

The 21st Century Incarnation of the Gospel

Pastor Ron McCants

Acts 2:5-12

Incarnation: personification, embodiment, manifestation, living form

Merriam-Webster: 1 a (1) : the embodiment of a deity or spirit in some earthly form (2) capitalized : the union of divinity with humanity in Jesus Christ b : a concrete or actual form of a quality or concept; especially : a person showing a trait or typical character to a marked degree <she is the incarnation of goodness>

Incarnation literally means *embodied in flesh* or *taking on flesh*. In its religious context the word is used to mean the descent of a god, embodiment of the [logos](#), a divine being or the Supreme Being in human form on Earth. (Wikipedia)

Text (Acts 2:5-12): Map: Phrygia, Pontus, Cappadocia, Parthia, Media, Elam, Mesopotamia, Pamphylia, Crete, Asia, Arabia, Egypt, Libya, Cyrene, Rome

The initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit (here, on the Feast of Pentecost) was upon the “Galileans,” who were identified by their accent – Peter, on the night he had denied Christ was recognized by his Galilean accent.

Galileans. Not regarded as a sect, but with reference to their nationality. They used a peculiar dialect, which distinguished them from the inhabitants of Judaea. Compare Mark 14:70. They were blamed for neglecting the study of their language, and charged with errors in grammar and ridiculous mispronunciations.

(from Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

1986 to Present:

Executive Director, Mission Arlington/Mission Metroplex, Arlington, TX -- Began Apartment Ministry Churches with the goal of meeting the needs of all people through Bible studies, medical and dental service, child and adult day care, clothing, food, furniture, transportation, counseling, etc.

Tillie Burgin, Mission Arlington: “I asked a lady if she would come to church with me and she said, *No, Ms. Tillie. Isn't church for people who have their lives together? I don't have my life together yet. When I get my life together, I'll come to church.* That's when I knew we must take church to the people. Our definition of Church is what we do 7 days a week, almost 24 hours a day, all year long! It is just who we are.”

Someone asked **Wayne Gretzky** what made him a good hockey player, and he said, “*Most hockey players skate to where the puck is, I skate to where the puck is GOING TO BE (emphasis mine).*”

1 Chron 12:32 NKJV

...of the sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do....

1. From Demographics to Discernment

- a. 1980s, Elmer Towns, Church Growth Movement guru, launched one of the most popular seminars ever: “How to Reach the Baby Boomer.”
- b. It was one of the most influential ever – Baby Boomers had similar values and could be reached by similar strategies.
- c. Characteristics of white, middle-class people are quaint memories – people have been trying to re-create or come up with the “next” Baby Boomer strategy.
- d. NOBODY IS ASKING “HOW TO REACH TO TYPICAL GENEeXer!”
- e. We need to be asking why people in our communities have not responded to what we are doing!! They are staying away by the thousands! (Come & See must be replaced by Go & Be – we must discern where to go & what to be!)
- f. Most of the time we are afraid to ask those tough questions. Businesses aren’t!

2. From Models to Missions

- a. Most of the time when we read a book by a Pastor of a healthy church he will say, “Don’t copy me! You are not in my community.”
- b. We don’t listen very well – we think if we copy his successful model (which is easier than trying to figure out our own community & our mission in it!) then we will be as successful as him!
- c. Cloning doesn’t work!
- d. Question: “How can THIS church be God’s missionary to THIS community?”
- e. We are NOT Saddleback, Willow Creek, Lakewood or Potter’s House! And we are NOT in Lake Forest (LA), Chicago, Houston or Dallas!
- f. Michael Frost & Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church*, – “Christology (our understanding of Christ) should shape our missionology (our understanding of His mission) and should shape our ecclesiology (our expression of church).” The churches they are involved with in Australia reflect that.
- g. Americans tend to Americanize rather than Christianize!

3. From Attractional to Incarnational

- a. In the 80s & 90s we thought we could reach our community with slick advertising, great strategies and good programs.
- b. WE ARE NOT AGAINST ANY OF THAT! BUT if we are to break the code of our community we must realize that NON-RELATIONAL EVANGELISM is a contradiction!
- c. Come & See outreach is effective in many CONTEXTS, but only when combined with relational approaches.
- d. The Gospel must be lived out in the context of the local community – The Incarnation! “What you are speaks so loud I can’t hear a word you say!”
- e. An incarnational church is more interested in the harvest than in the barn.
- f. Those people gathered in Jerusalem heard the MARVELOUS WORKS OF GOD in their OWN LANGUAGE! Where did they go after Pentecost? (Demonic at Gadara)