

Why Africa Matters

By Kameel Majdali

When a westerner thinks of Africa, what comes to mind: jungles full of lions and tigers (sorry—they are in India); a single country whose President is Nelson Mandela (Africa consists of 54 countries and Mandela is the *former* President of one of those countries, the Republic of South Africa); a populous and impoverished continent riddled with AIDS and the dreaded Ebola virus. What westerners do not yet understand is that this large and little understood continent is very rich—in massive mineral resources like gold, diamonds, cooper, silver, and timber. Yet without question Africa's greatest resource is not in its natural resources or people, but in the church of the Living God.



Africa is a growth area for the church and it can best be described in four waves.

First Wave: In the early centuries of the Church, the only parts of Africa to be affected by the Gospel was North Africa. St. Mark, who wrote the Gospel

that bears his name, was considered the great apostle to Africa, being based in Alexandria. Along the Mediterranean coast, viable Christian communities existed for centuries. The greatest theologian since the Apostle Paul was St. Augustine of Hippo, which is located in present day Algeria. The Ethiopian Eunuch of Acts 8 brought the Gospel to his great land, where it flourished from the 1st Century to the 21st. With the coming of Islam in the 7th Century A.D., North Africa fell like pins in a bowling alley. With the exception of the Coptic Church of Egypt, Muslim rule slowly extinguished those early Christian communities.

Wave Two: In 1652 the Dutch East India Company, under Jan van Riebeeck, set up a small garrison by the slopes of Table Mountain. The garrison eventually grew into a great city known as Cape Town, near the famous 'Cape of Good Hope,' the tempestuous meeting place of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. While the initial purpose of the garrison was to provide provisions for Dutch fleets heading for the Indian Ocean region, it also became the catalyst for inadvertent missions, especially from the Dutch Reformed Church.

Wave Three: In 1885, a Berlin Conference was concluded which formalized what became known as 'the Great Scramble for Africa.' European nations like France, Britain, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Spain, and Portugal, all carved their own piece out of the great 'Africa pie.' Colonial rule continued until after the Second World War. Colonial rule has been criticized for destabilizing native Africans, drawing borders that separated harmonious groups while hemming in other groups who struggled to co-exist. From our vantage point, one great legacy did remain: the work of faithful missionaries.

One of the most famous had not been heard from in years. A search party had gone out to see if he could be found, including a correspondent for the New York Herald called Henry M. Stanley. The date is October 1871 and the area was the eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika. Upon finding the man, Stanley asks his now famous question: 'Dr. Livingstone, I presume?'

The man in question was none other than Dr. David Livingstone (1813-1873), a Scottish missionary and explorer who wanted to help chart what was known as 'the dark continent.' 'Dark' was not just in terms of the people's skin colour; it also had to do with the spiritual environment where all kinds of heathen rites keeping the population in bondage. During the 'Great Scramble,' missionaries helped to spread the Gospel into various parts of the continent.

Wave Four: This was the grandchild of the above waves, but it will differ in this respect: here, the Africans will be propagating the Gospel to Africa and the world. It began with a great vision:

A spark came out of heaven and landed on the east coast of South Africa. Immediately, the spark burst into a flame along the southern coast of the continent. This flame spread along the coast of Kwazulu-Natal, southward to East London, Port Elizabeth, and then westward to George and on to Cape Town. Once it reached the Cape, the flame turned northward, quickly filling the entire nation with fire. In no time at all, the mighty South African 'veld' fire spread into all of Africa, including North Africa. Then, the flames reached the Mediterranean coastline but were too strong to stop. So they leaped over this 'gospel lake' and landed like missiles into postmodern, post-Christian Europe.

This vision, given in 1980, implied that:

1. South African Christian would be at the forefront of the great fourth wave of the church;
2. That this wave would be of the Holy Spirit;
3. That it would travel 'from Cape Town to Cairo.'

At the time, South Africa was considered an international pariah because of its white-minority (apartheid) government, which stressed the 'equal but separate' development of the various races in South Africa (it was not just a black and white nation; it also had mixed race colours, ethnic Indians and Chinese; the whites were divided among the Dutch derived Afrikaners and the English, and there were at least a dozen major tribes of 'black Africans.' Hence Nelson Mandela's desire to have a 'rainbow' South Africa.) A South African passport was barred from most African nations. How could the 'Cape Town to Cairo' vision ever be fulfilled with such serious impediments?

Yet prophetic voices came in the 1980's, confirming that the fire of the Lord would come from South Africa. Intercessors were raised up to pray for a peaceful change of government and a greater thrust in African missions. A school of missions was set up with the express purpose of training South Africans and others to reach out to the continent, even though it seemed impossible at the time. It was a prophetic act of faith.

Faith delivered. With the change of government in South Africa in 1994, a whole new chapter in Gospel outreach has begun. South Africans are now welcome all over the continent and the world. White South Africans have been noted for their ability to 'connect' with people of colour, whether from Africa, PNG, Melanesia, or the West Indies. Reinhard Bonnke and his Christ for All Nations (CFAN), whose momentum came from South Africa, has endeavored to fulfill the 'from Cape Town to Cairo' mandate with stunning supernatural effectiveness. Once owning a tent that held 35,000 people, with wooden bench blanks that stretched for sixteen kilometers,

CFAN found that the tent was too small to contain the crowds that would come in the future.

Man of God from the 'Heart of Africa'

Here is one inspiring success story. In the heart of Africa along the mighty Congo River lies one of Africa's largest nations called the Democratic Republic of Congo, with the capital at Kinshasa (formerly known as Zaire). Its greatest evangelist was born in December 1964 in the city of Limbe, four years after the DRC gained independence from Belgium. His name: *Jean Oscar Kiziamina Kibila (JOKK)*. He came from a very poor family and was orphaned at the age of eight. Whether it was school or survival, life was one big struggle. Eventually he came to Kinshasa and in 1986, through the witness of a twelve year old girl, JOKK came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. He was living with his aunt who took great offence at her nephew's newly-found faith and threw him out of the house. For two years he lived the lonely life of a homeless person, sleeping under trees, awning, or out in the fields. But the Lord's Presence and call were too great to ignore. He started to preach in the fields and though too poor to afford a roof or chairs he improvised old car seat frames for seating.



Jean Oscar Kiziamena Kabila from CONGO

Like Abraham Lincoln, JOKK's 'time had come.' The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him and he became one of Congo's leading healing evangelists. Basing his ministry on the motto (French): *Si ton dieu est mort, essaye le mien* (If your god is dead, try mine) JOKK is able to fill the great Martyrs' Stadium in Kinshasa with 120,000 people. His ministry has its own television station. He is the President of the umbrella organization *Congo for Christ*, which covers over 3,000 churches. In addition, he has planted over forty churches of his own, including several in key European locations like Belgium, France, England, and Scotland.

What is the result? The story is not over, but with an estimated population of 770 million, Africa could be nearing fifty per cent Christian, forty per cent Muslim, and the rest African religions. Dr. Livingstone would be pleased.

What about the rest of the vision? Africa is already sending missionaries into Europe. Some of the greatest churches on the continent are peopled by Africans, including in Paris and London. The largest church on the continent in Kiev, Ukraine, called Embassy of God, with a congregation of 25,000. Of great blessing to Australia has been the ministry of Prophet Bernard Blessing from Rescue Ministries in Ghana has been having a powerful impact on the churches of Victoria, culminating with his visit as the speaker at the Australian Christian Churches Victoria State Conference 1-4 October. Moving powerfully in the prophetic realm, calling out details of pastor's circumstances and even their names, he spoke of the pivotal role that Victoria and Australia will play in God's end-time economy. Over the years, other African born ministers like the late Benson Idahosa, Suzette Hattingh, and Rodney Howard-Browne, have also spoken about pivotal role of Melbourne and Australia in the latter days. Such are the blessings 'out of Africa.'

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