

# WILLIAM CAREY'S VISION OF A CONGRESS FOR WORLD MISSIONS IN CAPE TOWN FULFILLED

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The father of modern missions, William Carey, was a man ahead of his time. His book, *An Inquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*, is credited as being the book that launched the modern missionary movement. His sermon: ***Attempt Great Things for God! Expect Great Things from God!*** launched the first missionary society: *The Particular Calvinist Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel amongst the Heathen*.

En route to India, his ship docked in Table Bay and he was struck by the ideal setting of Cape Town, at the uttermost parts of the earth, and as a halfway house between Europe and Asia, for a world missions conference.

## **William Carey**

William Carey became the most prolific Bible translator in history, translating the complete Bible into six languages and The New Testament, or Gospels, into another twenty-nine other languages.

## **Edinburgh**

It was 100 years later, in 1910, that the first world missions conference was held, in Edinburgh.

## **Cape Town**

This week, in Cape Town, 200 years after William Carey had proposed it, Cape Town is hosting the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation.

## **The Largest Missions Congress**

With over 4,000 invited participants from 197 nations, and extending through global link sites to another 600 venues across 92 nations, this is, without any doubt, the largest and most representative mission conference in history.

## **Global Link**

I was a delegate at the largest previous missions conference, held in South Africa: The Global Consultation of World Evangelisation (GCOWE) in Pretoria, 1997. Cape Town 2010 is the first congress of its kind in the digital age and information traffic on the eight language congress website is already high. Radio networks are relaying programmes across Africa and Latin America.

## **God in Christ, Reconciling the Word to Himself**

Cape Town, 2010 (The Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation) has been organised in collaboration with the World Evangelical Alliance. Its theme is: **God in Christ, Reconciling the World to Himself** (2 Corinthians 5:19).

## **Mobilise to Evangelise**

Continuing on the basic theme of the first conference held in Lausanne, Switzerland, 1974, the priority of the congress is to strategise on how best to mobilise the whole Church to take the whole Gospel to the whole world. The organisers have undertaken extraordinary efforts to make sure that every region in the world is represented in proportion to the number of Evangelicals in their country. At the opening session on Sunday, 17 October, the Chairman, Doug Birdsall, estimated that there were 1,200 missionaries, 1,200 pastors and ministry leaders, 1,200 academics and students, and 600 in secular professions represented as participants in the congress.

## **From Pentecost to Edinburgh**

In the opening ceremony a documentary film was screened which took a breathtaking sweep of missions history from Pentecost to the first world mission conference in Edinburgh in 1910. This was followed by a presentation, which confronted the oppression of women in Hinduism through widow burning, the oppressive caste system, the reality of slavery, and the oppression by tyrants and political parties. The narrator quoted the Scripture: "The god of this world has blinded their minds."

## **Unity in Christ**

The chairman stated that the future is as bright as the promises of God. Participants were united on the authority of the Bible, the need for the new birth, the priority of fulfilling the Great Commission and obeying Christ's great Commandment.

## **Confronting Crises**

Opening speakers highlighted the need for bold and loving proclamation of the Gospel and applying of the Gospel through social responsibility. Some of the crises confronting church and society were identified as: AIDS, poverty, conflicts, abuse of children, environmental degradation, the development of nuclear weapons by rogue states, corruption, and moral and ethical dilemmas caused by modern technology.

## **Aims**

The congress aims to focus on the Truth of Christ in a pluralistic, globalised world; building the Peace of Christ in a divided and broken world; bearing witness to the Love of Christ with people of other faiths; discerning the Will of Christ for 21<sup>st</sup> Century world evangelisation; calling the Church of Christ back to humility, integrity and simplicity; and partnering in the Body of Christ towards a new global equilibrium.

## **Programme**

Each morning the plenary devotional sessions will expositionally work through the book of Ephesians. Each afternoon will include study groups focusing on different issues and challenges for world evangelisation. Each evening will focus on the specific challenges of each continent.

## **Praying through Ephesians**

Perhaps you would like to join with the many participants in this unique congress by praying through a different chapter of Ephesians each day of this week, and praying with us as we strategise together as to the best ways to mobilise the whole Church to take the whole Gospel to the whole world.

## **From the East and From the West**

As I met missionary friends and partners from as far afield as Sudan and Swaziland, Angola and Australia, Canada and the Congo, the United States and the United Kingdom, it was a picture of what the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 8:11 *"And I say to you that many will come from East and West and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven."*

## **The Table**

It also makes us look forward to what the apostle John was commanded to write: *"Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!"* Revelation 19:9

As we gather at the foot of Table Mountain, we remember the Shepherd Psalm: *"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my cup with oil; my cup runs over."*  
Psalm 23:5

It may be 200 years later than William Carey envisaged it, but this great congress on world evangelisation in Cape Town is now in session.

***"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our Faith ..."*** Hebrews 12:1-2

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