



DAVID LIVINGSTONE

PIONEERING MISSIONARY TO AFRICA

Christian Biographies

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Second Presbyterian Church



LARGER THAN LIFE LIVINGSTONE

One of the most celebrated heroes of Victorian England:

- Explorer to deep Africa
- Missionary Martyr
- Rags-to-Riches Story
- Accomplished Naturalist
- Anti-Slavery Crusader
- Gripping Journalist
- Expander & Reformer of Empire

EARLY LIFE

- Livingstone's Early Life:
- Descendant of Scots Covenanters
- Born in 1813, the son of a door-to-door tea salesman in Glasgow
- Parents were devout believers, inserting tracts with tea sales. Livingstone was trained in Bible memory from a young age.
- Went to work at age 10 at a mill; studied at night after 12 hours labor.
- Called to missions as a youth; studied medicine so to both "preach and heal."





LIVINGSTONE'S GOSPEL

- Application Essay for London Missionary Society (1837):
- “The Bible treats man as a moral and accountable agent. Salvation is freely offered to him. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved – faith in the work of Jesus Christ is all that is required to shield him from everlasting punishment. Yet he will not believe it, unless the Holy Spirit exerts his influence over his will by convincing him of sin, showing him the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of his own heart, the folly and danger of living in sin, and exhibits to his view the beauty of holiness.”



TO AFRICA

- Originally hoped to go to China, but was hindered by the first Opium War.
- Met Robert Moffat, veteran missionary to southern Africa. Determined to join Moffat in Botswana (where he was translating the Bible).
- Parted from family by reading Psalm 121
- On board a ship to Rio De Janeiro, studied navigation under the ship captain.
- Arriving at Cape Town, traveled 500 miles to Moffat's station in the bush of Botswana.
- Over the next 32 years, Livingstone covered 40,000 miles on foot, contracted malaria 27 times. Through it all "the thread of devotion to Africa woven in with his concern that the continent should be Christianized" (Cecil Northcott).



LIVINGSTONE AND HIS FAMILY

Married Mary Moffat, daughter of his missionary partner, in a union of true love.

Mary accompanied him on his first deep treks into central Africa, losing her first child as a result.

Livingstone planned a multi-year trek and thus sent Mary back to Scotland with their children. Both suffered emotionally from the absence.

“Let us do our duty to our Saviour and we shall meet again. I wish that time were now. . . . I can say truly, my dearest, that I loved you when I married you, and the longer I lived with you, I loved you better.”

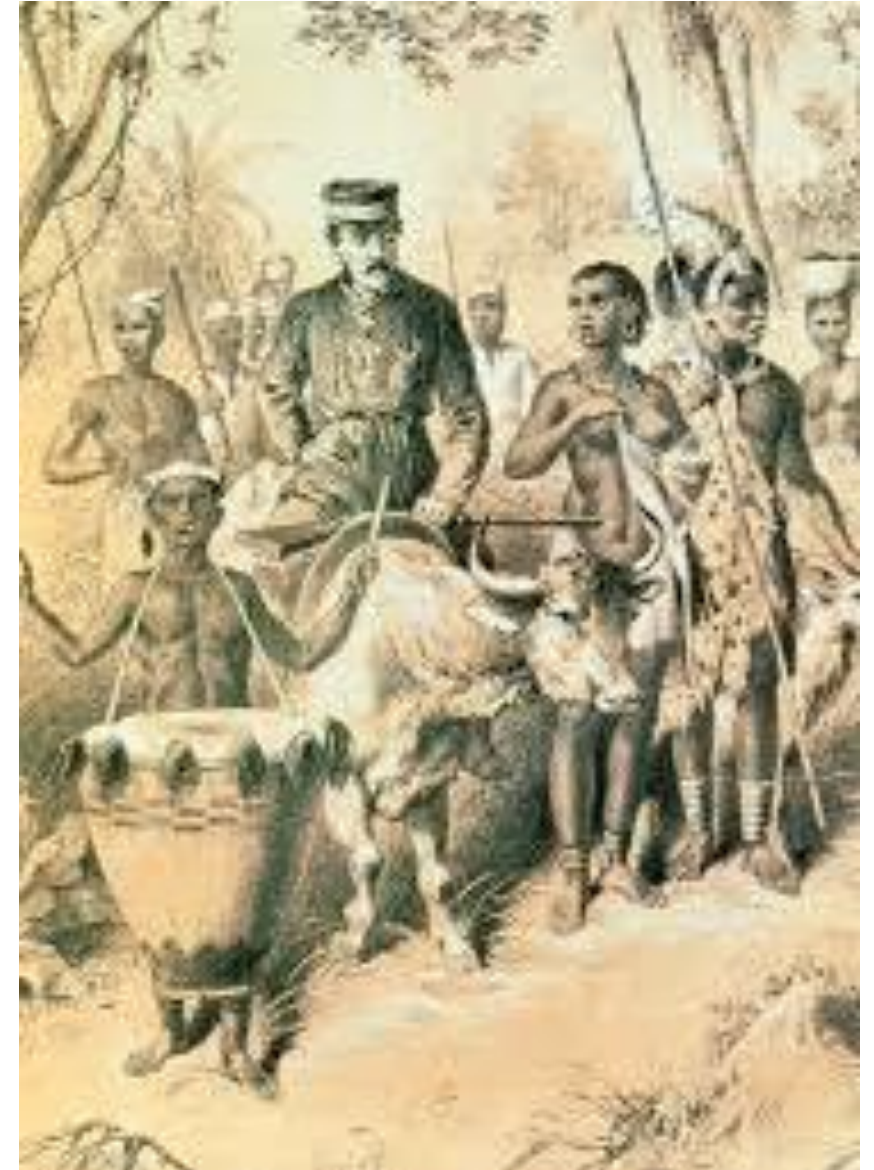
Mary was strong-willed, quarreling with her own and Livingstone’s family.

After 4 ½ years, Livingstone returned to England. In 1857, he and Mary returned to Africa, leaving 3 children behind. In 1861, she returned to her children, but came back to Africa in 1862, died and was buried beside the Zambesi River.

LIVINGSTONE'S MISSIONS STRATEGY

- Livingstone's aim was "the Christianization of Africa." To this end, he intended:
- To discover and chart central Africa, discovering the source of the Nile.
- Open the interior of Africa to British commerce and government
- Abolish the slave trade
- Inspire and pave the way for others to follow
- All to the end of bringing the light of the gospel to "the dark continent."

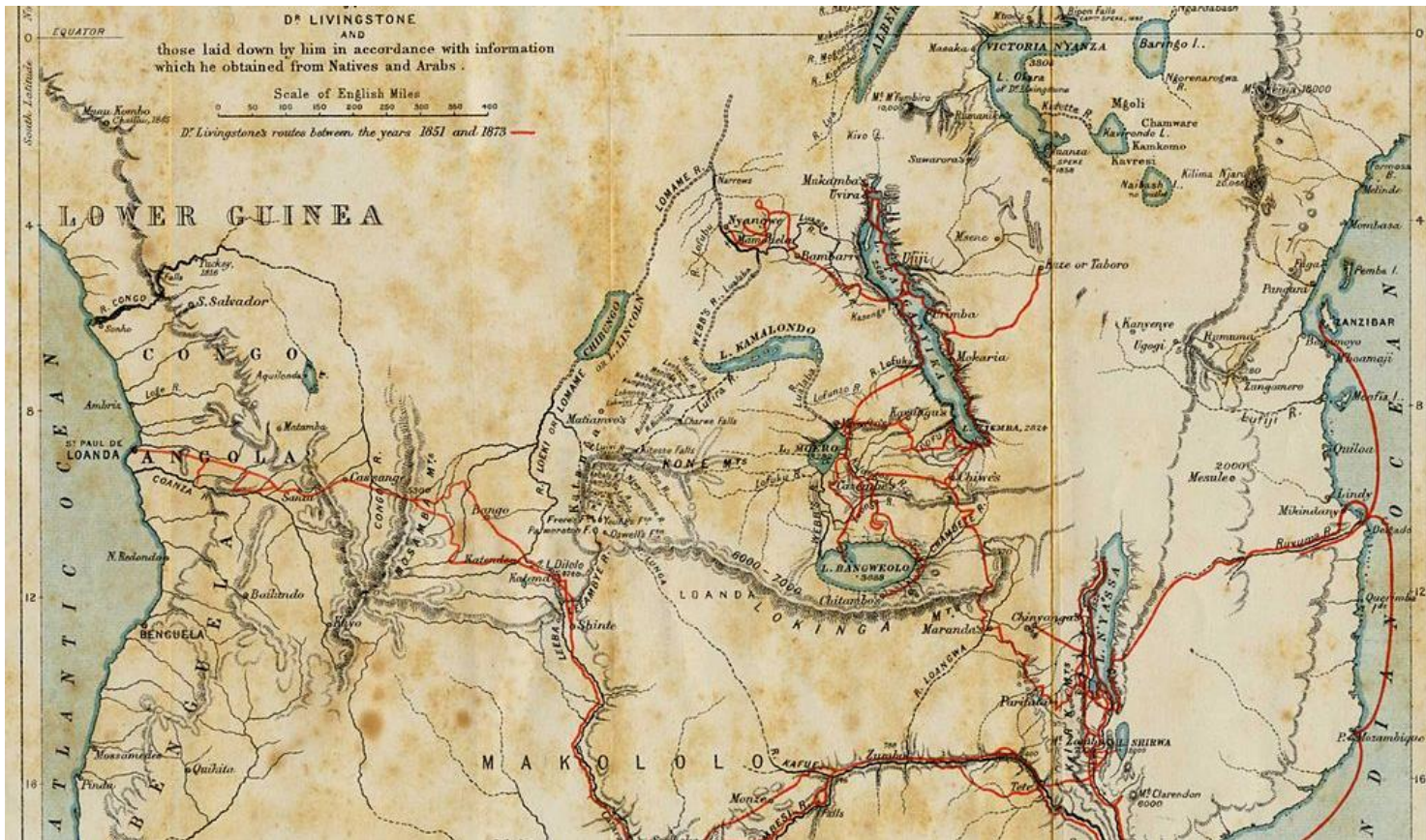
Although Livingstone planted no churches, and was famous for reasons other than the gospel, he preached Christ wherever he went.





LIVINGSTONE'S LABORS

- He saw “the smoke of a thousand villages, where no missionary had ever been.”
- 1845: Missions station in Botswana (abandoned due to conflict).
- 1847-51: Indifferent success at various mission stations.
- 1851-5: Sought to traverse the Zambezi River as a “highway” through Africa, from Mozambique through Zambia.
- As the first European to traverse sub-Saharan Africa, Livingstone became famous. Returned to UK to gain support for “Christianity, Commerce, Civilization.”



SECOND ZAMBESI EXPEDITION 1858-64

- Rejected by the London Missionary Society, Livingstone was made Her Majesty's Consul to Africa and was funded by the British Geographical Society.
- Involved a steamer, 10 Africans, and 6 Englishmen. The goal was to open up central Africa for minerals, trade, and the gospel.
- Livingstone lacked the skill to manage such a large expedition and the Zambesi could not be navigated by ship.
- Livingstone's leadership style alienated all and led to quarrels: he was "secretive, self-righteous, moody, and could not tolerate criticism." Physician John Kirk: "I can come to no other conclusion than that Dr. Livingstone is out of his mind and a most unsafe leader."
- Expedition recalled in 1863. Livingstone took his steamer with a small crew across the Indian Ocean to arrive in Bombay. Returned to England, where he popularized his achievements in his book *Narrative of the Expedition to the Zambesi*.



TO THE SOURCE OF THE NILE

- Returned to Africa in 1861, seeking to discover the source of the Nile.
- Livingstone went as the sole European, joined by freed slaves and other African servants and Sepoys.
- For six years, he was lost to the world, increasingly abandoned by his helpers and often having his supplies stolen. His health greatly deteriorated.
- “Discovered” Victoria Falls, mapped Lake Tanganyika and Lake Malawi, and the upper Zambezi River. Filled in the map of the African interior.
- Occasional messages from Livingstone made it out of Africa, causing the world to be fascinated with him. In 1869, the New York Herald sent Henry Stanley to search for him. Found him near lake Tanganyika. “Dr. Livingstone, I presume?” “Yes. I feel thankful I am here to welcome you.”
- Livingstone died in 1873 in Malawi from malaria and dysentery. His heart was buried beneath a baobab tree and his body sent back to be buried in Westminster Abbey.



LIVINGSTONE'S FLAWED CHARACTER

He was “a complex and engaging subject, larger than life, determined and driven, but essentially a fallible and vulnerable individual.” (Sarah Warden, Royal Scottish Museum).

Notoriously Stubborn: Told the LMS that he was willing to go anywhere “provided it be forward.”

Admitted that he was “sometimes fearfully guilty of mistrust” and asked for prayer that he might “not take offence so readily and aggressively.”

Virtually everyone who followed him abandoned him, except his wife.



LOVE FOR THE AFRICANS

Mary: “His greatest strength was his empathy with the heathens he had come to convert.”

Sharply contrasted with the racial attitudes of his time. His “compassion for the most oppressed Africans was limitless.” Saw the as fellow image-bearers of God and desired to elevate them spiritually and materially.

David Kaunda, President of Zambia (1973): “After 100 years David Livingstone’s spirit and the love of God so animated his friends of all races that he gathered here in Thanksgiving.”

After Zambian independence, all English place names were changed, except for the city Livingstone. Today, Africans flock to the Livingstone Center in Scotland, often bursting into tears or breaking out into songs to the Lord.

MISSIONARY IMPACT

Recorded as having led only 1 person to Christ, the chieftain Sechele, who then converted his entire nation to Christian faith. Sechele is said to have done “more to propagate Christianity in 19th-century southern Africa than virtually any single European missionary.”

Inspired and paved the way for a generation of missionaries who followed: “Do you carry out the work which I have begun. I leave it with you.” Numerous missionary societies to Africa were inspired by Livingstone.

Led to the end of the slave trade in southern Africa. The year of his death was the last year that slaves were sold in the Zanzibar market.

David Calhoun: “It was exploration with a purpose – not to satisfy his ambition but to promote the glory of God. . . . During his long and arduous journeys Livingstone consoled himself by the fact that he was sowing the seeds of the gospel that hopefully would be cultivated and grow to be harvested later.”

“Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring” (Jn. 10:16) – inscribed on Livingstone’s tomb.



FURTHER READING

