

Christ in Prophecy

Missions 2: “Greg Pruett on Bible Translation”

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: The Bible says in Matthew 24 that the Gospel will be preached to all the world and then the end will come. Are we living in the age when that prophecy is being fulfilled? For an expert’s opinion, stay tuned.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus our Blessed Hope and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. My special guest this week is Greg Pruett the President of Pioneer Bible Translators a premier Bible translation ministry located in the Dallas Texas area. Greg welcome to Christ in Prophecy.

Greg Pruett: Thank you so much.

Dr. Reagan: I tell you I really appreciate you taking the time out of your busy schedule to be here. I understand that you have been President of Pioneer Bible Translators since what 2007?

Greg Pruett: That’s right.

Dr. Reagan: And before that you were a Bible Translator in West Africa for what a dozen years?

Greg Pruett: That’s right, about that.

Dr. Reagan: A decade or something like that. Also I happened to know that you have a Civil Engineering degree from the Texas A&M University.

Greg Pruett: That’s right.

Dr. Reagan: And as a graduate of the University of Texas I must say that it took a real act of grace on my part to invite a Texas A&M graduate to be here.

Greg Pruett: I will try not to hold anything against you.

Dr. Reagan: Okay. Well let me ask you a question here; and that is how in the world did an engineering graduate in Civil Engineering from Texas A&M end up doing Bible translation work in Africa?

Greg Pruett: I guess it is kind of a love story really because I met my wife at Texas A&M and she was really passionate about Bible translation, and I was very passionate about her. And over time I just got drawn into it I guess.

Dr. Reagan: And what did you do? How did you get there?

Greg Pruett: Well we went off to Fuller Theological Seminary to study Missions and Scripture and then we did some work in linguistics in North Dakota and in Dallas and we headed off to France to learn French.

Dr. Reagan: So first of all you did get some basic training in languages and linguistics and that sort of thing.

Greg Pruett: That's right, and Scripture and Greek, and Hebrew and these kind of things.

Dr. Reagan: And then your first assignment was in West Africa an area where it had been under the French at one time or another.

Greg Pruett: That's right.

Dr. Reagan: So you had to go to Paris first and learn French.

Greg Pruett: That's right, we spent about a year in France learning French, which is about the coolest thing we have ever done for Jesus.

Dr. Reagan: Well somebody has to make those sacrifices.

Greg Pruett: Somebody has to go France.

Dr. Reagan: Then on to West Africa.

Greg Pruett: Right.

Dr. Reagan: And why was it necessary to learn French?

Greg Pruett: Well some of the people in this area speak French. The government language speaks French, all of the police checkpoints and interactions with the government it is all in French.

Dr. Reagan: So then you were going to actually translate the Bible not into French but you were going to translate it into a tribal language?

Greg Pruett: That's right. And there people really honestly didn't speak French, just a few people spoke French. But we could use that as a bridge to get into that context.

Dr. Reagan: Now you are going into an area with a language you have never learned before and how long does it take you just to prepare starting to translate? I mean don't you have to be there two or three years to learn the language?

Greg Pruett: It takes you about two years of learning the language. You go to the people who speak French and you ask for a few key phrases like, "What is he doing?" and "What is that?" You walk around the village taking notes, what is that, what is he doing? Two years later you are fluent in the language.

Dr. Reagan: That is if you have a capacity for language.

Greg Pruett: It helps. It helps a lot.

Dr. Reagan: I mean two years later I would probably still be asking, "How are you? How do you say that?"

Greg Pruett: It's not easy.

Dr. Reagan: But in two years time you can do that.

Greg Pruett: Right, you walk around point, they say, "Bong-kani," and you think I hope that means house. I am writing that down.

Dr. Reagan: Now did these people already have a written language?

Greg Pruett: They did not. There were some missionaries that had written things, but really they themselves had never really used it as a written language.

Dr. Reagan: So you are first of all putting their language into a written form?

Greg Pruett: First you have to figure out how to write the language, and then they themselves need to be taught to some extent how to read the language.

Dr. Reagan: Do you use Western alphabets?

Greg Pruett: We use a lot of the International Phonetic Alphabet.

Dr. Reagan: Oh, phonetic alphabet, okay.

Greg Pruett: And we also published in Arabic Script as well.

Dr. Reagan: Is that right?

Greg Pruett: Because some of the local people had Arabic Script.

Dr. Reagan: And then after two or three years you have learned the language and then you start the actual process of translating the New Testament into that language.

Greg Pruett: That's right.

Dr. Reagan: And how long does that take?

Greg Pruett: Well it varies depending on the education of the people. But for us it took about 12 ½ a little more than years.

Dr. Reagan: Twelve-and a half years.

Greg Pruett: It can take 30 or more years depending.

Dr. Reagan: And once you get that, you have the prospect of having to teach them how to read.

Greg Pruett: Right, we do that all along the way. The first day we were there the ladies of the church came to us and asked us to teach them how to read. We didn't even speak the language.

Dr. Reagan: Has computer technology speeded up the process of translation any at all?

Greg Pruett: It has greatly. We have computer assisted adaptations methodologies. We have all kinds of different, it helps with Greek and Hebrew and translation helps, all kinds of different things.

Dr. Reagan: And do you often find that there are tribal languages in the same area that are very similar so that you can easily then start making the translation into another tribal language?

Greg Pruett: Just similar enough to do an adaptation from our language to another related language. A lot of times it is a lot harder than it sounds, but it is possible.

Dr. Reagan: Do you still get out in the field these days?

Greg Pruett: I spend about a month each year in West Africa.

Dr. Reagan: And you have to spend a lot of the rest of your time in administration, and fund raising, and that sort of thing.

Greg Pruett: Yes I do.

Dr. Reagan: How many people do you have out in the field these days?

Greg Pruett: Well we have about the same number of people in preparation as we do overseas. We have 300 people on our team total. And we have between 80 and 100 full time career long-term missionaries overseas, and a bunch of interns and other things like that.

Dr. Reagan: That is fantastic. Do these people have to raise their own support?

Greg Pruett: As do I, we all have to raise our own support.

Dr. Reagan: Okay so they go to churches and that sort of thing, get it from mission budgets.

Greg Pruett: Churches, individuals, that's right. And we look at this as a great opportunity for us to mobilize the church. And we believe that is why God made it this way that we would need the church, so that the Church can learn about their purpose to reach out to the whole earth.

Dr. Reagan: That is just amazing to me, absolutely amazing. I appreciate you sharing that with us. I want to share something with you that I am sure is not going to come to any surprise to you and that is some amazing statistics about Christian world missions that I ran across recently. And I want to get your response to these. In 100 AD when the Church had just barely gotten started, been going about 70 years they were converting about 100 persons a day. By 1900 that was up to 1,000 a day, 1900, just about 100 years ago. By 1950- 4,000 a day, 1980- 20,000 a day, 1990- 86,000 a day, 1995- over 100,000 a day, the year 2000 over 200,000 people a day. That is what I call conversions on an exponential curve. I mean it is just going straight up.

Greg Pruett: That's true.

Dr. Reagan: It is amazing what is happening in these end times. In just a moment I want to get your response to that. I want to ask you what do you think is the reason that this is happening? What are the keys to this sudden explosion of conversions all over the world? So we will ask you that when we come back in just a moment.

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: Welcome back to Christ in Prophecy and our interview with Greg Pruett the President of Pioneer Bible Translators. Okay Greg tell us how in the world we can get from 1,000 Christian conversions a day in 1900, to 200,000 a day a hundred years later in the year 2000. How does that happen?

Greg Pruett: Well really the population of the world has exploded from 1.6 billion to now 6.9 billion people in the world. But not only that, technology has just exploded. You can have radio and different forms of media, you can have internet, you can have cell phone access to the Gospel and to Scripture. All of these things have accelerated exponentially over the same time period. Besides that the access to Scripture has just exploded exponentially over that same time period. Way back in the beginning very, very few people could any access to Scripture in their own language. But here in the last 30 years literally 1,000's of Scripture translations have been done. And then beyond that every kind of media has been used now in Scripture; the *Jesus Film*, is in 1,068 languages, billions of people have seen it. Then if you go beyond that, probably the most significant thing that has ever happened in the missions movement in the world today has been that now it is not sending missionaries only from Europe or from the United States, but the missionary movement has exploded into Korea, and into Brazil and all the different countries. Back in 1974 about 3,400 missionaries went out from non-Western countries, now it is over 103,000.

Dr. Reagan: Oh, my wow.

Greg Pruett: So literally 100,000 more.

Dr. Reagan: Well you mentioned a lot of things there. You know the first one you mentioned was radio and I was thinking about the fact that in the 1960's I bought myself a short-wave radio, I never had one before. I turned that thing on and the most amazing thing to me was as I

dialled that and heard languages all over the world I heard the name of Jesus in almost every language you could imagine. The atmosphere of this planet is saturated with the name of Jesus on the short-wave radio. Then you get satellite television, and Billy Graham I remember gave a sermon from either Puerto Rico, or Jamaica several years ago and it was carried by satellite television to over 100 nations in the world. In that one sermon he preached to more people than had been preached to in all of history of Christianity before then.

Greg Pruett: Truly remarkable.

Dr. Reagan: And it is just unbelievable.

Greg Pruett: And then in 1974 the laws on Congress wrote that 2/3 of the world's population was unevangelized, living in the least reached and unreached. By the time of the 1990's people were talking about half the world's population. Here today you can look the Joshua Project website about 40%.

Dr. Reagan: Well one of the most amazing technological developments to me is the Internet. You know on this television program we have access to 70 million homes in the United States, and we have access to every country in the world through 13 satellites. But that is nothing compared to the access we have through the internet. We have a full-time Web Minister here who is on there 8 hours a day talking to people all over the world.

Greg Pruett: And it has gone beyond the Internet to cell phone technology. Right now our close partner Faith Comes by Hearing they have 536 dramatized audio versions of the New Testament 536 languages, they are all available now on iPhone, and on 2 different Apps that you can use.

Dr. Reagan: And one that you mentioned also that I was glad to hear you mentioned was the *Jesus Film*, a lot of people don't know what that is but that is the Book of Luke, word for word that was filmed by Campus Crusade I believe it was.

Greg Pruett: That's right, it was.

Dr. Reagan: I think they have over 1500 teams showing that around the world right now. Many using an old 16 millimeter projector hooked up to a car battery.

Greg Pruett: I have shown it myself. It is in about 1068 languages that is has been dubbed into.

Dr. Reagan: I checked this morning and found they have shown that to 6 billion people total. They have 200 million conversions which is 21,000 a day, 630,000 a month, 7.5 million a year.

Greg Pruett: It is huge, it is huge.

Dr. Reagan: Now let's talk about Bible translation.

Greg Pruett: Okay.

Dr. Reagan: I am always looking for statistics and the statistics always vary but they are generally the same and that is basically that there are about 6900 languages in the world, that 438 roughly, somewhere around there 450, have the completed Bible, that there is another 2100 languages that don't have the completed Bible or the New Testament or whatever. Now that is a little bit misleading I found those statistics are. The reason I consider them misleading is because those 438 languages that have a complete Bible represent probably 85 to 90% of all the people in the world.

Greg Pruett: That's right.

Dr. Reagan: All these others we are talking about small tribal groups, right?

Greg Pruett: That's right. The ones that are remaining with not a scrap of Scripture about 2,252, you can get the up to the minute or the most recent official statistics from the Forum of Bible Agencies International website. And all of the Bible agencies cooperate together through that website and through their own individual efforts as well. So about 2,252 languages have no Scripture whatsoever, about 353 million people speak those languages.

Dr. Reagan: Okay.

Greg Pruett: It might be somewhere around a billion that don't have a New Testament so they are also in a pretty serious situation. But aside from that the remainders have access to either a New Testament or a Bible in their language, so a large portion of the world's population now has access to it.

Dr. Reagan: And there are many teams out there working right now, not only from Pioneer Bible Translators, but we've got Wycliffe.

Greg Pruett: Wycliffe, United Bible Societies, and other groups like Lutheran Bible Translators, and all of these we partner closely together. We are really tight, we are really living

in the end times because now more cooperation and more strong synergy is being developed than ever before in history.

Dr. Reagan: So if you are going to go in and start working with a particular group to get the Scriptures into their language you would check with others first to make sure they don't have the same purpose or idea.

Greg Pruett: That's right. And it's getting to be to be the situation where if the Bible translation movement continues to develop the same momentum that they have over the last 30 years; that over the next 20 years we are going to start every Bible translation project that is really needed in every viable language, just over the next 20, 20 something years.

Dr. Reagan: That's awesome, say that again, repeat that, I want people to really get in on this.

Greg Pruett: So if the same momentum continues, if you look at the trend of the last 30 years, and you look into the future, over the next 20 or 20 some odd years we are going to start every Bible translation project that is needed. The Bible translation movement all of these partners we have been talking about. So we are really in the process we have to check with each other or we are going to duplicate efforts. We have to start, and it is getting harder and harder to find a Bible translation project over 100,000 speakers.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Greg Pruett: So at this point we are doing a lot of work to make sure that every language over 100,000 speakers is going to have a Bible translation project going in it soon. And pretty soon we are going to be looking at the 50,000 and soon we will be looking at the 30,000 level. And 20 something years from now all of those will be spoken for God willing.

Dr. Reagan: I would imagine that this enormous effort must really require a lot of funds.

Greg Pruett: It is an extremely expensive to go to other places and mobilize other people. We have partners like the Seed Company, and Wycliffe US have been launching fund raising campaigns after fund raising campaign. And the rest of us we are all really working hard to not just get the funds, but the people, and also the skills.

Dr. Reagan: It seems to me that every church in America that has any heart for missions, and they all ought to have should have at least one Bible translation group in their budget.

Greg Pruett: I agree with that whole heartedly. It would make my life a lot easier.

Dr. Reagan: Well I am hoping some of those pastors who are watching right now will feel convicted about getting some Bible translation group whether it is your or someone else into their budget.

Greg Pruett: We have been praying for years now that God would mobilize the church to finish this task. And we are right now we believe we are right now training the generation of missionaries, we are recruiting and training the generation of missionaries that are going to leave behind them the legacy of a world in which every person on earth could have access to the New Testament in their own language.

Dr. Reagan: What a wonderful goal, that is just fantastic. You know when I think about churches supporting missions I always think about a friend who was our staff who went to a small church in Kentucky on a Sunday morning and one of the elders got up and said, "Folks I have been watching TV and there is a terrible drought going on in Africa. People are starving to death right and left. We need to get some aid to them. I found a Christian organization that will do it. Let's raise some money this morning, have a special offering and let's get some help to these people." And he, boy this staff member he was thinking, "Man, this is wonderful, this is great, what a vision to help people." And he was getting his checkbook ready, and all of sudden the pastor jumped up ran up to the pulpit and said, "Now before we take up this special offering, I want to remind you that we do need a new roof for our building." He said it was just like he threw a wet blanket on the whole thing. In other words he was saying don't give much because we need more here.

Greg Pruett: It's a reality that we live in. But the purpose of the Church, I mean the Lord said for us to do a certain task, to make disciples of all nations.

Dr. Reagan: He certainly did.

Greg Pruett: And when we are finished with that task, to Jesus' satisfaction, that will be the end of the age. So the Church needs to realize the purpose of the Church and to live out their purpose in their finances.

Dr. Reagan: We sure do, we really do. And I just pray that people watching this program will be convicted not only to give more to missions but also to urge their church to give more to missions, and to put Bible translation organizations into their budget. That is the reason I invited you here today because I have a real heart for this and I want to see people do that.

Greg Pruett: Oh, I praise the Lord for that.

Part 3

Dr. Reagan: Greg I found a very, very neat video clip on the Internet showing some of your translation work in New Guinea and I would like to show the viewers a little film clip of that. Would you introduce it for us, tell us what is all about?

Greg Pruett: Sure it's a little like going on a little mission trip, short term mission trip without all of the mosquitoes. And it is a celebration of the local people getting their New Testament for the first time ever. When you are watching this, just try to think about when was the last time you celebrated your Bible, like these Bibleless people celebrated getting the New Testament for the first time ever.

Dr. Reagan: Thank you Greg, and folks here is that video clip.

Video

Return to Him with all your heart, with fasting, weeping and mourning.
Bring your heart and change your life; come back to God your God.
Return to Him with all your heart, with fasting, weeping and mourning.
Bring your heart, can change your life, come back to God your God.
Lord, we surrender, we surrender. Lord, we surrender, we surrender.
Gather the people, the elders the children, even the nursing babes.
Let the ministers weep the tears of repentance; have mercy on us oh, God.
Lord, we surrender, we surrender. Lord, we surrender, we surrender.

Tribal man: Thanks to you all the citizens in America, the contribution and hard work you are with us, is not wasted. We have the God's Word in our hands now. So we really thank you for helping. Thank you.

[Song]

For He is gracious and compassionate. He's slow to anger, and abounding in love.
Lord, we surrender, we surrender. Lord, we surrender, we surrender.

Female Translator: It's not just the end product, the finished book that you are after. It's the lovely process of watching the Lord mold people's lives all along the way that makes it all worthwhile.

[Song]

Return to Him with all your heart, with fasting, weeping and mourning.

Bring your heart, and change your life, come back to God your God.

Gather the people, the elders, the children, even the nursing babes.

The ministers weep with tears of repentance; have mercy on us oh God.

Lord, we surrender, we surrender. Lord, we surrender, we surrender. Lord, we surrender, we surrender. Lord, we surrender, we surrender.

Yeah, yeah, we surrender to you.

Tribal man: We were reading the other translations the English, the Pidgin and other translations. But sometimes we see that it cannot help us. So when we read it now in our own language, we can understand everything about the Word of God.

Part 4

Dr. Reagan: Greg I want to thank you for supplying us with that inspirational video clip that was just fantastic. Why don't you take a moment to tell our viewers how they can get in touch with you and your ministry?

Greg Pruett: Sure you can get on our website at pioneerbible.org, and write us and you can get on our e-newsletter. You can look at YouTube and search for our Pioneer Bible Channel.

Dr. Reagan: Okay.

Greg Pruett: And see more of those videos.

Dr. Reagan: Well I hope they will do that, and I hope you will pick up some supporters as a result of this program. Thank you so much for being with us.

Greg Pruett: My pleasure.

Dr. Reagan: I praise God for you, your ministry, we will be praying for you. And we are just praying you reach more and more people with the Word of God. Folks stay with us; in just a moment I am going to discuss some of the prophetic implications of world missions.

Part 5

Dr. Reagan: Welcome back to Christ in Prophecy. Let's take a quick look at some of the prophetic implications of world missions. Matthew 24:14 says, "That the Gospel will be preached to the whole world and then the end will come." As we have seen in my previous discussion with Greg Pruettt that prophecy is being fulfilled before our very eyes today through the utilization of modern technology. Things like short-wave radio, and movies, satellite television, the internet, and the translation of the Bible into many languages. But there is one point I want to make crystal clear the preaching of the Gospel to all the world is not a condition for the Rapture of the Church. The Bible teaches that the Rapture is an imminent event that could occur at any moment, there are no signs of the Rapture. The signs of the times relate to the Tribulation, and the Second Coming. But when we see them accumulating as they are today you can be assured that the Rapture is right around the corner and that we are living on borrowed time.

One other point, although we are making great progress today in proclaiming the Gospel to all the world, the prophecy in Matthew 24:14 will not be completely fulfilled until near the end of the Great Tribulation. At that time right before the final pouring out of God's wrath in what the Bible calls the Bowl Judgments we are told in Revelation 14:6 that God in His infinite mercy will send forth an angel to proclaim the Gospel to every person on planet earth giving mankind one last opportunity to repent. The message proclaimed to the whole world by that Gospel angel will constitute the final fulfillment of the prophecy in Matthew 24:14, and then the end of this present age will come with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Now folks that will not be the end of the world, only the end of this present age, for when Jesus returns He will set up His Millennial reign whereby He will rule over all the world from Mount Zion in Jerusalem, for 1,000 years and the world will be flooded with peace, righteousness, and justice. In summary the return of our Lord is going to occur in two stages. First the Rapture of the Church, an event that could occur any moment, and then second the Second Coming which will occur at the end of the Tribulation, after the Gospel has been proclaimed to every person on earth. Are you ready for the Rapture? If Jesus were to appear in the Heavens today would you be called to Him, or would you be left behind to face the terrors of the Antichrist during the Great

Tribulation? If you are not ready I pray you will reach out to God in prayer, confess you are a sinner, repent of those sins and receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Don't put it off, do it now. Do it now, because your life will be transformed for you will receive the gift of the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit who will serve as your guide and comforter, and who will give you the strength to cope with the evil of this world.

Well that is our program for this week. I hope you will be back with us next week. Until then this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb and Lion Ministries' saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our redemption is drawing near."

End of Program