholars to explain the significance of the image of God in man. According to Richard Middleton, in the last thirty years of the twentieth century the functional understanding of the image of God became the virtual consensus in the field.⁶ Middleton defines the functional image of God as the designation by God to human beings to be his representatives and agents in the world, with the authority to share in God's rule of the earth's resources and creatures. As a result of the missional implications of this interpretation of the *imago Dei*, he interchanges the term missional for functional.⁷

In addition to virtual unity among Old Testament theologians regarding the functional interpretation of the image of God, scholars like Beale, Dempster, and Alexander, have also demonstrated that the *imago Dei* is a primary motif for understanding the outworking of the biblical narrative. Stephen Dempster states, "the rest of the canon assumes the royal overtones of Genesis 1, indicating the unique authority assigned to the primal couple, and thus to all humanity."⁸ Desmond Alexander understands the result of the fall of Adam and Eve, in part, as surrender of their dominion to Satan and thus states, "the rest of the biblical story is especially interested in describing how the sovereignty of God will be restored and extended over the whole earth."⁹

In spite of the consensus among biblical scholars regarding the functional perspective as part of the proper understanding of the *imago Dei* and its prominence as an overarching theme in scripture, little impact has been seen among missiologists and church leaders regarding its

⁶ Ibid., 29.

⁷ Ibid., 27.

⁸ Stephen G. Dempster. *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 60.

⁹ T. Desmond Alexander. *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2008), 79.

application to the mission of the Church. Missiologists often discuss the *imago Dei* in terms of its impact on what humans are as opposed to regarding what they do. Common statements include, “Spirituality is intrinsic to human nature. Because they are created in the image of God, humans have an embedded conscience reflecting the imprint of God.”¹⁰ The sole reference to the image of God in The Lausanne Covenant speaks exclusively to the dignity of all human beings because they are made in God’s image.¹¹ While these perspectives reflect important theological truths regarding the *imago Dei*, they also reflect the disconnect between missiologists and recent trends among biblical scholars. It is exceedingly rare, even among proponents of comprehensive mission, to find missiologists who have considered the implications of the functional interpretation of the *imago Dei* in regard to the outworking of their theology of mission.

The purpose of this thesis is to apply the work of biblical scholars regarding the functional image of God to the mission of the Church in order to argue for a comprehensive understanding of mission. By demonstrating continuity between God’s creation purposes for humanity and his post-Fall work among his people, this study will seek to demonstrate that the Lord has always desired that his image bearers participate in the *missio Dei*. Furthermore, by explaining how Christ restores the *imago Dei* in the Church, this work will show that the mission of the Church is comprehensive, involving active participation in the *missio Dei* as God’s agents in the world.

Few, if any, would deny that the Church has a mission and that obedience to Christ requires participation in that mission. Often our inability to define mission has led to improper practice at best and, at worse, apathy. If the Church is going to be relevant within her modern

¹⁰ Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rheenen, and Douglas McConnell. *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 83.

¹¹ John Stott. “The Lausanne Covenant.” *Lausanne 1974 Documents*
<http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lausanne-covenant.html> (accessed November 19, 2013).

context, she must build a consensus around a thoroughly biblical answer to this question: What is the mission of the Church?

In his book, *The Gospel in Human Contexts*, Paul Hiebert touches on what is a leading contributor to the problem of finding consensus regarding the mission of the Church. In discussing the relationship between missiology and other disciplines he states, "...disciplines have carved out and laid claim to their own territories"¹² resulting in a reductionist perspective that only sees the individual parts not the whole picture.¹³ According to Hiebert, Bible scholars have compartmentalized their various disciplines and they do not adequately interact, resulting in an inadequate theological perspective of mission. This helps explain the disconnect between Old Testament scholars and missiologists regarding the *imago Dei*.

As mentioned above, this thesis argues that the functional understanding of the *imago Dei* requires a comprehensive understanding of mission. The functional image reveals clearly that God's creation purpose, or mission, for humanity was to participate with God as his agents in the world. Their participation included manifesting his reign by exercising dominion and extending his presence and reign through fruitful multiplication and the cultivation and expansion of Eden.

Although the primal couple's dominion was surrendered to Satan and the image in them was marred due to sin, God did not alter his creation purposes for humanity. This is clearly seen in the continuity throughout the scripture where God works through his people to bring about his creation purposes in spite of the Fall. That Noah receives the same mandate given to Adam and Eve is a clear example of this. Throughout the Old Testament the Lord regularly raises up new

¹² Paul G. Hiebert. *The Gospel in Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 35.

¹³ Ibid., 35.

Adamic types to fulfill his creation purposes. With each new Adam the plan of redemption is advanced, but ultimately falls short.

With the coming of Christ, the kingdom or reign of God breaks into history. Christ, the final Adam, successfully manifests the reign and presence of God and, through his death and resurrection, he enables the restoration of the *imago Dei* in a new humanity. This new humanity, the Church, is being renewed in the image of its creator and thus participates with God as his agents in the world, accomplishing his creation purposes. The Church continues to participate with Christ in his mission to reconcile all things leading up to the second coming and the new heavens and earth.

Examining the functional image throughout all of Scripture is beyond the scope of this thesis so limiting the discussion of the functional image to the role of Adam, Abraham, Israel, David, and Jesus will make this study more manageable. Furthermore, focusing specifically on the role of specific figures in advancing the creation purposes of God, will serve to sufficiently establish the continuity and progression of God's creation mission among his people. This is essential and will be the foundation to a proper understanding of the mission of the Church. Through this approach the Old Testament scholar and the missiologist meet and both gain from the other's perspective.

Research Methods

This study will evaluate existing research from Old Testament scholars and biblical theologians regarding the functional image of God and its impact on the whole story of scripture. Some of these materials will focus specifically on the discussion of the *imago Dei* and on the functional interpretation. Other materials will consist of theological works that strive to display

how the theme of functional image can be traced through the entire narrative of scripture. Works from missiologists addressing this topic are limited, but when available they will be evaluated as well. These works will be analyzed and used to develop an argument for comprehensive mission based upon the functional understanding of the image of God.

Proposed Development of Thesis

The project will be divided into the following chapters: Introduction, The Functional Image of God in the Old Testament, The Functional Image of God in the New Testament, Missiological Implications of the Functional Image of God, and a brief Conclusion. The chapters will be arranged to demonstrate how the Lord has maintained his original creation purposes throughout all of his dealings with mankind. This format allows for the demonstration that the mission of Abraham, Israel, David, Jesus, and the Church is ultimately the same as the mission given to Adam before the Fall; they are to participate in the *missio Dei* as God's agents in the world. As stated above, this understanding of the continuity and advancement of God's creation purposes for his image bearers is essential to developing a biblical understanding of the mission of the Church.

Chapter one, The Functional Image of God in the Old Testament, will introduce the functional understanding of the *imago Dei* and its implications on Adam and Eve as agents participating in the *missio Dei*. The creation purposes of God found in Genesis 1:26-28 as well as in Genesis 2 will be explained. Genesis 1:26-28 is often referred to by missiologists as the Cultural Mandate; however, in this thesis it will be referred to as God's original commission for humanity. This is significant because Genesis 1:26-28 is the original mission given to humanity and it will be demonstrated that each successive commission given to God's people, including

the Great Commission, is a renewal of this original commission. A brief look at Abraham, Israel, and David will serve to demonstrate the continuity between the original commission and the Lord's ongoing work in creation through his people. Establishing this point will prepare the reader to better understand the mission of Jesus and the Church.

Chapter two, The Functional Image of God in the New Testament, will discuss the role of Jesus and the Church as the functional image of God. Jesus is the very presence of God once again walking among his people (Jn 1:14). He also is the son of Adam who, as the final Adam, prevails and does what all the previous image bearers failed to accomplish. Rather than succumbing to temptation like the first Adam, Jesus rejects the authority offered to him by Satan (Lk 4:5-8) and proceeds to take back the dominion Adam surrendered. Through his life of obedience, his exercise of dominion through his miracles, and ultimately his atoning death and resurrection, he inaugurates the kingdom of God and begins to manifest the reign of God in addition to manifesting his presence. Through the resurrection he creates a new humanity of restored image bearers called to participate with him as Spirit empowered agents in the world. Jesus gives dominion to those who are being conformed to his image.

Building upon this argument, it will be possible to demonstrate how the Church is called to participate in the *missio Dei* as God's agents in the world according to his original intent. Furthermore, this section will explain how the Great Commission, typically the key passage in any discussion regarding mission, is a renewal of the creation mandate from Genesis 1:26-28 given to the new humanity. This will become clear by explaining how the act of making disciples, those who bring every area of life under the Lordship of Christ by obeying all that he commands, is how the church manifests the reign of God as functional image bearers. This is not only reflected in personal holiness, but in acts of justice where the Church strives to see Christ's

kingdom come and his will done on earth as in heaven. It will also be evident through this chapter that the Church fulfills the original mandate to extend the presence of God to the ends of the earth by making disciples among the nations who, through faith and repentance, are being built up into the temple of God.

Chapter three, Missiological Implications of the Functional Image of God, and the conclusion will serve to shape the theological arguments of the thesis into practical missiological insights and provide some general examples of application. In keeping with the purpose of this thesis, it will be argued that the functional understanding of the *imago Dei* requires a comprehensive understanding of mission. Missiologists must account for the comprehensive nature of the original commission and God's original purpose for humanity as his agents in the world. Additionally, missiology must incorporate the progressive nature of restoration which is inherent in the Spirit empowered participation of the Church in the *missio Dei*.

Review of Literature

The research for this project will be conducted by reviewing a wide variety of academic materials from Old and New Testament scholars, biblical and systematic theologians, and missiologists. The materials will consist of books and journal articles. They will come from the university library, online sources, and the author's personal library. The bulk of the research will be done in the university library and the author's personal library.

In defining the functional image of God and tracing it through the scriptures, an emphasis will be given to Old Testament scholars and biblical theologians. Several academic resources that focus on this theme will be used including extensive works like G. K. Beale's *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*, Middleton's *The*

Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1, and Dempster's *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*. These works are beneficial because the authors define the *imago Dei* as functional and demonstrate how it is the overarching theme of the biblical narrative. Therefore, these resources will be used to support the premise that from the beginning, and throughout history, the Lord has desired to use image bearers as his agents in the world participating in the *missio Dei* by manifesting and mediating his presence and reign in the world.

As previously stated, the missiological resources that address the functional understanding of the *imago Dei* are limited. However, there are numerous significant missiological works which address the kingdom of God and will be used to help support the analysis that the functional image of God requires a comprehensive practice of mission. A few of these include Wright's *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, Glasser's *Announcing the Kingdom: The Story of God's Mission in the Bible*, Peskett and Ramachandra's *The Message of Mission*, and Newbigin's *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*.

In addition to missiological texts derived from various missiologists from the church in the West, sources from the Global South will also be utilized. Padilla's works *Mission Between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom* and *The Local Church Agent of Transformation: An Ecclesiology for Integral Mission* will be especially helpful with regard to application. Finally, the works of New Testament scholars like N. T. Wright's *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* and *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* will be used to supplement the above-mentioned resources. In addition, a few biblical commentaries will be used to help support the purpose of this paper.

As detailed above, there are a variety of sources and perspectives from which to glean insight into the mission of the Church. However, as has been stated, the sources are fragmented and the scholars generally stick within their field of study. As a result, those who best develop the functional understanding of the *imago Dei* fail to apply it to missiology. Likewise, those who are most concerned with the mission of the Church often fail to build upon the work of other scholars regarding the functional understanding of the image. Drawing from biblical theology, the work of Old and New Testament scholars, as well as the important work missiologists have done regarding the kingdom of God, this thesis will present a biblically rich argument for comprehensive mission.

Results

The aim of this thesis is to provide a thoroughly biblical case for comprehensive mission. The mission of the Church is comprehensive in nature and the ongoing debate in the Western church over this issue has often resulted in an anemic missiology. Many in the Global South have pushed against the dualism that is prevalent in Western missiology. By giving the Western church a theologically robust argument for comprehensive mission that builds on the work of Old Testament scholars regarding the functional image of God, this project will help the Western church move towards a comprehensive understanding of mission. This must happen because the Lord requires it and the world needs it.

Chapter One

The Functional Image of God in the Old Testament

Genesis 1:26-28 records the account of God's creation of mankind and the cultural mandate, or original commission, which is given to humanity. Adam and Eve were created in the image and likeness of God. It is essential to understand what image and likeness mean before we can truly comprehend the commission that is given to humanity. Theologians have held varying views on the meaning of the *imago Dei*.

Theologians such as Emil Brunner and Karl Barth held a relational view of the image.¹ As the name suggests, the relational view understands the image of God to involve the relational aspect of humanity. Like the triune God, mankind is created to exist in relationship both with God and with each other.² A second popular view of the *imago Dei* is the substantive view. This perspective has been the predominate view for much of church history and holds that the image relates to a definite characteristic or quality within humanity, often focusing on human reason.³

Both of the above views have merit and should be considered part of any comprehensive understanding of the *imago Dei*. However, virtually all Old Testament scholars have come to adopt the royal (functional) interpretation of the image.⁴ As Barr comments, "Doubtless the most influential opinion today, however, is what Jónsson calls the 'functional' view: the image of God

¹ Millard J. Erickson. *Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids, (MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 524-25.

² Gregory A. Boyd and Paul R. Eddy. *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 82.

³ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 520-521.

⁴ Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 29.

consists in human dominion over the world.”⁵ This understanding fits best with the context of Genesis 1, while the relational and substantive views help to shed light on the outworking of the functional interpretation.

The functional interpretation of the *imago Dei* understands the image to relate to humanity’s role as God’s royal agents in the world. Mankind, as the image of God, is placed on earth as God’s representatives. In light of this, the question of image shifts away from “the mechanism of the image to the function of the image, namely the rulerhood of the creation as God’s vizier.”⁶ Central to the *imago Dei* is the reality of mankind functioning as God’s agents in the world participating with God to fulfill his purposes in creation. “Humans are called to be ‘subcreators’ under the sovereign Creator in enabling the whole creation to flourish and reach its appointed fulfillment in time.”⁷

This understanding of the image is compatible with ancient Near East practice where kings were considered to be the living images of God.⁸ According to Walton, in the ancient world it was believed that the image of God did the work of God in the world.⁹ In this respect,

⁵ James Barr. “Biblical Faith and Natural Theology.” *Gifford Lectures(1990-1991)*, <http://www.giffordlectures.org/Browse.asp?PubID=TPBFNT&Volume=0&Issue=0&TOC=True> (accessed March 24, 2014).

⁶ D. J. A. Clines. “The Image of God in Man.” *Tyndale Bulletin 19 (1968)*, http://98.131.162.170//tynbul/library/TynBull_1968_19_03_Clines_ImageOfGodInMan.pdf (accessed October 1, 2013), 89.

⁷ Howard Peskett and Vinoth Ramachandra. *The Message of Mission*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 44.

⁸ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 76. This practice is illustrated in the Tell Fakhariyeh, a large statue of an ancient king of Gozan, which contains an inscription using the Aramaic equivalent of “likeness” and “image.” Gentry, Peter J. and Stephen J. Wellum. *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 192-193.

⁹ John H. Walton. *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 212.

the human couple's dominion or ruling over the earth reflects their role as God's viceroys.¹⁰ They were to represent God and mediate his reign over all of creation.¹¹ The act of mediating the reign of God clearly demonstrates that Adam and Eve were to participate with God in the *missio Dei*.

The Image of God in Primeval History

The Genesis text supports this understanding of the image. Genesis 1:26-28 states that God has created man in his "image" (*tselem*) and "likeness" (*demuth*) and given mankind dominion over all the earth. In light of this, God blesses Adam and Eve and commands them to be fruitful and fill the earth as well as to subdue and exercise dominion over the earth. The three commands to "be fruitful", "subdue", and "exercise dominion" make up the original commission for humanity.

In the context of verse 26, image and likeness are undoubtedly related to dominion. Middleton notes the royal nature of the text and the "close linkage of image with the mandate to rule and subdue the earth and its creatures."¹² This does not negate a relational understanding of the image. Clines acknowledges that the *imago Dei* is broader than man's dominion, yet he notes that dominion is so necessarily connected to the image that it loses the character of a mere derivative and becomes an essential part of the image itself.¹³ Indeed the relationship between God and man as well as mankind's volitional, rational, and moral nature is an aspect of the

¹⁰ G. K. Beale. *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 30.

¹¹ Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 59.

¹² Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 26.

¹³ Clines, *The Image of God In Man*, 96.

functional image.¹⁴ These attributes of God were to be reflected by Adam and Eve in their reign over creation.

Adam was not only a king mediating the reign of God over creation; he was also a priest, a priest-king. Eden was a temple-garden where God dwelt and man was to worship him.¹⁵ In Genesis 2:15-17 God places Adam in the garden to “work” and “keep” (*shamar*) it. The idea of working and keeping the garden is priestly in nature as the language is also used regarding the task of priests and Levites in fulfilling their responsibilities (Num 3:7-8).¹⁶ The word *keep* can be understood as “to guard” as in Deuteronomy 5:12 when Israel is commanded to protect, or keep the Sabbath holy.¹⁷

Greg Beale believes the command to “subdue” and “rule” suggests an expansion, or cultivation, of Eden until it extended throughout and covered the earth.¹⁸ As a result of the expansion of the temple garden, God’s presence, along with that of his people, would fill the earth. This understanding of “subdue” and “rule” serves to demonstrate that Adam was placed as a priest in the temple-garden to protect it from evil and to cultivate or expand it over all of creation. This was the beginning of his fulfillment of the cultural mandate.¹⁹

This understanding of Adam and Eve as priest-kings sheds much light on the cultural mandate given in Genesis 1:28. The human couple is to multiply and fill the earth, subdue, and exercise dominion over it. God’s reason for creating them, his original commission for mankind,

¹⁴ Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 32.

¹⁵ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 20-21.

¹⁶ Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 64.

¹⁷ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 26.

¹⁸ G. K. Beale, “Final Vision of the Apocalypse,” 201, quoted in Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 25.

¹⁹ Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 383.

was for humanity to participate with God in his creative work. It is important to understand each of the aspects of this commission.

First is the command to be “fruitful and multiply.” This was to be a multiplication of image bearers who would reflect God’s glory and extend his reign over all the earth.²⁰ In the ancient Near East a king would erect statues or images of himself in distant parts of his kingdom to indicate the reach of his authority.²¹ Likewise, as Adam’s descendants (image bearers) fill the earth, as priest-kings they will extend the temple-garden and the reign of God.²² The first couple will participate with God in creation by creating more image bearers who will likewise participate with God as his agents in the world.

Second is the command to “subdue” the earth. This command carries with it the idea of cultivation and expansion. Subduing the earth is the process of the expansion of mankind over the earth and making it their home.²³ The priest-kings are to expand the boundaries of the temple-garden (and thus God’s presence) and civilization to the ends of the earth.

Third is the command to “have dominion” over all the earth. The Lord created mankind to rule over the earth in a way that reflects his authority.²⁴ More specifically, God was to accomplish his rule of the earth through the agency of Adam and his descendants.²⁵ Adam is not to rule in his own power and wisdom, but he is to participate with God as his agent in the world

²⁰ Ibid., 383-384.

²¹ G. von Rad. “Old Testament Theology”, vol. I. (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1962), 146-147 quoted in Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 78.

²² Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 78.

²³ Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 52.

²⁴ Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 62.

²⁵ Dan G. McCartney. “Ecce Homo: The Coming of the Kingdom as the Restoration of Human Viceregency.” *Westminster Theological Seminary*, <http://files.wts.edu/uploads/pdf/articles/mccartney-vicegerency.pdf> (accessed February 7, 2012), 2.

to bring creation to God's desired end. Thus, as Adam cultivates and expands the temple-garden (subdue), fills (be fruitful) and brings all of the earth under the manifest reign of God (have dominion), he will fulfill the original commission. Stephen Dempster refers to this emphasis on human dominion as simply "the kingdom of God."²⁶

Prior to the Fall, God gave humanity a commission which reveals his purpose for mankind to participate with him in creation. Adam and Eve are to create life and fill the earth with image bearers, or priest-kings. These priest-kings are to subdue the earth by cultivating the temple-garden and extending God's presence throughout the earth. They are to protect the ever-expanding temple-garden from evil, and mediate the reign of God over the whole earth. They are to be people set apart for God who manifest his rule over the earth.

However, God's enemy quickly sets out to thwart his plan. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve disobey God and submit to the serpent. In so doing, they forfeit their role as priests and give control of the earth over to God's enemy.²⁷ Boyd elaborates on this:

When humanity rejected Yahweh's lordship, we accepted (by unleashing) a new "god of this world." We compromised our assigned task to have dominion over the world and thus subjected ourselves and all of nature once again to the destructive influence of the forces that oppose God...Satan now seizes "control of the entire world" and becomes "the prince of this age" and "the ruler of the kingdom of the air."²⁸

This understanding allows for a more nuanced and significant understanding of the story of redemption that unfolds in the remainder of scripture. The redemptive work of God involves both the restoration of fellowship between God and humanity and the restoration of humanity to its rightful position as vice-regent participating with God in the *missio Dei*.

²⁶ Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 62.

²⁷ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 78-79.

²⁸ Gregory A. Boyd. *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1997), 111.

As a result of their sin, the first couple is cast out of God's presence and is forced to live under a cursed condition. The serpent is cursed and the ongoing battle between him and humanity is intensified until the time when the seed of the woman prevails (Gen 3:14-15). The woman, whose joy was to give birth to image bearers, will now suffer through childbirth. Likewise, her relationship to the man is affected. Though created as a co-ruler, she will now be ruled over by her husband (Gen 3:16). Adam was created to cultivate and expand the temple-garden; however, now outside of the garden, his work will be laborious and much less fruitful (Gen 3:17-19).²⁹ Humanity continues to exercise dominion, but it now flows from a fallen nature leading to evil, oppression, and the exploitation of creation.³⁰

This turn of events should not be understood as thwarting God's plan or the commission that humanity was given in Genesis 1:28. Clines is adamant that mankind is created to be God's image and there is no indication in scripture that man has ceased to be the image of God.³¹ At no point does God discontinue his original commission for mankind to participate in the *missio Dei* as his agents in the world; a point testified to by Genesis 9:1-3,7 and the psalmist in Psalm 8:4-8. In both instances it is clear that God's original commission for mankind is still in effect. Indeed, the remainder of scripture details how the sovereignty of God will be restored and reestablished over the entire earth.³²

This restoration will ultimately come to pass through the seed of the woman. The curse and the resulting enmity between the seed of the woman and that of the serpent in Genesis 3:15 sets the stage for the spiritual battle that will take center stage in the story of redemption.

²⁹ Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 67-68.

³⁰ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 79.

³¹ Clines, *The Image of God In Man*, 99.

³² Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 79.

According to Dempster, the immediate context of the *Protoevangelium* seems to suggest that the victory of the woman's seed will lead to the return to an Edenic state and the reestablishment of humanity's rule over all of the earth.³³ This is the eschatological hope, and the Lord begins working toward this end immediately through Adamic figures who, functioning as image bearers, or vice-regents, participate with God in the unfolding spiritual battle. Having taken dominion from Adam, Satan will not easily relinquish it.

A quick look at Noah will help to illustrate the continuity of God's plan to work through Adamic figures. As a result of the Fall, the earth is progressively marred by sin until the Lord determines to destroy humanity (Gen 5:9-13). The Lord commands Noah to build an ark in order that the animal life and a remnant of humanity might be spared (Gen 5:18-21). In doing this, Noah was exercising dominion over the creation.³⁴

Later, after the flood, and not inconsequentially after the Fall, God reiterates the commission from Genesis 1:28 to Noah (Gen 9:1-2, 7). In this, Noah and his descendants are expected to fulfill the commission that was previously given to Adam and Eve, though they will struggle as a result of the Fall.³⁵ It is significant that while the Fall and resulting curse had marred humanity's ability to fulfill the commission, the Lord nonetheless reiterated it. Genesis 9 gives no indication of a loss, or even a partial defacement of the image, but rather humanity's creation in the *imago Dei* is regarded with contemporary validity.³⁶ This is perfectly illustrated in that the *imago Dei* is given as the reason that human life must be protected (Gen 9:6).

³³ Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 68.

³⁴ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 83.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.

³⁶ Clines, *The Image of God In Man*, 100.

Noah's act of planting the first vineyard (Gen 9:20) should be understood as exercising mankind's "fundamental vocation of transforming the world by the historical agency granted them at creation."³⁷ In this act Noah is taking up Adam's vocation to subdue the earth and cultivate it as a participant in the *missio Dei*. As mentioned above, he becomes a sub-creator enabling the creation to flourish and advance toward Yahweh's desired end.³⁸

In the post-Fall, post-flood era, God does not simply write off the physical world and begin a new plan of saving souls. Rather, Yahweh raises up an Adamic figure in Noah and reiterates the same commission originally given to humanity. Noah, like Adam before him, is to participate with God in the *missio Dei*: to fill the earth with image bearers, to extend God's presence to the ends of the earth, and to manifest the reign of God over all the earth. Though Noah likewise fails to bring about the fullness of the eschatological hope, he nevertheless advances God's purposes and paves the way for the Lord to raise up Abraham, another Adamic figure.

As seen above, God's plan for humanity is for mankind to participate with him in the *missio Dei* by multiplying and filling the earth with image bearers who will serve as priest-kings. In this role they will cultivate and extend the temple-garden to the ends of the earth and mediate the reign of God over the earth. As a result, the earth will be filled with God's presence and his sovereign reign will be made manifest over all the earth. This is the original commission given to mankind in Genesis 1:26-28.

³⁷ Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 217.

³⁸ See footnote 7 on page 13.

Be Fruitful: Abraham, Israel, and David

In order to demonstrate the continuity between the Genesis 1:28 commission and God's dealings with his people throughout the Old Testament, it will be helpful to examine the previously discussed aspects of the original commission—to be fruitful, to subdue the earth (priestly function), and to exercise dominion (royal function) in regards to Abraham, Israel, and David. Since the Genesis 1:28 commission is reiterated to each of these Adamic figures, it is clear that Yahweh's continued desire is that humanity will participate with him in the *missio Dei* as his agents in the world. This is essential to a proper understanding of mission because it demonstrates that the Fall has not altered God's purposes for mankind. Though participation in the *missio Dei* now requires redemption as seen in Abraham's righteous faith (Gen 12:6; 15:6), the goal for the mission of God's people has not been altered.

The covenant that is made with Abram in Genesis 12:1-3 is the renewal of the original commission.³⁹ This is seen, in part, in the frequent reiteration of the theme of blessing.⁴⁰ In the original commission the Lord “blessed” (*barak*) Adam and Eve (Gen 1:28). In the initial promise that Yahweh makes with Abram, he uses the term “bless” five times. Flemming connects the use of “bless” in Genesis 12:1-3 to its origin in Genesis 1:28 and concludes that Israel's role as a vehicle of blessing points to a comprehensive understanding of mission.⁴¹ In the same way that the Lord intended to bless his original vice-regents and the earth through them, he now intends to bless Abram and his descendants (Gen 12:1-3, 22:16-18).

³⁹ G. K. Beale. *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004) 94-96.

⁴⁰ Frank E. Gæbelein, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 111.

⁴¹ Dean Flemming. *Recovering the Full Mission of God: A Biblical Perspective on Being, Doing and Telling*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013) 24-25.

In Genesis 1:28 the Lord commands Adam and Eve to be fruitful and fill the earth. As previously noted, this first aspect of the original commission demonstrates that Adam and Eve are participating with God in the creative process by filling the earth with additional image bearers. Through Adam and Eve, Yahweh intends to create a people who will participate in the *missio Dei* as his agents, or representatives, in the world.

Fruitfulness is equally prominent in the Abrahamic Covenant. God repeatedly promises Abraham that he will make him into a great nation and bless all the families of the earth through him (Gen 12:2-3, 13:16, 17:5-6, 22:17). In other words, Abraham and his offspring will be God's agents of blessing in the world. The blessing of the earth by the seed of righteous Abraham alludes to a renewed humanity bearing God's image and filling the earth with regenerated children who once again reflect God's image.⁴² Thus, the multiplication of image bearers in Genesis 1:28 will include "people who have left their old way of life and have become spiritually newborn and have come to reflect the image of God's glorious presence and participate in the expanding nature of the Genesis 1:26-28 commission."⁴³ The necessity of spiritual new birth is a post-Fall addition, bringing a spiritual dimension to the command to be physically fruitful and multiply. Nonetheless, the original commission remains the same for those who are part of the renewed humanity.

The opening of Exodus demonstrates the continued importance of fruitfulness. Pharaoh forced into slavery those who were representative of a new humanity, destined to restore the creation blessing to the world.⁴⁴ This turn of events should be directly seen as the outworking of

⁴² Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 53.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁴⁴ Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 94.

the ongoing battle between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.⁴⁵ In the midst of this assault on God's people, Yahweh works deliverance and once again commissions his people as priest-kings (Ex 19:5-6), serving as his agents in the world, to accomplish his creation purposes. Alexander notes, "Exodus begins with the enslavement of the Israelites to Pharaoh, it concludes with their becoming the priest-kings of the Lord."⁴⁶

Even in the midst of slavery and oppression, Exodus 1:12 reveals that the descendants of Abraham were very fruitful and began to fill the land of Egypt. This strongly echoes the creation language of Genesis 1 as well as the promise made to the patriarchs and communicates an advance of the commission from Genesis 1:28.⁴⁷ Yahweh is working among his people to bring about his creation purposes. His multiplication of the seed of Abraham, in the face of strong opposition, demonstrates that he will accomplish his original design for humanity, to fill the earth with image bearers, in spite of the Fall.

Likewise, this can be seen in the establishment of the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7:11-17). The promise to Abraham included the promise that kings would come from him (Gen 17:6,16). These kings would rule over the nation in the promised land as the instrument of God's blessing to the nations, linking the Davidic and Abrahamic Covenants.⁴⁸ Further illustrating this point, the Lord promises to make a great name for David (2 Sam 7:9) just as he promised Abraham (Gen

⁴⁵ Ibid., 94.

⁴⁶ Alexander, *From Eden to New Jerusalem*, 84.

⁴⁷ Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 93.

⁴⁸ Herbert W. Bateman IV, Darrell L. Bock, Gordon H. Johnston. *Jesus The Messiah: Tracing The Promises, Expectations, And Coming of Israel's King*. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2012), 38.

12:2).⁴⁹ Thus the hope of a king from the line of Judah (Gen 49:10) is realized initially through David's reign as king.

Yahweh promises to make David fruitful and build a house (dynasty) whereby his offspring will be adopted as sons and given an eternal kingdom (2 Sam 7:11b-16). David will be exceedingly fruitful and his offspring will always occupy the throne. With this promise a shift occurs in the way the Lord deals with Israel. The nation had been established as a royal priesthood, yet they rejected Yahweh as their king and thus their role as vice-regents (1 Sam 8:4-7, 19-22).⁵⁰ Now the Davidic king is to function as the *imago Dei* on behalf of the people. From Jerusalem, the temple-city where the presence of the Lord dwells, he will be Yahweh's agent of blessing to the nations.⁵¹

Subdue the Earth: Abraham, Israel, and David

The second aspect of the Genesis 1:28 commission is the priestly function. Adam and Eve are placed in a beautiful temple-garden and commanded to cultivate it (Gen 2:15). In this sense they serve as priests in the presence of God extending the temple of God to the ends of the earth. The first couple is to "spread God's luminescent presence by extending the boundaries of the original Edenic temple outward into the earth."⁵² Adam entered the presence of God and was given the responsibility to care for and protect God's sanctuary.

⁴⁹ Paul R. House. *Old Testament Theology*. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1998), 241.

⁵⁰ Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 137-138.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁵² Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 82.

In Genesis 12, Abram is promised that God will give him a land. This aspect of the promise is very significant. This land will be the place of God's temple where he once again dwells among his people just as in the garden with Adam and Eve. Paul R. House also connects this promise of a land with the original commission by stating, "Emphasizing the land here indicates that the earth, or land, may finally be inhabited by people willing to obey Genesis 1:26-31."⁵³

Abraham, as another Adam, will be given a land where he can serve God as a priest-king. As Abraham resides in the land, his functioning as a priest is clearly seen in that he often receives divine communication from God (Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1, 4-5, 7, 9, 13-16, 18-21; 17:1-22; 18:1-33; 21:1, 12, 15-18).⁵⁴ In addition, he functions in his priestly role by building altars and making offerings (Gen 12:7-8; 13:4, 18, 22:1-13).⁵⁵ These are correlations to the command given to Adam to cultivate the garden and extend the presence of God to the ends of the earth.

The priestly function is equally important in the life of Israel. In Exodus 15:17-18 the conclusion of the song of Moses reveals that the goal of the exodus event is Yahweh planting his people in the land of promise and the building of the Edenic sanctuary in order that the Lord can once again dwell with his people just as he dwelt with Adam and Eve.⁵⁶ This is an advancement of the original commission. As a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:5-6), Israel will dwell in the presence of God and will be responsible for extending his presence to the ends of the earth. This is seen initially in the building of the Tabernacle and ultimately the Temple.

⁵³ House, *Old Testament Theology*, 72.

⁵⁴ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 83.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁵⁶ Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 100.

David, as the King of Israel and God's vice-regent, also is to serve as a priest-king according to God's creation purposes. Psalm 110:4 refers to David as a priest forever, thus the Davidic kings held an ongoing role as the sacral leader and official patron of the temple of Yahweh.⁵⁷ David demonstrates his priestly role in bringing the ark of God to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6).⁵⁸ The ark was the footstool to Yahweh's throne (1 Chr 28:2; Ps. 99:5; 132:7), thus its location represented the place where the presence of the Lord dwelt on earth. David made sacrifices, built an altar (2 Sam 6:13, 24:18-25) and made the arrangements for the building of the Temple (1 Chr 22-29), all of which were in keeping with the administrative role in which Near Eastern kings functioned in the sacral systems.⁵⁹

Have Dominion: Abraham, Israel, and David

The third aspect of the Genesis 1:28 commission is the royal function. Adam and Eve are commissioned as vice-regents and delegated the responsibility to mediate God's rule, in a way that reflects God's character, over all the earth.⁶⁰ They were to fulfill the royal aspect of the original commission by manifesting the sovereign reign of Yahweh over every aspect of life on earth. To use New Testament language, they were to obey all that God commanded (Matt 28:20) and to ensure that the world around them reflected this obedience. They would accomplish this practically by fruitful multiplication of image bearers, cultivating the temple-garden, having

⁵⁷ Bateman IV, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 65.

⁵⁸ Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 71-72.

⁵⁹ Bateman IV, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 97-98.

⁶⁰ Christopher J. H. Wright. *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 426.

dominion over the animals including naming them, and not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Though Abraham is never referred to as a king, the scripture reveals that he functions as one. He exercises dominion over the kings of the nations. In Genesis 14 he defeats the kings of the nations (vs. 13-16). This military victory with only 318 men reveals supernatural help and thus a superior kingship.⁶¹ Furthermore, when the covenant is reiterated to Abraham in Genesis 22:17-18 the Lord states that his offspring will “possess the gate of their enemies” (ESV), which is an application of the ruling over the earth language from Genesis 1:28.⁶² This ruling aspect of the original commission is further clarified through the references to kings coming from Abraham (Gen 17:6) and Jacob (Gen 35:11; 49:9-10).⁶³

Through Abraham, the scripture reveals that the commission given to humanity before the Fall is still the end to which the Lord is working. The covenant with Abraham is not a new plan, but rather the process in which the Lord intended to ultimately bring about the completion of his original intent for creation as seen in Genesis 1:26-28. The Lord continues his original purpose for creation and humanity through Abraham.⁶⁴ Fruitful Abraham and his many descendants are to fill the earth and participate with God in the *missio Dei* as Yahweh’s agents in the world, bringing about the creation blessing upon the earth.

At Mt. Sinai the nation of Israel is commissioned to be Yahweh’s kingdom of priests (Ex 19:5-6). This commission means that they are to function as “a body of priests ruling as kings...

⁶¹ Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 79.

⁶² Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 463.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁶⁴ Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 79.

they are to fulfill the role that God originally allocated through Adam and Eve to all human beings.”⁶⁵ Israel is to participate with God, in the *missio Dei*, as his agents in the world. They are to manifest his sovereign reign over all the earth according to the original commission.

In light of this, Israel will be a holy nation (Ex 19:6), “a nation set apart by its holiness or its service to God.”⁶⁶ They will magnify the Lord and His righteous reign to the nations and serve the nations on behalf of God. In so doing, they will redefine the meaning of dominion as service to God and man and reclaim the lost dominion of humanity.⁶⁷ By their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, Israel will be a kingdom of priests who manifest God’s rule to the world.⁶⁸ For example, their obedience to the commands in the law to love one’s neighbor and care for the poor, orphans, widows, and foreigners in the land would be a manifestation of Yahweh’s divine rule (Lev 19:9-18, Deut 15:4-11). This is an advancement of the plan of redemption toward the ultimate fulfillment of the promise that Abraham would be a blessing to the nations (Gen 12:2-3) and the Genesis 1:28 commission.

The Davidic kings were to enjoy a father/son relationship with God (2 Sam 7:14) as part of Yahweh’s covenant with them. In the ancient Near East, kings were considered to be the image of god because, as sons of god, they possessed the god’s characteristics and therefore represented him/her on earth.⁶⁹ The designation as “son” was originally given to the nation of Israel (Ex 4:22-23), and they were commissioned to serve as Yahweh’s image bearers (Ex 19:4-

⁶⁵ Alexander, *From Eden to New Jerusalem*, 84.

⁶⁶ Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 101.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 101-102.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁶⁹ Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum. *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 396.

6), mediating his reign on earth and extending his presence over the entire earth. When Israel rejected this role, it was given to David and his house.

As God's son, the Davidic king was inheriting the role of Adam and Israel as Yahweh's functional image bearer or priest-king. The king would be responsible to demonstrate to the nations how to have a right relationship with God, how to treat one another in a truly human way or justly, and how to care for the earth. As the representative of Yahweh on earth, the rule of the Davidic king would have global repercussions, just as God intended for humanity in his original commission (Gen 1:26-28).⁷⁰ The covenant with David becomes the key to Israel's national redemption, as well as the world's, and therefore is a further development of the Abrahamic Covenant.⁷¹ David and his descendants become the means through which the Lord will fulfill his covenant promises to Abraham and thus his creation purposes for Adam and all of mankind to participate with God in the *missio Dei*.

Each new Adamic figure in the Old Testament failed to bring about the eschatological hope. They all began with promise but ultimately failed. Though they all succumbed to sin like Adam before them, they each advanced the plan of redemption toward the fulfillment of the creation purposes of Yahweh.

As Genesis comes to a close, the original commission appears in jeopardy. Abraham's descendants are no longer in the land of promise, and the opening chapter of Exodus reveals that God's people are in bondage in Egypt. Those whom Yahweh intends to participate with him as vice-regents mediating his reign over the earth have left the land of promise and become enslaved to Pharaoh. The future of the Genesis 1:28 commission is in question, but a glimmer of

⁷⁰ Ibid., 398-400.

⁷¹ Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 143.

hope rests in a promise regarding a future king (Gen 49:9-12). In this passage, verse 10 explains that Judah will serve as a mighty warrior as well as a powerful king who rules over the nation.⁷² Thus the hope of the creation blessing of the original commission lives on.

Like Abraham, the nation of Israel also fails to bring about the eschatological hope. They reject Yahweh's commission given to them in Exodus 19:5-6. As a result of their rejection, Israel did not become a nation of priests, but rather a nation that had a king and had priests.⁷³ According to House, "This is a direct repudiation of their calling as a nation of priests set apart as holy to Yahweh (Exodus 19:5-6)."⁷⁴ In light of this open rebellion, the status of the Abrahamic Covenant, and thus the creation purposes of God, is once again in trouble. The people whom God delivered from Egypt, that they might fulfill the covenant with Abraham by serving as a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:4-6), have rejected God's rule and their role as participants in the outworking of the *missio Dei* in the world.

Though the creation purposes of God are again advanced through the Davidic Covenant, 2 Samuel closes with a mixed portrait of David. He is the man after God's heart who illustrates the type of kingship Yahweh desires. Even in his sinfulness he displays humility and a dependence on Yahweh who remains faithful to the covenant and delivers David and the nation (2 Sam 24:17). Like the other Adamic figures before him, through disobedience, David fails to bring about the eschatological blessing. However, the covenant remains in effect and the nation

⁷² Bateman IV, Bock and Johnston, *Jesus The Messiah*, 45.

⁷³ Samuel Kimberly, "The Community of Mission: The Church," in *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, The Church, and The Nations*, ed. Bruce Riley Ashford (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011), 67.

⁷⁴ House, *Old Testament Theology*, 233.

looks forward with the hope that one of his descendants will finally accomplish Yahweh's original commission.⁷⁵

The creation of Adam and Eve as the *imago Dei* reveals God's desire that mankind would participate with him in the *missio Dei*. The primal couple were blessed and commanded to be fruitful and multiply, filling the earth with priest-kings. In this role humanity is to manifest and extend the dominion of Yahweh, as well as his presence, over the entire earth. This cursory review of the functional image of God in the Old Testament reveals that, in spite of the Fall of man, the original commission given in Genesis 1:26-28 has not changed.

From Adam and Eve through the Davidic dynasty, Yahweh has desired that his people participate with him in the *missio Dei* to establish his sovereign rule and manifest his presence over all the earth. In light of this participation with God in the *missio Dei*, the mission of God's people must be understood as comprehensive in nature. Furthermore, the continuity seen throughout the Old Testament regarding God's creation purposes for mankind demonstrates that the Fall did not eradicate the Lord's original commission for humanity. The next chapter will serve to further establish these conclusions by examining the functional image of God in regard to Jesus and the Church.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 147.

Chapter Two

The Functional Image of God in the New Testament

The previous chapter explained the functional understanding of the *imago Dei* as pertaining to mankind's role as priest-kings participating with God in his rule of creation. Yahweh's creation purposes, or mission, for mankind involved filling the earth with image bearers who would manifest his sovereign reign over the earth and extend his presence to the ends of the earth. This understanding of the *imago Dei* illustrates the comprehensive nature of the original commission given to Adam and Eve (Gen 1:26-28, 2:15).

Though the sin of mankind impacted God's creation purposes, Yahweh did not abandon his original commission, but chose to accomplish it in spite of the Fall. The continuity demonstrated by Noah, Abraham, Israel, and David continuing to function as God's priest-kings, or image bearers, serves to illustrate this point clearly. They demonstrate that throughout the Old Testament the Lord continued to work through his people, who participated in the *missio Dei*, as his agents in the world. In each case the goal was the eschatological hope of a renewed heaven and earth; however, they all failed to ultimately accomplish this.

This chapter will examine the functional understanding of the *imago Dei* in light of the ministry of Christ as well as the church. It will be demonstrated that as the Davidic King, Jesus, functions as the true *imago Dei* on behalf of humanity and inaugurates the kingdom of God by taking back the dominion that Adam surrendered to Satan. Through his resurrection, new creation breaks into history and will be consummated in the new heavens and earth. The Lord commissions his Church, those who are being conformed to his image, to function as priest-kings

and participate with him in this process just as the Father originally intended. Thus this chapter will make it clear that the mission of the Church is comprehensive in nature, as she is called to participate in the *missio Dei*, mediating Christ's reign as his agents of transformation in the world and extending his presence to the ends of the earth.

Jesus as the Image of God

The prophet Daniel foretells the ultimate establishment of human vice-regency (Dan 7:13-14). The Son of man in this passage is a representative of humankind who is given dominion over the entire earth forever.¹ As Miller notes, the son of man title highlights the humanity of Christ and the authority he is given in Daniel 7:13-14 is not his inherent sovereignty but rather his physical rule over a real kingdom on earth.² As the ultimate human king who exercises complete dominion over the earth, the son of man in Daniel 7 should be understood as the eschatological king who will finally fulfill the mandate given to Adam to function as the image of God.

Genesis 1:26-28 explains that mankind is created to have dominion over the earth, and in Psalm 8:4-8, the psalmist, establishes that this human viceregency is still Yahweh's desire for humanity. In reference to this passage, Hebrews 2:5-9, like Daniel 7:13-14, presents the restoration of humanity's viceregency as a key theme of God's eschatological plan. Jesus as the last Adam is representative of all humanity and thus man's viceregency is restored in him.³ This

¹ McCartney, *Ecce Homo*, 5.

² Stephen R. Miller. *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, vol 18. (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1994) 210.

³ McCartney, *Ecce Homo*, 6.

restoration of man as viceregent, or priest-king, is the foundation of the arrival of the kingdom of God that Jesus proclaims.⁴

This context is extremely important in light of the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary in Luke 1. Mary is promised that she will bear a child who will be the Son of the Most High and will sit on the throne of David where he will rule forever (Lk 1:31-33). This passage connects the Davidic Covenant with Daniel 7:13-14, where the son of man receives an eternal kingdom from the Ancient of Days, and reveals Jesus to be the great hope for Israel. He is the Messiah, the eschatological Davidic king who will finally bring about the creation blessing by establishing the reign of God over all the earth. That Mary understands the birth of Jesus this way is evidenced by her song of praise (Lk 1:46-55).

In the previous chapter of this thesis, a connection was made between the Davidic king as the son of God and Genesis 1:26-28. As the son of God, the Davidic king was considered to be the functional image of God, that is, he was to be a priest-king who was responsible to extend the presence of God over the earth and mediate the reign of God. This fits within the expectations of Second Temple Jews, whom N.T. Wright notes, were looking for the Messiah to do two main things – restore the Temple and fight a decisive battle against the enemy.⁵ Like David, who made provision for the Temple and defeated God’s enemies, he was to be a priest-king.

The baptism of Jesus further supports this reality. Having been baptized by John, the Spirit of God descends on Jesus and the Father announces that Jesus is his “beloved Son” (Matt 3:16-17). Yahweh uses language resembling Psalm 2:7, which further connects the idea of Jesus as the son of God with the Davidic Covenant, in which the king was adopted as God’s son (2

⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁵ N. T. Wright. *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1999) 75-76.

Sam 7:14). More than an acknowledgement of the deity of Christ, the title “son of God” speaks to His role as the Davidic king, the Messiah: God’s vice-regent.⁶

After the account of Jesus’ baptism, Luke immediately gives the genealogy of Jesus tracing it all the way back to Adam, “the son of God.” Luke is seeking to identify Jesus as the eschatological Adam, the true Son of God.⁷ Thus, from the very beginning of Luke’s gospel account the ministry of Jesus is connected to the Genesis 1:26-28 commission and his role as the functional *imago Dei*. In light of this, it is necessary to examine how Jesus, like the previous Adamic figures, functions as a priest-king.

The discussion regarding the Davidic Covenant in the previous chapter described how David was a priest forever (Ps 110:4). As a result the Davidic king functioned as a priest-king. Not coincidentally the writer of Hebrews likewise references Psalm 110 as well as Psalm 2:7 to demonstrate that Jesus is also a priest-king (Heb 5:5-6; 7:17; 8:1; 10:12-14). These passages demonstrate that Jesus was “divinely put in charge to rule as king as well as to serve as high priest”.⁸

It will be helpful to review two areas in which Jesus functioned in the priestly role according to the Genesis 1:26-28 mandate. The first area was in manifesting the presence of God. As seen in the previous chapter, Yahweh desired, from the beginning, to dwell among his people. Adam was tasked with the role of extending the borders of the temple garden and filling the earth with the Lord’s presence. Though Adam sinned and ultimately failed, Yahweh continued to work through human vice-regents to achieve this end. After Sinai, he tabernacled

⁶ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 92.

⁷ Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 418.

⁸ Bateman IV, Bock, and Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 349.

with his people, Israel, and ultimately dwelt among them in the Temple. Therefore, the Temple was the central incarnational symbol of Judaism.⁹

John explains the incarnation of Christ as God becoming flesh and dwelling physically among his people (Jn 1:14; 2:19-22). Through Jesus, Israel's God was present with his people.¹⁰ In light of this, Beale understands the life and especially the resurrection of Christ as the presence of God breaking out of the Holy of Holies to fill the entire new creation as his cosmic temple. He further states, Christ is "God's tabernacling presence of the new creation which is to expand further until it is completed at the very end of the age in the whole cosmos becoming the temple of God's consummate presence."¹¹ As the final Adam, Christ is accomplishing Yahweh's original intent of extending his presence to the ends of the earth.

The presence of God no longer dwells in a fixed geographical area, but Jesus is building a spiritual temple that will extend his presence to the ends of the earth (1 Peter 2:5), as Yahweh intended in the original commission. He is accomplishing this by restoring fellowship between God and mankind and renewing the *imago Dei* in a new humanity. The restoration of fellowship is a second area in which Jesus functioned in a priestly role.

The role of the high priest was to mediate between God and man on behalf of the people by offering sacrifices for sin (Heb 5:1). As noted above, both Christ and David were appointed as priest-kings like Melchizedek (Ps 110:4, Heb 5:5-6). In this role, David interceded with Yahweh on behalf of the people and made sacrifice for sin (2 Sam 24:17, 24-25). The writer of Hebrews explains that Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice for sin (Heb 7:27; 9:12,26; 10:14) and, as a

⁹ Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus*, 110.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹¹ Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 632-633.

priest forever, he lives to intercede with the Father on behalf of those whom he has completely saved through his sacrifice (Heb 7:24-25, 9:24).

This important section regarding Jesus as High Priest is grounded in God's original commission given to Adam at creation. The writer of Hebrews ties the priesthood of Jesus to sonship (Heb 7:28) and points to his rule as king seated at the right hand of God (Heb 8:1). This demonstrates that Christ is the final Adam (Heb 2) who functions as *imago Dei* and inaugurates a new world.¹² In light of the references to Christ as a priest-king (Heb 5:5-6; 7:28-8:1; 10:13), it will be helpful to examine the royal aspect of his ministry.

In the Genesis 1:26-28 commission, Yahweh commanded Adam and Eve to exercise dominion, or to mediate his reign on earth. In this way, humanity was to participate with God in the *missio Dei* as his vice-regents or priest kings. The previous chapter of this thesis demonstrated the continuation of this after the Fall and throughout all of Yahweh's working with his people. In the Old Testament this culminated in the Davidic Covenant in which the king would become the son of God and be his representative on earth. The Lord would accomplish his eschatological plan through a Davidic priest-king.

As mentioned above, the theme of sonship and Davidic kingship is integral to understanding the context of the life and ministry of Christ. Like David, the Messiah is God's representative on earth. As such, he is entitled to the dominion that was given originally to Adam. However, as mentioned in the earlier chapter, Adam surrendered human dominion to Satan.

This is evident when Satan tells Jesus in the wilderness that all authority over the kingdoms of the world had been given to him and he offers to give it to Jesus (Lk 4:5-7). This

¹² Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 298-301.

event, prior to the public ministry of Christ, is crucial to a right understanding of his role as the final Adam. As previously noted, Hebrews 2:5-9 and Daniel 7:13-14 demonstrate that the reestablishment of human vice-regency is a key theme in God's eschatological plan. Jesus rejects Satan's attempt to short circuit this plan and sets out to take back the dominion that Adam surrendered in the garden. The earthly ministry of Jesus should be understood in this light.

Dan McCartney notes several ways that the teaching and actions of Jesus demonstrate the coming of the reign of God, or the reinstatement of human sovereignty by Jesus. Jesus proclaims the arrival of the kingdom (reign of God) as seen in His first sermon in Luke (Lk 4:18-19). He heals diseases (Lk 9:2) which are a result of sin and thus a corruption of the created order. Jesus displays power over nature (Lk 8:22-25) which demonstrates his Adamic authority over creation.¹³ This display of power demonstrates that the curses of the Fall were being overturned and Jesus was reestablishing the new creation and kingdom that Adam should have established.¹⁴

In connection to his demonstration of dominion over nature and disease, Jesus demonstrated human vice-regency by defeating God's enemies. When confronted about his work of casting out demons, Jesus explained that it should be seen as the coming of the kingdom of God (Matt 12:22-32). This is none other than the seed of the woman crushing the head of the seed of the serpent. McCartney sees Jesus exercising Spirit-empowered authority over demons and the in-breaking of the kingdom of God representing the restoration of the proper vice-regency of man under God.¹⁵

The authority Jesus demonstrates throughout his ministry should be understood as that of a priest-king, the Messiah, functioning according to Yahweh's original commission. Jesus is the

¹³ McCartney, *Ecce Homo*, 7-8.

¹⁴ Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 423.

¹⁵ McCartney, *Ecce Homo*, 7-8.

son of man from Daniel 7:13-14, the Davidic King, who is being given everlasting dominion. However, in a final attempt to defeat him, the strong man enters Judas (Lk 22:3-6), and he betrays Jesus. The Lord is arrested and executed, and it seems as though yet another Adamic figure has failed to bring about the eschatological hope of fulfilling the Genesis 1:26-28 commission.

Rather than thwarting God's plan these events lead to the inauguration of the new creation in the resurrection of Christ. In John's Gospel, Jesus describes himself as the resurrection and the life (Jn 11:25-26). The belief in the ultimate resurrection of mankind was common among the people of Israel (Dan 12:1-2) as is evidenced by Martha's response to Jesus' claim that Lazarus would rise again (Jn 11:24). In claiming himself to be the resurrection and the life Jesus is indicating that with his ministry the end times resurrection and thus new creation was beginning.¹⁶

The kingdom of God that Jesus was bringing is synonymous with new creation (Is 43:18-19, 65:17-25; 2 Cor 5:17). In the resurrection of Christ, Yahweh was overcoming the Fall with its resulting curse and was fulfilling the promise that a Davidic king would reign forever.¹⁷ The resurrected Christ has been given all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt 28:18). This is an allusion to Daniel 7:13-14 and demonstrates that Jesus, the Son of Man, has been given the promised everlasting kingdom.¹⁸ As the image of God and firstborn of creation (Col 1:15) he is the Davidic king, God's vice-regent, who fulfills the creation purposes for mankind.

Post-resurrection, Jesus gives the Great Commission requiring his followers to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19-20). This also alludes to Daniel 7 where it states that all

¹⁶ Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 235.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 238-239.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 423.

peoples, nations, and languages, would serve the Son of man (Dan 7:14). The connection between these two passages, along with their similarities with God's reiteration of the Genesis 1:28 commission throughout scripture clearly demonstrate that this commission given by Jesus is a renewal of the Genesis 1:26-28 commission given to Adam.¹⁹ Jesus commissions new humanity to finally accomplish the Lord's creation purposes by participating with Jesus in his mission.

The Church as the Image of God

The Church, or new humanity, is being renewed in the *imago Dei* (Col 3:10; Rom 8:29). Grenz believes the New Testament theme of a new humanity formed in the image of Christ comprises the final fulfillment of God's intent for humankind seen in Genesis 1:26-28. In light of this, he understands from Romans 8:29 that God desires for the new humanity to participate in Christ's destiny.²⁰ Thus the mission of the Church is the restoration of the creation design of God that mankind would participate with God in the *missio Dei* by creating image bearers, extending God's presence to the ends of the earth, and mediating his reign over all the earth.

This is affirmed by Hood when he states that the goal of sanctification is the renewal of the *imago Dei* where believers begin to become a new humanity with a Christ-like version of the original *imago Dei*.²¹ Likewise McCartney states, "if Christ's inauguration of the kingdom is the restoration of human vicegerency, then the participation in the kingdom by believers is also a

¹⁹ Ibid., 390, 423.

²⁰ Stanley Grenz. "Jesus as the Imago Dei: Image-of-God Christology and The Non-Linear Linearity of Theology." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/47/47-4/47-4-pp617-628_JETS.pdf (accessed October 5, 2013), 622.

²¹ Jason B. Hood. *Imitating God in Christ: Recapturing a Biblical Pattern*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013) 104.

restoration of their viceregency.”²² Of course, humanity must identify with Christ in order to have the image of God renewed in them.²³ Jesus clearly taught that no one could enter or even see the kingdom of God apart from being born again (Jn 3:3,5). Therefore, the fruitful multiplication and filling of the earth with image bearers (priest-kings) from Genesis 1:28 now requires a spiritual dimension.

The renewal of the creation purposes of God for those who are in Christ can be further supported by reviewing the outworking of the priestly and royal roles of the *imago Dei* within the Church. Peter refers to the Church as a royal priesthood and holy nation (1 Peter 2:9), which is a direct connection to Exodus 19:6 and should be understood as applying the Genesis 1:26-28 commission to the Church. Likewise, John refers to believers as priest-kings who will reign on the earth (Rev 1:6, 5:10). Alexander rightly sees these verses as pointing to the reality that Christ’s disciples participate in the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth as they live in obedience to him.²⁴

The Church fulfills its priestly role by extending the presence and blessing of God to the ends of the earth as Adam was commissioned to do. The concept of extending the presence of God can be easily seen in the way biblical authors describe the church. Peter describes the church as living stones being built into a temple in order that the Church might serve as a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5,9). This demonstrates that, because of her union with Christ, the Church has replaced the Temple as the place where God’s presence dwells on earth and that the growth

²² McCartney, *Ecce Homo*, 14.

²³ Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 386.

²⁴ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 96-97.

of the Church is the extension of God's presence throughout the earth.²⁵ Paul likewise affirms the Church is the new temple where God's presence once again dwells on the earth (1 Cor 3:16, 6:19; Eph 2:19-22).

Part of Yahweh's creation purposes for Adam is that he would fill the earth with image bearers who would extend the temple-garden and thus the presence of God to the ends of the earth. In union with Christ, believers are being renewed in the image of God and are now responsible to function as priests who extend the temple, the Church, and the presence of God to fill the earth. As the Church evangelizes and baptizes the nations (Matt 28:19) into union with Christ, they are fulfilling the creation mandate to fruitfully fill the earth with the *imago Dei* and thus God's presence.²⁶

The Church fulfills the royal nature of its priesthood by mediating God's reign over the earth. It has already been established that sonship is synonymous with kingship in scripture. This is significant because Paul understands the Church as becoming the sons of God through adoption (Rom 8:15-17; Gal 4:4-7; Eph 1:5,11) for the purpose of inheriting the kingdom of God (Rom 8:17; 1 Cor 6:9; Gal 4:7, 5:21) and thus ruling with Christ (Eph 2:6; 2 Tim 2:12; Rev 5:10).²⁷

This ruling with Christ is demonstrated in the gospel accounts. Jesus commissioned the twelve (Lk 9:1-6) and the seventy two (Lk 10:1-12) and gave them authority over demons and disease (Lk 9:1-2; 10:9,17) and creation (Lk 10:19). They were sent out as representatives of Jesus commissioned to do what Jesus was doing.²⁸ Therefore, the sending of the twelve and the

²⁵ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 332.

²⁶ Hood, *Imitating God in Christ*, 138-141.

²⁷ McCartney, *Ecce Homo*, 15-16.

seventy two should be seen as an integral part of Jesus' own mission.²⁹ This is further demonstrated by Jesus' statement that the rejection of those he sent is equivalent to the rejection of both him and the Father (Lk 10:16).

These texts support the view that the mission of Jesus' followers is an extension of his own mission to mediate the reign of God over the earth. The Church will fulfill the royal aspect of its mission by making disciples who obey all that Jesus taught (Matt 28:19-20). Under the authority of the Davidic king, the Church is to make disciples of the nations. This should be understood as extending the rule and reign of Jesus to the ends of the earth, just as God intended when he made mankind in the *imago Dei*.

As demonstrated above, the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) should be seen as the renewal of the original commission from Genesis 1:26-28 given to the new humanity that is being renewed in the image of God. From the beginning, Yahweh intended for humanity to participate in the *missio Dei* to establish his presence and dominion over the earth. Jesus accomplished the mission that Adam, Israel, and humanity failed to accomplish, but the work of fulfillment is not complete. Therefore, Jesus is gathering a people to himself, and by the power of the Spirit he will fulfill the task God gave humanity through them as his agents in the world.³⁰

N.T. Wright calls this process building for the kingdom. He stresses that God alone builds his kingdom; fulfills the original commission. However, Yahweh always intended to work through humanity and through the work of Jesus and by the power of the Spirit, he now equips

²⁸ G. K. Beale, D. A. Carson. Eds. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007) 309.

²⁹ Andreas J. Kostenberger and Peter T. O'Brien. *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001) 119.

³⁰ Hood, *Imitating God in Christ*, 138.

humans to participate in the process of restoration.³¹ As the Church builds for the kingdom she is participating in the *missio Dei* as God's agents in the world.

Revelation 21 reveals that Jesus ultimately fulfills the *missio Dei* by accomplishing the creation purposes of God. The chapter depicts a restored creation where the Lord once again dwells with his people and his reign is manifest over all the earth. As Alcorn notes, the return of Christ will be for the purpose to restore everything so that the perfection of creation that was lost will be fully regained.³² It would be foolish to believe that the Church could, in its own strength, bring about this restoration, but the scriptures demonstrate that the Spirit empowered Church, under the authority of the risen Jesus, participates with God in anticipation of the return of Christ and the final consummation.

³¹ N.T. Wright. *Surprised By Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*. (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2008) 207-208.

³² Randy Alcorn. *Heaven*. (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers Inc., 2004) 153-154.

Chapter Three

Missiological Implications of the Functional Image of God

It has been argued in this thesis that God created mankind in the *imago Dei* in order that humanity would participate with God, as his agents in the world, to bring creation to his intended purposes, namely to fill the earth with image bearers who would extend his presence to the ends of the earth and manifest his reign over all the earth. It has been demonstrated that this original commission found in Genesis 1:26-28 is reiterated throughout scripture. In all of Yahweh's dealings with his people, even after the Fall, his creation purposes have remained the same.

In light of this, any definition of the church's mission must reflect the continuity of God's plan for humanity and creation that has been established. For this reason, the best definition of mission will be faithful to the Lord's creation purposes and be presented in a way that is in keeping with the reiteration Jesus gave to his disciples (Matt 28:18-20). Thus a good working definition for mission is the Church, through participation with Christ, is called to be fruitful and fill the earth with Spirit empowered image bearers (disciples) who, as the new temple of God, are extending the presence of God to the ends of the earth and expanding the rule and reign of Christ over all the earth by obeying all that he commanded.

Having established a working definition of mission, the remainder of this chapter will focus on three specific missiological implications. First, the continuity between the Genesis 1:26-28 commission of humanity and Yahweh's post-Fall dealings with his people reveals that his original creation purposes for mankind are still in effect and must be central in missiology. Second, the nature of the original commission is comprehensive, involving every area of life, and

thus requires a comprehensive missiology. Third, the Lord desires that his people will participate with him in the *missio Dei* to progressively accomplish his creation purposes.

The Continuity of God's Creational Purposes

The continuity between the creational purposes of God found in the Genesis 1:26-28 commission of humanity and his post-Fall dealings with his people has been painstakingly established in the preceding two chapters. A few comments will serve to solidify this point before moving on to the next missiological implication. The post-Fall portion of the biblical story deals specifically with Yahweh's redemptive purposes, or how Yahweh will accomplish his creation purposes, in spite of the Fall, through Noah, the Patriarchs, Israel, David, and ultimately through Jesus.¹ As Beale notes, "We can speak of Genesis 1:28 as the first 'Great Commission' that was repeatedly applied to humanity."²

Glasser likewise describes the significance of the ongoing impact of the Genesis 1:28 commission upon the mission of the Church. He notes that the presence of the serpent in Genesis 3 indicates that the powers opposed to God have sought since creation to usurp God's rule over the earth. In light of this conflict, Yahweh's creation purpose for humanity was to call forth a people who would participate with him in reclaiming, or mediating, his sovereign reign over the earth. Glasser distinguishes between the creation purposes of God and the post-Fall redemptive purposes of God; however, he states, "When Jesus inaugurates the Kingdom of God these two mandates fuse into one fundamental task."³

¹ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 188-192.

² Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 117.

³ Arthur F. Glasser, Charles E. Van Engen, Dean S. Gilliland, and Shawn B. Redford. *Announcing the*

The participation of human priest-kings with God in extending his presence and mediating his reign over the earth is the kingdom of God.⁴ McCartney explains that the proper created order of God's sovereign rule, or kingdom, is with man as vice-regent.⁵ In light of this understanding of human vice-regency, it should be understood that Jesus, the Davidic king, inaugurated the kingdom of God and, according to Glasser, this inauguration involves the merging of the redemptive and creative purposes of God into a single mission. Jesus is restoring the *imago Dei* in fallen humanity (Col 3:10) so that redeemed people can participate with Christ in his mission to extend the presence and mediate the reign of God over all the earth.

At this point, it should be clear that Yahweh created mankind to participate in the *missio Dei*, as his agents in the world, to fill the earth with image bearers who would extend his presence and mediate his reign over the earth. He worked through numerous Adamic figures, advancing his creative purposes, until at last a Davidic king arrived who accomplished what all the others failed to do. Through defeating Satan, Jesus has taken back Adamic authority and inaugurated the kingdom of God by restoring proper vice-regency. In Christ, the functional image of God is being renewed in the Church, who is empowered by the Holy Spirit to participate with Christ in accomplishing the mission that the first Adam failed to realize.

The mission of the Church cannot be fully grasped apart from this context. There is no question that the new heavens and earth (Rev 21) are the culmination of the realization of the *missio Dei*; Yahweh's creative and redemptive purposes. Since the biblical narrative ends with the ultimate fulfillment of God's creation purposes, then the continuity of the Genesis 1:28

Kingdom : The Story of God's Mission in the Bible. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003) 38-39.

⁴ Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 62.

⁵ McCartney, *Ecce Homo*, 11.

commission throughout scripture demands that these purposes for humanity must be central in missiology.

Therefore, it should be understood that the mission of the Church is to participate with Christ in the *missio Dei* as his agents in the world. The centrality of this theological truth prevents the mission of the Church from being reduced to an either/or proposition. As participants in the *missio Dei*, followers of Christ are called to extend the presence of God by expanding his temple through evangelism. They are likewise called to extend the manifest reign of God by living as a new humanity that fully obeys the Lord and thus brings aspects of the fallen world under his dominion. In a practical sense this involves any endeavor that seeks to join Christ in his mission to see the kingdom of God come and the Father's will be done, whether in the hearts of mankind or in the physical world.

The Impact of God's Creational Purposes on Mission

The next missiological implication of the functional understanding of the *imago Dei* upon the mission of the Church involves the comprehensiveness of the original commission. This is perhaps the most difficult area to develop specifically from the functional perspective because the functional understanding of the image of God is not frequently developed by missiologists. More often the theme of the kingdom of God is the focus of missiological reflection.

The preceding discussion has demonstrated that the kingdom, or reign, of God should be understood as God reigning through his agents in the world and specifically through Christ. In light of this reality, much of the missiological reflection regarding the kingdom of God is relevant to the application of the functional understanding of the *imago Dei* on the mission of the Church. Considering a portion of the rich body of work missiologists have compiled regarding

the kingdom of God may help to bridge the gap between biblical theology and missiology that was discussed in the introduction.

The original commission given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28 and reiterated throughout the scripture, culminating with Jesus' commissioning of his disciples, involves every area of life and thus requires a comprehensive missiology. Fernando states that a proper understanding of mission includes involvement in the world where Christians seek to uphold kingdom values so that various structures of society are brought into conformity with God's will.⁶ This is but one example of how a kingdom understanding of mission fits perfectly within the argument of this thesis. Restored human vice-regency is partially expressed when the Church, under the authority of Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, participates in Christ's mission by mediating his authority over the earth. By making disciples who obey all that Christ commanded, the Church is to bring aspects of the fallen world under the manifest reign of Christ.

To further develop the comprehensive implications of the functional understanding of the *imago Dei*, it will be helpful to flesh out the working definition of mission mentioned above. Before delving into the three aspects of this definition of mission, it is necessary to establish the reality, from the perspective of missiologists, that the Church is indeed participating with Christ in his mission. It has been well documented that from the beginning Yahweh desired that humanity would participate with him as his agents in the world. Likewise, Jesus has commissioned his Church to participate with him in the fulfillment of the *missio Dei* (Jn 17:18; 20:21).

⁶ Ajith Fernando, "God: The Source, The Originator, and the End of Mission," in *Global Missiology for the 21st Century*, ed. William Taylor (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000), 198.

This truth has been attested to by many missiologists. “The mission of the church is an extension of the mission of Jesus.”⁷ Regarding the disciples, Newbigin explains they were sent into the world as the continuance of Jesus’ mission. He refers to them as partners in the mission of Jesus.⁸ N.T. Wright argues extensively that, as part of its mission, the Church participates with Christ as “agents of transformation.”⁹ Finally, Lewis definitively states, “The final stage of God’s mission is accomplished through the body of Christ, the church, which has been sent into the world. The church is the extension of the mission of God through Jesus Christ for the church is to be the living manifestation of Christ’s rule on earth.”¹⁰

Having established, from the perspective of several missiologists that the Church participates in the continued mission of Christ, a discussion regarding fruitfulness, extending God’s presence, and expanding God’s reign is in order. These areas were developed in chapter two, but here a few additional comments regarding the necessity of a comprehensive missiology will be beneficial. Often proponents of comprehensive mission are accused of minimizing the importance of evangelism, however the emphasis on fruitfulness and filling the earth with disciples necessarily requires multiplication and should immediately diffuse these accusations. It is impossible to fill the earth with disciples apart from the proclamation of the Gospel and a call to repentance of sin and faith in Christ.

⁷ C. René Padilla. *Mission Between the Times: Essays in the Kingdom*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985) 192.

⁸ Leslie Newbigin. *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995) 45-49.

⁹ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 197-205.

¹⁰ Jeff Lewis, “God’s Great Commissions for the Nations,” in *Discovering the Mission of God: Best Missional Practices for the 21st Century*, ed. Mike Barnett (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 101-102.

Adam and each of the latter Adamic figures were commissioned by Yahweh to serve as a priest-king. It has already been established that the priestly role ascribed to them involved filling the earth with the presence of God and mediating with God on behalf of the nations. Jesus himself is the new temple and, in Christ, the Church is being built up into the temple of God (1 Cor 3:10-16; Eph 2:20-22; 1 Peter 2:5). As the place where the presence of God dwells on earth, the expansion of the Church is synonymous with extending God presence to the ends of the earth.

This is how Jesus' command to go to the nations and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19) should be understood. By converting the nations and baptizing them in identification with Christ and his kingdom, the Church is extending the manifest presence of God to the ends of the earth. Beale affirms this understanding stating the Church is now the end-time temple which manifests the presence of God to the world and is to be involved in expanding the temple in anticipation of the return of Christ. This is accomplished when believers live for Christ, spread his word, and when unbelievers accept it.¹¹ Again, the emphasis on the priestly role of extending the presence of God by bringing the unregenerate into the Church via conversion should decisively quiet all accusations of minimizing the importance of proclamation in mission.

In addition to the priestly function, the original commission established a royal function for the people of God. The royal aspect of the commission includes the function of expanding the reign of God over all the earth. This is what Christ meant when he commissioned his followers to make disciples who obey all that he commands (Matt 28:20). As Newbigin notes, the Church is

¹¹ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 395-397.

the community where the reign of Christ is present in the life of the world.¹² Christ rules in the life of the world through his rule in the Church.¹³ Thus, when the church lives and brings aspects of the fallen world under the rule of Christ so that his reign is manifest in the world, she is fulfilling the royal function of her mission.

The Church is the eschatological and historical manifestation of the kingdom.¹⁴ She is called to manifest the reign of God in the world through what she does and what she proclaims. In light of this, mission must necessarily be comprehensive. Peskett and Ramachandra utilize an argument from the functional understanding of the *imago Dei* to rightly argue for creation care as an aspect of mission.¹⁵ Based on the concept of ‘building for the kingdom’ which, as discussed in chapter two, is grounded in the functional understanding of the *imago Dei*, Wright argues for Christians to be involved in justice, beauty, and evangelism.¹⁶

It is not possible here to fully develop all the ways in which the Church manifests the reign of God, though some examples are given in the concluding remarks. These are as diverse as the body of Christ itself. The royal aspect of mission can be demonstrated in acts of mercy and justice, poverty alleviation and development, creation care and agriculture, political involvement, and most certainly evangelism when individuals are called, through faith and repentance, to submit themselves to the King of Kings. It should be understood that whenever the Church, under the authority of King Jesus, in obedience to his commands, and empowered by the Holy

¹² Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 45-55.

¹³ Robert E. Webber, “Common Roots,” 159, quoted in Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom*, 244.

¹⁴ Padilla, *Mission Between the Times*, 198.

¹⁵ Peskett and Ramachandra, *The Message of Mission*, 48-52.

¹⁶ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 207-232.

Spirit, causes aspects of the fallen world to reflect the rule of Jesus then she is fulfilling the royal aspect of her mission.

It cannot be stressed enough that the advancing of the kingdom is not done in the power and wisdom of the Church. It is Christ's kingdom and thus his work, accomplished by his Spirit, through his agents in the world. This should not be a foreign concept as it is widely accepted that the good works the Church does are actually Christ's works done through the Church (Eph 2:10). As the work of Christ, the expansion of the reign of God does not happen according to the principles of the world. Christ advances his kingdom through the Church in the same manner he advanced it when on earth, through humble service and death (Matt 5:21-48; Mk 10:42-45; Lk 9:21-24, 14:25-33, 22:24-30; 2 Cor 8:9; Phil 2:3-11; 1 Jn 3:16).

God's Creational Purpose Requires Participation in the *Missio Dei*

The final missiological implication of the preceding study involves the progressive nature of the *missio Dei*. It has been argued throughout this thesis that from the beginning Yahweh has desired to work through his people as agents in the world to accomplish his mission. Adam was to overcome God's enemy and expand the presence and reign of God throughout the earth. It has further been argued that according to the Father's creation purposes the Church continues to participate in the *missio Dei* as she continues Christ's mission in the world by the empowering Spirit. Padilla rightly understands salvation to include the recovery of the whole man according to God's creation purposes.¹⁷

It has also been demonstrated that the *missio Dei* is progressive by design. Yahweh did not create the world in the complete state he desired. He did not create a world filled with image

¹⁷ Padilla, *Mission Between the Times*, 78-79.

bearers where his presence and reign were fully manifested. Rather, he created the human couple and placed them in the temple-garden in order that they might have the distinct privilege of participating with him in the creative act.

Likewise, after the Fall, the Lord did not immediately bring the seed of the woman to usher in the fullness of the eschaton. Instead, he raised up Adamic figures who participated with him to progressively advance the plan of redemption and ultimately accomplish his creation purposes. In this context it makes sense that the mission of the Church would involve participating with Christ in the progressive expansion of his kingdom. The point is not that the church brings about Christ's kingdom, but rather Christ, in keeping with the creation purposes of the Father, allows the Church to participate as his agents in the world.

Christ will accomplish the consummation of the kingdom of God and in great power he will make all things new by establishing the renewed heaven and earth. The Church can work toward this end knowing her "labor is not in vain" (1 Cor 15:58), because what she does in the present will have fulfillment on that day.¹⁸ This is why Glasser states the goal of the *missio Dei* is to incorporate people into the kingdom of God so as to involve them in God's mission.¹⁹

¹⁸ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 162.

¹⁹ Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom*, 245.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to argue, from the functional understanding of the *imago Dei*, for a comprehensive understanding of mission. This project has demonstrated the continuity between God's creation purposes for humanity and his post-Fall work among his people. It has further demonstrated the ongoing desire of God that his people would participate in the *missio Dei* as his agents in the world. This is the case for Christ, who is restoring the *imago Dei* in a new humanity, so that it might participate in his ongoing mission as his Spirit empowered agents in the world. In light of these arguments which are Christ centered and supported by sound biblical theology, it must be concluded that the mission of the Church is indeed comprehensive in nature.

In closing, it may be helpful to consider a few practical ways this missiology can be implemented. As an example, the work of Living Bread Ministries (LBM) planting churches among the global poor provides an excellent perspective on the application. Living Bread is planting churches in very poor communities around the world and equipping them to take a comprehensive approach to mission. The Living Bread church plants are truly acting as agents of transformation in their communities.

One way the LBM church plants are fulfilling their priestly function is by proclaiming the gospel and calling upon community residents to surrender their lives to King Jesus and be baptized into the Church according to his commands. In so doing, they are literally expanding the temple of God (the Church) and therefore the presence of Christ into communities that often have no kingdom witness. As a result, the Church is fruitfully multiplying as the unregenerate are being brought into the body of Christ and are disciplined.

Discipleship is at the center of how these local churches are fulfilling the royal function of the original commission. Those who have turned from the world to Christ are taught to obey all that he commanded. As they walk through this process, their eyes are opened to the areas of their individual and communal lives that do not reflect Christ's kingdom.

By the power of the Holy Spirit and in accord with the gifts they have been given, they seek to engage these areas as agents of transformation. When they see physical hunger, they seek to feed. When they see broken families, they seek to bring restoration. When they encounter orphans and widows, they provide care. They engage illiteracy, addiction, and poverty. In short, they join Christ in moving their fallen community toward the eschaton while anxiously awaiting his coming and the final consummation.

This can also be said of the work that Williamsburg Christian Church (WCC) is involved in. The church works in partnership with 3e Restoration, a ministry focused on breaking the cycle of homelessness and extreme poverty in the Williamsburg, VA area. Through this partnership the body of Christ at WCC has entered into genuine relationships with members of the homeless community. The church is walking with their homeless friends in a transformational way.

The members of WCC care for their homeless friends and desire that they come to know Christ as their Lord and Savior and be brought into the new humanity. Likewise, they desire to see their lives manifest the rule and reign of Christ. As a result, they work as coaches to help their homeless friends develop the life skills they need to truly experience the new life that Christ intends as well as to fulfill their function in the *missio Dei*.

The work of Living Bread and Williamsburg Christian Church both reflect the comprehensive nature of mission that this thesis has argued for. They are fruitfully fulfilling their

priestly roles by bringing those separated from God into a right relationship with God through Christ. In both cases they also fulfill the royal function of mission by working as agents of transformation to see individual lives and entire communities begin to reflect the rule and reign of Christ now in anticipation of the final consummation. The brief overview of the work of these organizations provides a glimpse at comprehensive mission grounded in the functional understanding of the *imago Dei*.

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