

Summary Statement

Luis Bush

At Lausanne I there was a delegation that met every morning to pray before the meeting started. It was the Chinese delegation. And two years later, under the very able leadership of Thomas Wang, there was a movement called the Chinese Coordination Center of World Evangelization (CCCOWE) movement. They have had three major Congresses and in their fourth Congress, which is scheduled for 1991, they will take up the theme "Marching Toward the Year 2000."

Their question is, "What can we do as Chinese Christians around the world to contribute to the fulfillment of the Great Commission by the year 2000 and beyond?" And this is just one of the movements in country after country and region after region that are focusing on a major initiative as the body of Christ to contribute to the mandate that the Lord Jesus has given to us as his disciples, of obeying the Great Commission especially in the light of the year 2000.

And we are starting to see around the world how this movement is almost spontaneously, almost independently one of another beginning to surface. In the countries of Latin America, over the next nine months there will be four major regional consultations. They will be called "Alcanze dos mil," "Reaching to the Year 2000," in Costa Rica for Central America, in Argentina for the six countries of the southern core in November. In January of next year in Colombia for the Andean countries of Latin America. And then further on and a few months later in the Caribbean.

Also in West Asia, Christian leaders have already gathered together in a country to discuss what they can do as Christians in West Asia to assist in the process of evangelization of that part of the world by the year 2000. How they can mobilize their people with their gulf regions, and how they can penetrate those yet unreached peoples of West Asia.

In Europe there are both church-based and mission-based movements. In September of last year in Italy, there was a consultation where some five hundred pastors and Christian leaders came together. And I remember dramatically the evening where they committed unanimously to the task of the evangelization of the country of Italy by the year 2000. In Belgium, next January, there is a consultation planned to challenge the church in Belgium in this respect. There's a mission-base movement just getting started in these days in Europe called "Love Europe," where some seven thousand young people are getting together, and the vision is to see every European have the opportunity to hear the gospel by the year 2000.

We also see in Canada there is a "Vision 2000," which is to multiply churches throughout that country as the decade moves towards the year 2000. In Africa, there is

a significant national movement of evangelization taking place right now in Zaire which has the goal of seeing every one of sixty thousand villages with a church in its midst by the year 2000. And in their soon-coming consultation they expect that already seven thousand of these villages will have a church planted in its midst.

In the country of Ghana, fifteen years ago a group made a commitment to see Ghana be disciplined as a nation. And over fifteen years of research has been done that has resulted in ten volumes and significant consultation with some six hundred Christian leaders just a few weeks ago, and a mobilization to reach the villages and the cities of Ghana with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And many other countries are sharing the principles of discipling a whole nation—sometimes referred as the "The DAWN (Discipling a Whole Nation) Principle."

In Africa we see that the vision for Ghana is being taken up also in Nigeria. And there's a consultation coming up on "A.D. 2000 and Beyond" in Nigeria. Next year, Rev. Daidanso Ma Djongwe, General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar, was saying to me, a meeting is planned to bring together certain people and city leaders from throughout Africa, so that in each country of Africa, over the next three years, there will be a focus on cross-cultural mission as we look toward the year 2000.

As John Stott said, "Unless the whole church is mobilized, the whole world will not be reached." It is interesting that even in the South Pacific there is a meeting coming up in December and the overall guiding goal of that meeting is to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the churches of the South Pacific about their role in fulfilling the Great Commission by the year 2000.

If the business community can focus on the year 2000, if the political community can focus on the year 2000 and set goals, why can't the Christian community focus on the year 2000 and trust God for the goals? Already twenty-five countries have specific plans focused on that year. And several of the same words are being used to describe these plans. The first word is *mobilization*, the awakening of the church in these countries for this task. The second word is *empowerment*—a recognition that the Lord has provided things like financial and computer resources but, above all, that "It's not by power, it's not by might, but it's by my spirit says the Lord." The third word is *penetration*. It's the focus on the unfinished task, on what is remaining to be done in terms of taking the gospel particularly to those who have not heard. The fourth word is *compassion*, to demonstrate the caring, incarnating love of the Lord Jesus Christ as servants. And the next word is *collaboration*. The need to network and partner together in a new harmonious way.

And then what really distinguishes this particular thrust in different countries is the word *intensification*. It's the intensified process that is already underway, but it's an urgency. It's recognizing that urgent things are things that have to be done now. And in Latin America we love to say *manana*. And we like to postpone things to *manana*. But the vision that is developing is recognizing that we must ask the question: *Why not now? Why postpone until manana, what we can do today?*

As this vision is taking place around the world, the world and national initiatives and global initiatives, the Lord put one light in the heart of Thomas Wang back in February of 1987—the question: *Is God up to something?* You know Thomas sees the many organizational goals being set in the year 2000. Movements, denominations. And these national initiatives. He couldn't sleep one night as he was writing an article for the next edition of the Lausanne magazine. He stayed up until about three in the morning.

And out of that he asked himself the question, *My, what is the Lord doing? So many groups are simultaneously beginning to talk about the year 2000. What is happening? What is God trying to say?* So he wrote the article "By the Year 2000: Is God Trying to Tell Us Something?" And in just a few minutes Thomas will come to help us to understand as God has given him insight into the answer to that question. Let us be praying that God will speak to us clearly.

The Great Commission Decade

Thomas Wang

The book of Isaiah is timeless. It illustrates the relationship between a sovereign God and suffering mankind. The Old Testament prophets did not live in ivory towers—they lived among people. They knew people—their pain and their aspirations.

The book of Isaiah is also the gospel book of the Old Testament. It tells about sin, judgment, redemption, and hope. It not only describes suffering mankind, but also a suffering servant—the Son of God.

The first part of the book warns that the people of Israel will go into captivity because of their sin. And chapter 39 specifically states that they will be taken into Babylon and become slaves. And it happened! Psalm 137 says the Israelites sat down by the rivers of Babylon, and whenever they thought about Zion, they wept. And they said, "O Jerusalem, how can I forget you. If I ever forget Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill, and may my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth." In Babylon, they cried out to God from the depth of their sorrow.

The Meaning of the Great Commission

As is always the case, after tears there is joy, and after chastisement there is restoration. And with Isaiah chapter 40, we begin to see a totally different picture. God the loving Father is bringing comfort and joy to his people.

God told them to speak tenderly to Jerusalem. And to tell her that her warfare was accomplished, her sins were pardoned, and that she had received from Jehovah God a double forgiveness. What a wonderful feeling it is: the task is done, sins are forgiven, and we are thoroughly chastened and disciplined. This is the meaning of evangelization: the people of the world hear the Good News, receive Christ, and become his followers. This is the Great Commission.

Agents of the Great Commission

God said, "Comfort ye my people," which means: "*You* comfort my people." He was speaking to the prophets. God did not say, "I will comfort my people," but, "*You*, my servants, comfort my people, wipe away their tears, and bring good tidings to them."

In New Testament times, God's principle was the same. Before the miracle of five

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