

A Man for All Seasons

MISSIONS CONFERENCE 2005

By **Dr. James M. Baird**

Matthew 28:16-20

I want to join the thanks for all of these missionaries again. Touched my heart. The leadership of this church, Ligon, Jim Stewart, it's been a good conference. And I want you to try to gather...(there go the little ones)...I know there's a lot of adults that would like to follow and get out of here, but...I once was at a church with a man, Uncle Hank. You remember Uncle Hank? Uncle Hank Schum. And just at this time that I get up to preach, all the children would come out, and Uncle Hank would meet them at the door and lead them out into their worship services. And one Sunday as they all left, he turned to me and he said, "Preacher, I leave you with the leftovers!" So I'm praying for you leftovers that you would understand in this message what it means to be a missionary, and what missions is all about. Let's make that a prayer, right now.

O God, our heavenly Father, Thou who has sent Thy Son on mission into this world, and one day He will come to claim it all. Until then we are His witnesses. Teach us what it means to be a witness for our God. Teach us what it means to be mission-minded; to be reaching out to the people who are lost around us and across the ocean. Hear our prayers. Help us in missions through this sermon. And help me, Lord. Help me to preach. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Open your Bibles, please, to that passage which in many ways was the first missionary conference. It's the last verses of the Gospel of Matthew. The twenty-eighth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, and this is the last, the resurrection chapter; and at the end of this chapter Christ calls His disciples to a mountain wherein He hath appointed them, and He gives them the great missionary passage and sends them out. And sends them out....

Let me read this passage to you, and as I read this passage to you, my mind goes to a man by the name of Robert, who was preaching. And he was preaching in a missions conference just like this, and this was his text— this text from Matthew. We hear what Robert was preaching from. And let me read to you, beginning to read in the sixteenth verse of Matthew 28. This is a remarkable statement.

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where

Jesus had appointed them. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted.

I'm going to pause right there. Isn't that amazing? These are the eleven, after the resurrection. Don't tell me that doubt cannot enter into a Christian's heart. I wonder who would have doubted. Well, there was a guy named Thomas. And yet, I stood at the grave of Thomas in Old Madras, India. Thomas, from this passage, went all the way to India in his lifetime and was martyred there for Christ. You can overcome doubts.

Now we go back to the preacher, Robert, who is still reading the Scripture, and take up the next verse. The eighteenth verse reads,

Jesus came and He spake unto them, saying, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Amen.

And Matthew's Gospel ends.

Robert read that Scripture, and then he said, "In the morning I stand on the bluff, and I look to the north, and I see the smoke rising from a thousand villages where the name of Jesus the Christ has never been mentioned." He said, "I'm going back. Who'll go with me? Who'll go with me?" He preached the sermon, and out in the congregation was a 27-year-old medical student. At the end of that sermon, and may it be like that here on this night, that medical student bowed his head and said to God, "I'll go. I'll go." And he did. His father walked him six miles down to the ship that would take him to South Africa. He never saw his father again. His name was David Livingston.

David Livingston went out, and it was sixteen years before he came back to Scotland for his first furlough. Let me tell you a little bit about David Livingston.

That sermon that Moffat, Robert Moffat, great missionary to South Africa, he was preaching in the year 1840. That young medical student, David Livingston, was born in 1813. He was born in a little village outside of Glasgow—Blantyre. The home where he was born is nothing but a cottage, and you can still see it. Very humble. His father was a Presbyterian elder in what we would call the PCA, the Free Church of Scotland. His mother used to read to him the missionary stories. He grew up in a home of true believers, and mission-minded.

At the age of ten, ten years old—I've got a grandson ten...I looked at him today—at the age of ten, David Livingston's formal education ended. He went to work in the village textile mill with his father. There were no child labor laws. At the age of ten, he marched down there with his father and reported for work, six o'clock in

the morning. He got through at work, six o'clock that evening. Six days a week.

At the end of that first week he got a little paycheck. He gave it to his parents. They gave him one pence, with that one pence he went back into the little village to a used book store, and he purchased a book. You know what the book was? It was a book on Latin grammar. He was bright! He began to study, right there, in his free moments.

The mill owner saw him. The mill owner began to watch and keep up with him. The mill owner asked if he would like to continue his study. The mill owner opened up his library at eight o'clock at night. Livingston went home at six o'clock after twelve hours of work, ate his evening meal, had a brief time of rest, went back to the owner's house and began to study under the tutelage of some of the men who came in, and he did that until he was 23 years old.

At the age of 23, to the utter astonishment of everybody, he took the examination for the University of Glasgow and their adjacent medical school, and he passed. And he went, and for the next four years he was at the University and he studied, and he graduated. And when he graduated, he was in a missions conference, and he heard Moffat say, "Who'll go with me?" A village—a thousand of them!—never heard of the name of Jesus.

Livingston came back after sixteen years. He came back to Glasgow. When he came back, the University asked, as was their wont, for a former graduate to speak at a chapel. Now in that day and in many places, and European education is like that, they had an enforced chapel one day a week, during a morning hour. And all of the schools of education came: the medical school, the school of economics, mathematics, whatever; they all came for the chapel service. Many of the students came under duress. They did not want it! And when they came, they were like some students we have in the United States: they came to harass the guy who was preaching. And they had whistles, little whistles; they had pea shooters. Some of the more educated just simply read the newspaper.

And so they were prepared for this new preacher. They saw his picture, his graduating picture: he was a rugged looking man, and he was tall and big for his age, for his era, and he would have been a linebacker! That's the kind of build he had. And when he walked out onto the stage, they were all ready...and suddenly a hush fell over that whole congregation, because when he walked out, his face, after sixteen years, was burnt brown. The dark head of hair was flecked with gray; his left arm hung from his shoulder down, useless. He was blind, legally blind. A branch had come back and hit him in his right eye. He was legally blind in his right eye. When he came out, the lines in his face, the ravages of malaria...he said of himself, "I was a bag of bones."

He walked out and began to tell them about what had happened to him in sixteen years. He went down in 1840. He went to the great compound inland, Kuruman,

and in that village there was a mission station, and immediately he got another missionary and they struck out to find those villages where Christ had never been mentioned. That was his flame and his desire. And the other missionary soon had enough of him. He was a hard-driving man. That was his nature.

In one village, in one village he walked in, he stayed, preached the gospel, and then they asked him: 'There is a pride of lions terrorizing us. There is one huge lion. You have a gun. Kill that lion.' And he agreed. And he went out and found the lion, and shot the lion. And as he was reloading his gun, the lion got up. The lion was mad, angry! And the lion attacked Livingston. Though dying, he shattered that left shoulder. He said, "He grabbed me and shook me like I was a little rat." The nationals killed that lion with their spears.

He had to go back. He had been two years in service. Had to go back to Kuruman. When he gets back to Kuruman, who is there but Moffat. Moffat has been in England, and he had been raising money. And Livingston had gone out into the bush, now he's come back. When he comes back, he finds Robert Moffat, and Moffat has brought with him his 19-year-old daughter, Mary. You want to know the rest of the story?

Mary nurses this man back to health. In the process, Livingston, who has committed himself never to marry—because who's going to do what he's doing, and where he's going?—Mary says, "I'll go with you." And they marry. And they fall not only in love, they marry truly as missionaries to go out, and they do.

Three children are born to them out there in the bush. Nobody else is with them, just he and his wife. They went from the coasts of the Indian Ocean all the way to the coasts of the Atlantic Ocean; all the way from Angola all the way back to the Indian Ocean.

His wife can no longer take it, with these three young children, and she has to return. She returns back to England and to the grandparents of these children, to help raise and educate these children, and Livingston is on his own, alone for about the last five years.

In that time of sixteen years, he traversed north-central, south-central Africa, for 11,000 miles. That's Miami to Seattle, walking, dugout canoe, small boats—three times.

When he comes back, he comes back to these students and he tells them, and he is a man for all seasons, about south-central Africa. He's a scientist, an explorer; but most of all, he's a missionary to preach the gospel. He's a man for all seasons.

They throw away all the maps—nobody knew what was in there! But when he gets through, they throw away all the maps. He's the explorer. They loved him!

When he gets through, these students say, 'You've got to write! You've got to write!' and he writes a book, and within an short time it's over 600 pages. In a short time, everybody wants him.

He not only tells about the rivers; it is not jungle. South-central Africa is immense, and it reminded me of the West, of Colorado. You ought to ask the Chinchens, better than me...mountains, high plains, many rivers, some jungle. He tells about it, what it's like. He tells about the plants. He tells about the fruit, the trees, the huge trees. He tells, he tells as an explorer and a scientist, about the food. And then, as the missionary, he talks about the people and their lack of knowledge of Christ.

When he gets through, these students who had come to vilify him, they mob him. They mob him. They're the ones who said, 'You must write.' And he writes.

He tells in his book about the time as an explorer he's going down the Zambezi River. As he's coming down the Zambezi River with his two nationals who are going to remain his lifelong friends, the two nationals tell him, "Thunder and smoke! Thunder and smoke awaits us!" He has no idea. And then he hears the thunder, and then he sees the smoke, and he discovers Victoria Falls. The thunder is when it hits the bottom. The smoke? It's the water rising, the mist. You can see it and hear it for miles and miles and miles.

My daddy was a Scot. There were two things he said he always wanted to see. He wanted to see Victoria Falls, and he wanted to see Gibraltar. I had the privilege of seeing both, and being at both; and I went to see the Chinchens. And we went to see the Chinchens...I told them, "I want to go see Victoria Falls." Nell Chinchin said, "You can't go." This was Zimbabwe, must have been five or six, or more than that, years ago. I had my little eleven-year-old granddaughter with me, and her mama and my wife. Nell says, "You can't go." But her younger brother from this congregation, who had last year's Missions Conference, Palmer Robertson, said, "Let him go. He wants to go." And Nell said, "His blood is on your hands!" I said, "Wait a minute!"

But the Chinchens were willing for their granddaughter to go with us, and so we went. And I want to tell you, it was awesome! It was awesome. And we went down that river, just like Livingston. What a life he had! When he writes this, all London and England fall at his feet. He has an audience. He has an audience with Queen Victoria, tells her about the falls, and speaks before Parliament. And he's home a year, and he says, "I'm going back. Who'll go with me? Who'll go with me?"

He goes back a second time. This time it's the year 1857, almost 1858. And when he goes back he has three great goals. The first thing he's going to do is make sure that his wife Mary can go back with him. And he's going to prepare for her. He goes first; she's going to come about two months later.

There's a second thing that he is going to do. He's going to find the source of the Nile River. The Nile River is the only large river in the world that flows north, four thousand miles.

The last thing he is going to do, besides preaching in village after village after village, he's going to break the backbone of slavery in Africa. That's his goal. How about that for a man for all seasons, and with vision?

Mary comes two months after he arrives. She comes in through the Indian Ocean, and comes into Africa. He meets her. Almost immediately she is stricken with severe malaria. With all of his medical skills he cannot save her, and his wife Mary dies. She is buried under a baobab tree, a huge tree on the border of modern-day Malawi. He weeps—he puts that in his journal.

And there are books and there are movies about Livingston. In the movies that I've watched on television, there are two kinds: one is so negative, the other is fairly true. The negative one says Livingston is no hero at all; he was a terrible husband and a lousy father. Yet you read those letters he wrote.

Last Sunday Jane and I were in a church in Georgia. They had a hook-up in the missions conference with a missionary in Romania. And one of the questions asked of this man...he's a Mission to The World missionary...how're your children? And he begins to tell about his children. They're all in schools, scattered literally over this world. You want to pray for missionaries? Can you imagine your child at the age of twelve being educated in another country? This missionary is telling about a child in college here in the United States, another one in the Black Forest School. I've preached in that Black Forest School years ago in Germany, and they had missionary children from all over...all over Europe, even Africa. What are you going to do with your children?

He had a hard time, and his children suffered. He loved his wife. The letters that they wrote to each other were love letters. He loved his children, but it was tough on those children.

A number of years ago I was preaching in Nashville, Tennessee, and I preached about Livingston, my hero. And when it was over with, a woman came out and she handed me a little envelope and she said, "I want you to read this." And I said, "Well, thank you very much." And she just passed on. I put it in my pocket and didn't think anything about it until we got all the way back here to Jackson. I'm hanging up my jacket, and I feel this thing in the pocket. So I pull it out, and I read it. Very brief. "Dear Dr. Baird, Thank you for teaching me something about David Livingston that I had not realized. Thank you very much. Signed/ Margo Benton, Great-great-granddaughter of David Livingston." In a PCA church in Nashville. I get on the phone, get that church and get her number and call her up immediately!

She's president of their Women In the Church, a strong Christian. I've kept in contact with her. Livingston's children, had a rough life, but I want to tell you, some believed. It's no easy thing. You want to pray for the missionary? You pray for his health, his wife's health, and the education of his children.

How about slavery? He is accused of being the father of modern-day colonialism in Africa, and he is vilified by many people. His goal was to break the backbone of the economy, which was built then on slavery. And so he had invited all of the European nations to come and give something in the way of their ability of economy to Africa, so that they could earn money. But he is vilified because of colonialism, and it is Europeans who usually do it, but there is one people who never vilify him: the Africans. To this day, when you go to Africa, Livingston is a hero! It's the Europeans who don't like him, not the Africans. And when you're at the falls there, there is a huge...no statue of Victoria; it is a statue of Livingston. And the second largest city in Malawi is Blantyre, named after Livingston's birth place in Scotland!

His wife dies, he strikes out into deeper Africa. He never does find the Nile. In all of his life, he will never find the source of the Nile. He is by himself. He does not come back to England until the year 1864. When he comes back, he is not a hero in England. He is a hero internationally; loved, wanted, he stayed one year, and then he says, "I'm going back. Who'll go with me?" And to this day there are Scots who go back to Africa, because of Livingston, as missionaries.

He goes back, and this time alone. And when he goes back, he arrives in '65, and strikes ever deeper into north-central Africa, villages that he has never been in before. Within two years, he is so deep into Africa he's never heard from again. And the world says he's gone, and dead. Nobody has seen nor heard.

There is an American newspaper owner in New York City, Gordon Bennett of *The New York Herald*, who takes a very unusual reporter and says to him, "He can be alive. Go find Livingston. Find out if he's alive." His name is Henry Stanley.

It takes Stanley a couple of years to get ready. He goes. By this time, Livingston says in his journals that rogues have stolen everything from his medicine and everything else. The two nationals, Susi and Chumah literally carry him, because he is emaciated and half dead, from village to village, way back. And one day they prop him up at the end of the trail, in Ujiji. And down the trail comes this man in a pith helmet and a white little suit with a huge American flag and 250 people with him, with all these supplies that nature could have. And Henry Stanley walks up to this emaciated man, sticks out his hand, and utters the memorable words: "Dr. Livingston, I presume?"

They become dear friends. Stanley says, "I arrived a flaming atheist." By the way,

Stanley would come back to Africa and explore, and as a missionary! He said, "Within four months, I'm a Christian. He never once spoke to me directly about Christ, but I simply had translated what he was saying to nationals, and I watched him." And he receives Christ, Stanley does.

At the end of four months Stanley is restored with medicine and health, and Stanley says to him, "We'll go back. We'll go back to England. You could...the gospel could go on...it's wonderful! Let's go back. The world is at your feet." And Livingston says, "You go back. There are villages I have never been in." And they part their ways, and Livingston...they don't believe Stanley, except then he's got all the records...and into the deeper part goes Livingston.

And in 1873, at the age of 60, they go to wake him up in the morning. He's kneeling on his cot there, as he often did in prayer for Africa, they touch his head, and his head is cold. He's dead. On his knees praying for Africa, that's how he died. May 1, 1873. It was his desire: they cut out his heart and they buried his heart right there in deepest Africa. Nobody knows where. They embalm his body. At least two nationals, they start down the Zambezi, going to the Indian Ocean, to Zanzibar. It takes between six and eight months, because they stop at every village and there is a memorial worship service by the nationals for Livingston.

They finally get to Zanzibar. These two African men take Livingston back home in 1874. When they arrive with this mummy, some in Scotland say, "Who knows who this is?" And then doctors who had worked with Livingston when he had been home began to unwrap, and they saw the shoulder and recognized, "This is Livingston."

They buried him in Westminster Abbey. They buried him in the very center of Westminster Abbey, *the* place of honor. Every time Jane and I are in London, I go. Jane and I, we've been married 53 years, so I guess it's almost three years ago, we took all of the family—the boys and their wives—and we went to the holy land, *bonnie Scotland!* But before we got to Scotland, we went to London. We went to the Abbey, Westminster Abbey. We stood around, prayed at his grave. At his grave in the very center, this is what is inscribed. This was his desire to be put as his epitaph on that grave. It's from the Gospel of John. It's the word of God. It's where Christ says, "I am the good shepherd."

Christ is the Good Shepherd of the Twenty-third Psalm. It reads like this: "I am the Good Shepherd. I know my sheep, and I am known of mine." And this is what is inscribed on his grave: "Other sheep,' Christ said, 'I have, which are not in this fold. Them also I must bring. They shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd.'" That's missions.

What do we do? We do three things.

I. The first one is, we pray.

When they found Livingston's Bible, on the flyleaf of his Bible he had this prayer: "Lord, send me anywhere, only go with me. Lord, lay any burden on me, only sustain me. Lord, sever any ties except those ties that bind me to Thee and to Thy gospel." That's the kind of praying that produces and brings men and women to Christ. We need to pray. We need to sign these cards and say, "I'm going to pray. I'm going to pray."

II. When he went back the third time, he resigned from the Mission Committee because the British government paid his way.

They were so proud of him. There's no missionary who has any government to pay his way now. None. The Muslims do. When we were in Africa, particularly in Liberia, I saw the money that the Muslims were pouring in there, and all across Africa and around the world. I don't know if it's true, but the biggest Muslim temple, mosque, in the world, is in my home town of Chicago. Can you believe that? They've got this country as a mission field in their eye, and they're pouring that oil money into it—and all across Africa and all across the world....

Well, who pays for the missionary now? Nobody except you. Nobody. No government, no company, nobody except the sheep of Christ, the local churches of the Lord Jesus. Will you make a *Faith Promise*? And say, "Lord, You give me, and I'll give. Lord, You have enabled me. I want to do something for Christ around this world and across this city."

III. And finally, we must go.

We must go. I told those little kids Friday night...nine, ten years of age and down, I said, "You know, most kids get touched with the idea of missions before the age of twelve. Livingston did, through his mother. Through his mother.... Through this church. I thought about it as those kids walked out: I wonder how many missionaries walked out through those doors."

Will you commit yourself? I know that some of you cannot go, literally. But I could tell you stories...I just can't tell all the stories...of what has happened, even when I was way back here in this church, about people who went to the mission field even for two weeks...I could tell you stories about some of the people in some of the churches I've served...unbelievable! What happened, what happened for one guy in one afternoon...I said, "Well, you're in Acapulco, will you go to Dick Dye and give him one afternoon?" "OK." He came back on fire!

My own life was changed in 1968 when I went to Indonesia for a month to preach among the Muslims. Will you go? Will you ask God, "Send me, and I'll go." Go

back there and say, what have you got?

And will there be some men continue out of this church to go into the ministry? We need preachers. We need preachers for local churches. We need missionaries. We need young ladies.

I close with this. Do you remember the young college students who were going to vilify him when he came back the first time to preach at the University of Glasgow? When it was all over and they said, "You must write," before they said "you must write," they asked this question: "How did you do it? How in the world could you do what you did in sixteen years?" This is what exactly Livingston did. Jesus commanded... "all power is given unto me"...and he read it to those students... "in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." "He commanded me, called me," and then he said, "And He made me this promise: He said, 'I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.'"

Missionaries, you hear those words? He's with you. He's with you. You're going to be able to do things that are unbelievable. Livingston put it like this: "He made a promise to me, and it was the promise of a gentleman." That was the Old English way of saying it was a promise that will not be broken. He said, "I'll go with you."

As we pray together,

O God, our heavenly Father, we thank Thee for that great first missionary conference called by the risen Lord Jesus Christ, conqueror of death itself, and the promise that He'd go with us as we attempt to do great things for Jesus, the Christ. He'll go with us. Burn those words on our hearts, on our missionary friends here, on this congregation as we fill out these cards. And may it be that these cards would pour forth the commitment from five-year-olds, fifty-year-olds, twelve-year-old girls, teenagers...every last one of us, to pray and to ask You to give money through me. And O God, may I be challenged to go, to go. Hear this prayer, and love these people, and love what they're going to do across this world for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Amen and amen.

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