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## The Old Testament and Missions

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# Mission in the Old Testament

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Why would anyone be “interested in missions?” Often it goes back to a moving in the spirit or to an emotional response to a missionary speaker who described the need of thousands or millions who are suffering now and will be for eternity. Such emotional responses are easily experienced and just as easily disappear, especially in the midst of the mundane, problematic and sometimes miserable circumstances of living cross-culturally. Home never looked so good.

However noble, the willingness to undertake the difficult tasks of mission, emotional motivations will be so tested and overwhelmed with everything from conflicts to grief that one begins to wonder, “Why am I here?” When in the midst of the jungle, the desert or a mega-city, by far the deepest motivation that never fades or varies is the deep conviction gleaned from in-depth Bible study that it is God who wants this people group to know about Himself. You cannot quit until you can say “mission accomplished.” It does not matter how much you may be hurting, how disillusioned, frustrated or frightened. You must be convinced that world evangelization is what is most on His heart ... it is and it always has been. The confidence that you know “lo, I am with you to the ends of the earth” has special meaning to you. Then it is possible to say, “I’ll go through anything if He goes with me. If reaching this people is the eternal value on His heart, then I’ll make it the same in my heart ... no matter how I feel.”

Mission is rooted in the nature of God, who sends and saves. When Adam and Eve acquiesced to Satan's temptations in the Garden of Eden, God came searching for them, calling, “Where are you?” (Gen 3:9). This question testifies to the nature of God throughout all generations. He continually seeks to initiate reconciliation between Himself and His fallen creation. “God demonstrated His nature by sending His one and only Son into the world. The emphasis of John 3:16 is on God, who loved the world so much that He “gave.” “This is the very nature of God. He is always giving, relating, reconciling, redeeming! He is the spring that gives forth living water -- the source of mission! From the very foundation of the world God has been the great initiator of mission, as vividly portrayed by the acts of God in both the Old and New Testaments” (Van Rhee, 1996, p. 14).

To develop this conviction one must see the Bible as a whole, not as 39 books in the OT and 27 books in the NT with different messages, but one book with a global focus. If the Bible is God telling man what He is like, then you would expect to see mission through-out this revelation. This chapter will walk us through the development of this revelation. It is written with the objective that reader will allow God to inculcate His heart's desires, touching the reader's heart with His love for the nations. Walter Kaiser, professor of Old Testament and President of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, put it this way: the theme of mission is a “driving passion throughout the entire Old Testament” (Kaiser, 2000, p. 7).

## Purposes of God in the Old Testament

God created human beings in His image, but without infallibility and without His the divine nature; thus man was innocent, but vulnerable to sin's influence. However, both the angels and man had a free will to choose God's way or their own.

In eternity past, God foreknew that sin could exist if He created free beings in His image. In what must have been an agonizing decision (not unlike the prayer in the Garden of

Gethsemane) He decided to create the angels and man knowing that they would bring sin into existence by their own choosing.

Sin would be permitted to run its full course through history until God could withhold His wrath no longer (Rev. 19:15). Though He condemned sin, which was repugnant to His holiness, motivated by His infinite quality of grace, He provided Himself the only totally sufficient and just payment for all the sin of His created beings. God the Father unleashed His just wrath on His perfect sin sacrifice, His beloved Son, on that day on Calvary's hill. The most amazing story of all human history is the story of God's unfathomable love for His created beings, mankind. All God seems to want is for every person on earth to hear this unbelievable story and believe it.

Immediately after the flood God established a covenant or promise with Noah (Gen 9:8-17) that was to include "every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth" (Gen 9:16): God's commitment was worldwide. Throughout the covenants and continued revelations God has consistently demonstrated that He expected the nation He would choose, Israel, to share His revelations with the rest of the nations, since they effect all mankind.

Israel's assignment was twofold: to serve as the family through which the promise and blessing of the Messiah would come (compare Gen. 12:1-3; 15:5-7; 17:4-8), and through Him to be a spiritual light to the other nations of the world (Is. 42:6-7; 44:8; 49:6), that is, communicate to the nations that the Messiah came and what He did for them.

The Hebrews, beginning with Abraham, were given a missionary task to live in the light of what God had revealed to them. He placed them in a strategic locale, and enabled them to build a house of prayer, the Temple, for all nations (see 1 Kin. 8:41-43). Grateful obedience and faithful witness were the proper responses to God's call. God's purpose was to bless all the families of the earth through Abraham (Gen 12:1-3; 18:18-19; 22:15-18) and his descendants (Isaac: 26:2-4; Jacob 28:14), but, sadly, Israel did not share the same heart for the world.

Amos offers a wonderful ray of hope in an otherwise unhappy book of prophecy when he alludes to all the Gentiles who are to be called by the Lord's name (Amos 9:12). This is a hope to all who were not descended from Jacob. It is not just a possibility, but a promise, that those outside of Israel will have access to God. Even as His judgment was coming upon Israel and the nations of the ancient world, God promised that out of the chaos and calamity He would raise up a place of worship for all who will come to Him.

"Throughout the Bible God's thought and plan for the world's evangelization are everywhere in evidence. From cover to cover the Bible is a missionary book, so much so that, as someone has expressed it, one cannot cut out its missionary significance-without completely destroying the book. For, let it be understood, scriptural authority for world-wide missions rests not merely upon a group of proof texts, but upon the entire design and spirit of the Bible as it reveals God in His relation to men and nations, and as it traces the unfolding of His purposes down through the ages." Glover, 1936, p. 102)

## Missions in the Old Testament

"Probably the last thing a person is likely to think about in connection with the Old Testament is a missionary message to the Gentiles" (Kaiser, 2000, p. 7). From **Genesis 1 He gave the first command to man** to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (Gen 1:28). Sadly, man rebelled and God promised that He would destroy Satan and sin through the "seed of the woman" (3:15), called the *protoevangelium*. God wanted man to take His name and the promise to Adam throughout all His creation.

Sometime **after the fall**, man's rebellion brought God's judgment in the form of a massive flood that left only Noah and his family, along with some select animals (Gen 7:23) to begin life again on earth with a similar command, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (Gen 9:1). Man decides again to disobey by congregating and building towers that would reach to the heavens. To get people to do as He commanded He confounded their languages such that they had to disperse and live with those of similar language (Gen 11:17-18). Notice again that God's actions encompassed the world. The sons of Noah with distinct languages migrated to different regions of the world as described in Gen. 10. No distinction among these pre-Abrahamic nations is made until Gen 11:10 when Shem is mentioned as the forefather of Abraham (11:26).

**By about 2,000 BC God reveals Himself to Abraham** and says, "in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (a statement repeated to his son and grandson - Gen 12:3; 26:3-4; 28:14). Abram's name was changed to Abraham, i.e., "father of a multitude of nations" (Gen 17:5; 22:18). The "Abrahamic Covenant" became the key promise to reach the world through the blessing that Abraham received by faith in God's promise. Paul makes it clear that the message of the gospel in the NT is exactly the same message of faith that Abraham experienced in Romans 4:1-3. Then Paul asks the question if this "blessing" was only for the "circumcised" (i.e., the Jews) or also for the "uncircumcised" (i.e., the Gentiles), and the answer is in the affirmative. The "blessing" of God's righteousness being granted to sinful man by faith has always been the same message to the world that God wanted Israel to understand and spread around the world.

**Six hundred years later Moses (1400 BC) leads Israel out of Egypt** into the Arabian desert where he meets with God on Mt. Sinai. The dramatic departure from Egypt had its objective "in order to show you my power and in order to proclaim my name through all the earth" (Ex 9:16). God delivers Israel so that they would know His great name (Deut 4:5-6). The law was designed to show them that their own righteousness would never be acceptable and that they needed to trust God for His righteousness by faith.

**Through out the Historical Books (Joshua – Nehemias: 1400-500 BC)** God providentially leads His people through experiences, like the drying up of the Red Sea and 40 years later the Jordan River, so that "all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, so that you may fear the LORD your God forever" (Josh 4:24). Four hundred years later at the dedication of the Temple Solomon prays that whenever a foreigner comes to pray in the Temple that he built, Solomon asked that the Lord would listen and answer the prayer, "in order that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name" (1 Kings 8:41-43; 1 Chr 16:23; 2 Chr 6:32-33). Later God granted Solomon unusual wisdom so that all the nations would come to hear of the things God did for him (1 Kings 10:23-24).

**In the Psalms one of the major themes that God reveals is His intent** by declaring, "Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth" (Psa 46:10; 9:20; 18:49; 22:27; 45:17; 57:9, 67; 72:11-19; 79:10; 86:8-10, 96; 89:2; 102:15-22; 106:47; 108:3, 117; 126:2; 138:4). God is universally concerned about the nations of the earth. He owns the nations (Ps 60:7-8; rebukes the (9:5); judges them (7:8; 9:8; 67:4; 96:13; 98:9); He rules (22:28; 42:2, 7-8); chastens them (94:10); laughs at them (2:4); He pours out wrath on them (2:5); and keeps watch on them (66:7). But God's ultimate objective is to be exalted among the nations (46:10) as they come to know Him.

**The Major and Minor Prophets repeat this theme (800-400 BC).** Isaiah stated, "Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name. Make known His deeds among the peoples; Make them

remember that His name is exalted” (Isa 12:4; 2:2; 6:3; 11:9; 42:6-10; 60:3; 66:18-19). Their message is consistent: God’s authority is over the world, especially in judgment. If the people will not listen to His word then He will do a “strange work” (Isa 28:21; see 28:22-23).

God used Gentile nations and kings for His purposes. Sometimes God would punish the Gentile nations through Israel, and sometimes He would punish Israel through the Gentile nations. For Isaiah this was not unusual because he saw God as Creator (Isa 40:12) and as the controller (41:4). In one of the most remarkable prophecies of the OT, Isaiah describes how the king of Persia, “Cyrus,” “he is my shepherd! And he will perform all my desire” (Isa 44:28). This Persian king admitted that “The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth” (Ezra 1:2). Ezra recorded that it was the God of Israel who “stirred up the spirit of Cyrus” such that he would give the decree to free Israel (Ezra 1:1) after precisely 70 years of captivity (606-535 BC).

Jeremiah declares the purpose of God saying “this time I will make them know my power and my might; and they shall know that my name is the LORD” (Jer 16:21; 1:5; 3:17). He is all about getting people to know who He is.

Ezekiel makes one of the clearest statements of God’s purpose in working with Israel to reach all the nations: “It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went” (Ezek 36:22-23; 5:5-8).

The successor to Cyrus, Darius witnessed the amazing protection of Daniel in the den of lions then he wrote to “all the peoples, nations, and men of every language ... in all the land” of his kingdom. He told them to “fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; for He is the living God and enduring forever” (Dan 6:25-26). This was God’s plan for the whole world.

Habakkuk gave a glorious global purpose that God set forth: “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab 2:14; Zeph 2:11; 3:9-10; Haggai 2:7; Zech 9:11; 2:11).

Malachi concludes the OT with the declaration of intent of God: “My name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts” (Mal 1:11).

## **Does the Old Testament reveal that God had a Missionary Message?<sup>1</sup>**

The consistent message through the OT was that God is concerned about all the peoples of the world. This is the foundation of all the OT notion of a missionary plan of God. If truly there is only one God and only one message of reconciliation, then it must be for all mankind.

We can only speculate how God had communicated before Abraham. The intent of God to communicate with man is suggested in Heb 1:1, “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways...” God is a personal God who made man in His own image with the purpose of revealing Himself to his human creation. Making man in the image of Himself, though without divine attributes, would enable man to communicate with and reflect his Creator.

It seems from the beginning that God would make Himself known to a few (Noah, Abraham, Moses) via special revelations, then this message was to be passed on to succeeding

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<sup>1</sup> The basic outline followed in the remainder of this chapter is from Gordon Olson’s *What in the World is God Doing?* (pp. 22-34).

generations. Initially it was to be by oral recitation of the message until Moses, when the revelation was recorded in a written form for all generations and all people of the world. This would allow the translation of the message as well as an in depth analysis of the message's grammar, linguistic structure and historical background to assure an uncorrupted understanding of the message.

“There are three basic texts that make it clear that God did commission Israel to go to the Gentiles. These are: Genesis 12:1-3, Exodus 19:4-6, and Psalm 67. These three texts are so basic to our understanding of the missionary mandate that God had designed for the whole nation of Israel that it is impossible to view the Old Testament fairly without treating these texts in their missionary context. In the plan and purpose of God, Israel had always been responsible for communicating the message of God's grace to the nations. Israel was meant to be a communicating nation” (Kaiser, 2000, p. 11).

## Self-Revelation of God

The only way anyone can know and understand another person is if that person chooses to reveal what he is like, what he thinks, likes, or dislikes, and what he wants done in the future. This is the primary purpose of the Old Testament revelation.

### *One God as Creator of the Universe*

The OT is the revelation of God: how He is, what He has done, what He values, and what He plans to do. Fourteen hundred years before Christ, God began to reveal to Moses the first record of an inspired text that God had given to reveal Himself and His purpose to mankind. It was written not as the story of Noah, Abraham, Jacob, David and Daniel, but rather the story of the God of Noah, Abraham, Jacob, David and Daniel. The uniqueness and universality of *Yahweh*-God made Him like none other. Cris Wright writes, “According to the OT texts, the faith of Israel made remarkable affirmations about *Yahweh*, affirmations which had a polemical edge in their own context and still stand as distinctive claims. Among them are the declaration that *Yahweh* alone is God and there is no other (e.g. Deut. 4:35, 39) and that *Yahweh* is God over the whole earth and all nations (e.g. Ps. 24, 96, 1 Chron. 29:11 etc.)” (Wright, 2004). It was not easy to convince the descendants of Abraham in the face of many sophisticated and influential religions, much less the rest of the world ... but this would become the task of Moses.

From the beginning, the invisible God revealed Himself with the intent that men would discover Him as He really is and want to know and worship this awesome God. He is first seen as the Creator of the universe and the special Benefactor and Judge of Adam and Eve. He is a God of righteousness and holiness that is beyond our imagination.

He gave Adam and Eve only one restriction with no other apparent reason except to test man's will to trust Him. He was to choose God's will or to decide in his perceived autonomy that his wisdom was better than his Creator's. Whatever the fruit was is irrelevant. However, this seemingly minor infraction of a rule was catastrophic to God.

It was not a grievous sin like murder or adultery, but it was disobedience to God's command. A man-like god would have excused this act as a bad judgment call or a momentary lapse in moral integrity, then would have given them another chance. It is hard for us to imagine the offence and disdain that a holy God has for any single sin, but it should be evident in that His

response to this act of disobedience was to condemn Adam and Eve and all creation to a changed nature and utter rejection in His presence. This natural propensity towards sin and selfishness was then passed on to all of their descendants.

God's justice demands that the sins of every human be punished by death, both physical and eternal. There are no exceptions. This indicates how horrible sin is to God. It is not a slap on the wrist, but it is so offensive to God's holiness, that only death will satisfy His justice. How trivial we often think "minor" sins are, but not so with God. What He has revealed about Himself is scary to mankind who love the sin that God hates; that is, all and every sin.

In His graciousness, though God condemns all sin, He was provided a substitute that He would be willing to punish in the place of the sinner, if man was willing to accept such a substitute payment. A lamb was killed by God in the Garden and its skin was provided as the first clothing to Adam and Eve (the first implied death in the Bible) (Gen 3:21). Though God would punish Adam and Eve along with the entire creation, yet He would never leave them nor reject them ultimately. He continued to reveal Himself and to give them every reason to trust Him for forgiveness and acceptance, if they were willing to do so.

Thus began the plan of God, not to coerce or manipulate man, but to sufficiently reveal Himself and His grace to all men who were interested in knowing and trusting Him.

Moses would eventually record the special revelations that God had been giving as well as what had specifically been given to him. Gordon Olson describes this revelation when he wrote: The first verse of the Bible stands as a marvelous refutation of most of the errors of mankind's confused religions. It denies atheism, agnosticism, evolution, polytheism, materialism, and pantheism in one fell swoop. This is the basic truth of ultimate reality that mankind as a whole strives to repress. The Animist has some remembrance of God as Creator but thinks that He is not concerned with mankind. The Hindu and the Buddhist have an eternal universe with no creator. The Shinto legends have evolving gods. So the oneness of a personal, Creator God has been corrupted by the imaginations of man. The sophisticated modern evolutionist goes to great lengths to deny the Creator and especially His direct role in the creation of man (Olson, 2003, p. 22).

### *A Righteous God of Judgment*

As man began to multiply, he quickly forgot his Creator and any supposed revelations that God might have given during the pre-Noahic period. Whatever was revealed was ignored and man again chose to be independent of God, sliding into sin's deceptive addictions. For it was God's design, even though not yet clearly revealed, to make the human race and its redemption the means of glorifying His Son. As a result, His Name should be exalted above every name. Glover points out that this pre-Noahic people said, "'Let us make *us* a name.' Here was revealed that spirit of self-love and self-seeking which ever since has dominated men and nations, and which has opposed and hindered the working out of His missionary purpose and the bringing in of the universal dominion and glory of Christ. And so God had to interpose, confound their language, and upset their ambitious plans" (Glover, 1936, pp. 103-104).

Can you imagine the indignation that God felt in order to decide to send a universal flood? Yet in His grace, one man found favor before Him. Noah was a preacher of the blessing of righteousness that God offered to a perverted generation for 120 years, but to no avail (Gen 6:3, 5-8). No one believed that God was serious about judging man's sin. Olson described this revelation of God in *What in the World is God Doing?*

Noah is called a "preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet 2:5). Indeed his ancestor Enoch had prophesied of the coming judgment on unrepentant sinners (Jude 14-15). The message of Noah was that God is righteous and holy and will judge sin. The core error of heathen religion is the repression of this very truth. The gods of the ancient Greeks and Romans were not particularly moral; neither are the gods of the Hindus. [It is] not that heathen religions don't have moral standards - they do. The problem is that the standards are not God's standards; they are man-made ... Noah realized that since God is a righteous God of judgment, it was important to reach his fellow humans before God's judgment fell. They didn't believe that God's judgment was coming (Olson, 2003, p. 23).

### *A Gracious God who provides salvation*

*Yahweh* not only reveals Himself as a holy God who despises all sin, but at the same time the God who offers to sinners a solution to their sin problem, if they want it and will trust Him alone. God is always taking the initiative to intervene when necessary. It was God who first shed the blood of an animal to give a covering to Adam and Eve's nakedness and shame for their flagrant rejection of God's command.

Likewise He revealed Himself to Noah and gave him the message of righteousness that God offers, even though he found no takers for his message. Again He intervened in the life of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and many more throughout OT history to encourage people to take His Words seriously. The few that did were granted unbelievable favor in His sight.

The question that must be answered only by revelation (because man only conjures up speculations) is "How is a sinful man to become acceptable to a holy God?" Another vital question that false religions do not deal with is, "How can I solve the problem of my sin?" At best, false religions attempt to tell you how to be better, but never deal with past sins with any finality. Only God could reveal to man what He will accept. Man's speculations mean nothing and certainly do not impress the One to whom we must give account. This was the failure of Cain. He wanted to worship God his own way. There are not many ways to know God or to worship God.

If man does not listen to God's revelation he is only guessing. Man thinks he controls his destiny, but he only controls the decisions he makes during his life. Once beyond this life, his state is entirely in the hands of God. The only God who is there has determined to only offer salvation to sinful men during this life time, but that offer ends at the individual's death (Heb 9:27).

The offer, however, is not concrete or visible. It is not something we do or something we think will impress God (this was Cain's error). It is accepting the truth of our own sinfulness, recognizing how shameful and repugnant we are before a holy God, then whole-heartedly clinging to the promise of a loving God who freely gives His righteousness, full forgiveness and acceptance in His sight for those who wholeheartedly trust Him and His Word. Amazing! This was the message of Noah, and Abraham down through the OT history. The writings of Moses opened the door for a message to the world.

## Revelation of man's nobility and depravity

### *Created in the image of God*

The Old Testament unveils many truths about God and about the nature of man, which contradicts many speculations of man throughout history. The description of the creation of man in Gen 1:26-27 shows the uniqueness of man in contrast to the animal life. It is not just a larger brain cavity that makes man unique. It is because man was created in the "image of God." This is not a reference to appearance, but to nature. Man has a moral, intellectual and volitional likeness to God, created to be able to understand and communicate with his Creator on a personal level. He was noble and capable enough to rule over the animal and plant world. Likewise, man was expected to obey the Laws of his Creator. "God makes no moral demands of lower animals since they were not created in His image. The image of God in man makes us responsible moral beings" (Olson, 2003, p. 24).

### *Human Race as a Unit*

This author has lived among tribal people in the jungles of Colombia and worked among sophisticated university students in Argentina, only to discover that they were basically the same kind of people. Their needs of self-confidence, resolving insecurities, craving for relationships and family and a sense of destiny were remarkably similar. The tribesman's awareness of his world made him a scholar in his own environment. The need for friendships and ability to communicate while caring for others were remarkably similar. The idea that "primitive" people are sub-human or more animal-like is totally unsubstantiated. Humans are humans, all with the same feelings, hopes, needs, cares, and ability to understand each other and to communicate in their own language.

"The Bible-believer holds to the unity of the whole human species ... If we share the same human blood, then we are responsible for all men, not just those of our nation, race, and color. Racial pride and discrimination thus become a violation of His creative order and the enemy of His redemptive plan ... Tragically, hundreds of millions of people are bound by ethnic religions which make no claim to universality: Shinto for Japanese, Hinduism for Indians, etc" (Olson, 2003, p. 24).

Luke wrote<sup>ET</sup> **Acts 17:26-27** "From **one man he made every nation of the human race to inhabit the entire earth**, determining their set times and the fixed limits of the places where they would live: <sup>27</sup>That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him," Sadly each of these nations has developed ethnic religions which enslave their followers in a false sense of security that only the truth can break, if they could ever get a chance to hear.

### *Sin and Depravity Universal*

God had declared to Adam and Eve, when they chose to disobey God's command, that they would die spiritually. As physical death means the separation between the real you and your body (you will continue to live somewhere forever), so spiritual death means the separation between you and God. In Isaiah 59:2 the prophet declared, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have caused him to reject you and not listen to your prayers." Thus the very moment that Adam sinned he died spiritually, God separated Himself from Adam, just as God had said He would (Gen 2:16-17). God and man no longer had anything in common. As a

result, all of Adam's descendents inherited his sinful nature (Ps 51:5; Rom 5:12). Only the Lord Jesus, born of a virgin, escaped this inherited sinful nature (2 Cor 5:21).

Paul described this sinful nature and human depravity in Rom 2-4. The latter chapter deals with those who are not consumed with a reprobate mind, but equally were guilty of sin; however, they were unable to avoid sin in their lives and could not please God (Rom 8:6-7) just as Adam could not. Adam was driven from God's presence.

Regardless of how religious or moral anyone may be (Rom 4) all men are equally in need of a Savior who alone is able to deal with their sin issue before a holy God. If all men are guilty of sin (Rom 3:22b-23), then the only injustice in the world is the inequality of the distribution of the knowledge of the saving work of Christ. It must be noted that this situation is not God's responsibility or making. Rather it is laid on the shoulders of all who know the truth of how God is willing to forgive all sins and grant His righteousness to anyone who trusts and believes in Him alone.

### *The "blessing" Abraham's descendents were to pass on to the world*

Abraham discovered the amazing grace of God who granted to him the righteousness of God (Gen 15:6) and thus perfect acceptance before the Lord. This was the "blessedness" of Abraham (Rom 4: that "righteousness" would be granted or "credited" to any of his descendents (Rom 4:6-9) and to anyone in the world who would be willing to trust in His Word as did Abraham (Rom 4:3). The "blessing" of God is not that He will provide prosperity, happiness and healing to His followers, but rather acceptance before a holy God.

The argument of Paul in Romans 4 was that Abraham was uncircumcised (Rom 4:10-12) when God granted him "righteousness" by faith, thus he was technically still a Gentile! If God could grant righteousness to Abraham before he came under the sign of the Covenant (circumcision), then He could grant righteousness to any Gentile without their being obligated to become a Jew first. Thus the OT message is a universal message for all mankind and not a Jewish message. If only someone would tell the rest of the world.

This was the message of righteousness by faith that was the blessing which Abraham and his descendents were expected to pass on to all the "families of the world." To hoard this message of grace, refusing to be concerned about the people groups of their world, is only comparable to the Church's reluctance to take the same message of faith to the people groups of modern times.

## **Does the Old Testament show a Missionary Purpose?**

The misunderstanding about Israel's acceptance was that the election of Israel as God's choice people was, in effect, a choosing for salvation. As a result they became self-centered and thought they had a racial favoritism, making other races inferior or repugnant to God. They thought the unelected were reprobate and thus detestable to them.

Israel's misunderstanding annulled God's purpose for choosing Israel to be a "light to the world." The argument of Paul in Romans 9 was that only the "children of the promise" (that God would grant His righteousness to anyone who would trust or believe in God's promise) are the "children of God." Those of Israel who are only "children of flesh" without a personal faith are not "children of God" though they are part of the elect Israel (Rom 9:8).

Because of our failure to grasp the salvation by faith of Abraham as a universal offering that would “bless” all the nations of the world, the purpose of God for Israel was lost. Walter Kaiser expresses the disappearance of this purpose from the OT: “Some may still doubt that the Old Testament explicitly enjoined believers and messengers in the Old Testament to go to the Gentiles. Did God, they ask, ever send an Israelite or the whole nation with the Great Commission?” Kaiser, 2000, p. 11).

The story of Abraham, beginning in Genesis 12, gives a clear answer. God's declared commitment is that He intends to bring the “blessing” to the nations: “all the families of the earth will be blessed through you” (Gen. 12:3). This concept is repeated six times in Genesis alone, and this key affirmation is the foundation of biblical mission, in as much as it presents the mission of God. “The creator God has a purpose, a goal: blessing the nations of humanity. So fundamental is this that Paul defines the Genesis declaration as 'the gospel in advance' (Gal. 3:8). And the concluding vision of the whole Bible signifies the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise, as people from every nation, tribe, language and people are gathered among the redeemed in the new creation (Rev. 7:9). The gospel and mission both begin in Genesis, then, and both are located in the redemptive intention of the Creator to bless the nations. Mission is God's address to the problem of fractured humanity” Wright, 2004).

### *God's covenant with Noah and sons*

All the existing population of the world are descendents of Noah and his seven family members after the deluge. Noah was not a Jew nor part of the covenant that God made with Abraham and the people of Israel. He was a Gentile, yet according to Heb 11:7 he “became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” and found “grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen 6:8). Peter called him a “preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5). This is the righteousness that is by faith, which he preached for 120 years (Gen 6:3).

With a father who understood God's message to the world and having listened to the message of righteousness by faith for over a hundred years, surely the world after the flood would be filled with the knowledge of God as Noah's family spread out and repopulated the earth.

The diversity within the human race was embedded within the three sons, Ham, Shem, and Japheth. God made a covenant through Noah for the whole human race, “Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, ‘Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you’” (Gen 9:8-9). Again it is evident that God was concerned for the whole human race from the new beginning after the flood just as He had been after Adam.

### *God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*

For whatever reason, the descendants of Noah quickly accepted idolatry and a Romans 1-type behavior. Within a few hundred years Abraham's family “served other gods” (Josh 24:2) in Ur of the Chaldees (ancient Babylon). Olson brings out another indication of God's interest in the Gentiles: Gen. 10-1-32 God lists seventy nations who descended from Noah. Out of one, God would call a leader with the objective of reaching the rest of the Gentile nations with His

“blessing” (Gen 12:1-3). Robert Glover wrote in *Bibliotheca Sacra* about the “Missionary Character of the Scripture:”

We see God choosing a man, a family, a nation-Abraham and his Jewish descendants. But with what purpose? Was it to lavish upon them an exclusive and selfish affection, regardless of all others? No, but rather that they should be His channel of blessing to the whole world: “In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen 12:3). This promise, with its revealed purpose of election, was later repeated twice to Abraham (Gen 18:18; 22:17, 18), and reasserted to Isaac (Gen 26:2-4) and to Jacob (Gen 28:12-14) (Glover, 1936, p. 104).

What was the promise which God made to Abraham? It was a composite promise consisting of several parts that would constitute the Abrahamic Covenant.

First there was the promise of a *posterity*. He was to go from his kindred and his father's house, and in exchange for the loss of his family, God would make of him "a great nation." Second, it was the promise of a *land*. ... God would show him another country. (Gen 13:14-15). Third, it was the promise of a *blessing*. Five times the words *bless* and *blessing* occur in 12:2-3. The blessing God promised Abraham would spill over upon all mankind. ... Already God has accepted Abraham as righteous or (to borrow the New Testament expression) has "justified him by faith." No greater blessing is conceivable (Stott, 2000, pp. 4-5).

The world in which Abraham lived was not an easy world to live in. Ralph Winter describes the world population of that time to be an estimated at 27 million - less than the population of California in AD 2000. But, “the small slow-growing population of Abraham's day is mute, and ominous evidence exists of the devastating combination of war and pestilence, both the relentless impact of the Evil One. World population growth back then was one-sixteenth of today's global rate. ... If today's relatively slow global growth rate to have happened in Abraham's day, our present world population (of 6 billion) would have been reached back then in just 321 years! Thus, in those days, evil must have been much more rampant than now” (Winterrrr, 2000, p. 195). This was not an easy world in which to spread the blessing of the how to know the true God.

Kaiser shows that Paul plainly stated in Galatians 3:8 that Abraham had the gospel preached to him ahead of time when he received Genesis 12:3: "in you shall all the nations be blessed." He stated, “If we today believe, then we are part of Abraham's "seed" (Gal 3:29). The object of faith and trust is still the same; the focal point for Israel and the nations of the earth is that Man of Promise who was to come in Abraham and David's "seed" and is now come in Jesus Christ. ... Israel was to be God's missionary to the world -- so are we by virtue of the same verses!” Kaiser, 2000, p. 12). The mission has not changed in our own day. Abraham and Israel were not intended to be passive transmitters of the "seed" any more than we are to be passive. They were to be a blessing so that they actually could communicate God's gift to the world.

### *God's covenant with Israel through Moses*

The same intimation is to be seen in the divine message through Moses to Israel at Sinai. Exodus 19:5-6 says: "... if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my special possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be my kingdom of priests and a holy nation (italics mine)." Kaiser shows that these are the three ministries God specifies for Abraham's descendants.

In the first place, they were to be God's *special possession*. The fact was that Israel was to be God's son, His people, His first-born (Ex 4:22), and now His special treasure. The emphasis

here is on the "portability" of the message of God's gracious offering of the blessing. Likewise these verses indicate that God has placed a high value on people. This is exactly as Malachi 3:17 describes His people as "jewels."

Another role Israel was to perform was that of being *kings and priests for God*. Kaiser states, "The genitive or construct form, "kingdom of priests," is better translated ..."kingly priests," or "royal priests." It is here that Israel's missionary role became explicit, if any doubt had remained. The whole nation was to function on behalf of the kingdom of God in a mediatorial role in relation to the nations. ... Unfortunately for Israel, they rejected this priesthood of all believers and urged Moses to go up to the mountain of Sinai on their behalf and as their representative. Nevertheless, even though God's original plan was for the moment frustrated and delayed until New Testament times, it was not defeated, substituted, or scrapped. It remained God's plan for believers. They were to have a mediatorial role!" They were the intermediaries between God and the pagan nations around them, thus God expected them to be a missionary nation..

Israel was to have a third function: a *holy nation*. Holiness means to be totally set apart or wholeness. To be "holy" is to be "wholly" the Lord's, unreservedly set apart for His use. Israel was to be given wholly over to the Lord as a nation. They were to be set apart not only in their lives, but also in their service. Kaiser states, "As priests were to represent God and mediate his word to the nations, so Israel as a holy nation was to assume two relations: one side toward God, their King, and the other side towards the nations. They were to be a nation for all the times and for all the people -- set apart. But instead, Israel began to act for herself, as we also often do, as a club of the pious, rather than remembering her call to be sharers of the blessings, truth, gifts and the 'Seed' to the nations" (Kaiser, 2000, pp. 13-14).

To accomplish this mission they had to individually value their personal faith in God's promises, trust in and obey the commands that God had given through Moses and share the news of God's revelation with other nations. Over time they transformed their personal faith into a legalistic culture of rules that were thought to bring them acceptance before God. Thus the gracious God who freely gives His righteousness became a strict legalistic God who could only be pleased by a life of ridged obedience to the laws of Moses and the Pharisees. The majority never realized that God's strict regulations were not to be watered-down, but accepted at face value even though they condemned everyone to the humble status of an unworthy sinner needing God's gracious righteousness by faith. When they missed the message of Abraham, they had no message worth sharing with the nations.

"The Jews stumbled at the divine purpose, failed to discern the meaning of God's election of them as His servant nation, and selfishly monopolized what was designed for the good of all humanity. Consequently, God had to lay that nation aside for the time as a failure. The whole story constitutes one of the great tragedies of history" (Glover, 1936, p. 104).

### *God's worldwide purpose in the United Kingdom*

When David was king he wrote almost half of the Psalms in which he not only revealed his own heart, but also the heart of God. Olson states that there are about 175 references in the Psalms that refer to the Gentile nations of the world. "Many of these references are to be fulfilled in the ultimate reign of God and His Messiah over all the nations in the kingdom. They all show God's concern and purpose for all the Gentiles. Many speak of Israel as God's channel of blessing to the nations and of God's purpose to bring salvation to the nations" Olson, 2003, p. 23).

“Let all the people of the earth acknowledge the LORD and turn to him! Let all the nations worship you!”<sup>NET</sup> **Psalm 22:27**

“Let the whole earth fear the LORD! Let all who live in the world stand in awe of him!”<sup>NET</sup> **Psalm 33:8**

“All the nations, whom you created, will come and worship you, O Lord. They will honor your name.”<sup>NET</sup> **Psalm 86:9**

“Praise the LORD, all you nations! Applaud him, all you foreigners!”<sup>NET</sup> **Psalm 117:1**

Glover described the revelations given to the psalmist that made their mission all too clear. “Among the Psalms which are peculiarly marked by a world-wide vision are the 2d, 22d, 47th, 50th, 67th, 72d, and 96th. Take for example Psa 2:8-“Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” Or note Psa 67, the first verse of which reads: “God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us.” How selfish that prayer would be if it stopped there! But it does not stop there, but goes on to reveal the missionary motive of such prayer and the result of its being answered-“that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations” (v. 2). And its last verse is a beautiful prophecy-“God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him”” (Glover, 1936, p. 107).

When the Jew would read these passages it never occurred to them that they were to be the instruments to make this happen. From all indications they thought that God would do this without their involvement, especially since they did not want to get involved with the Gentile nations, which they despised. This characteristic of God must have been a mystery to them or they refused to think about it. This is not too dissimilar to the modern day praise songs which use these very words of all the world glorifying God or praising Him, but few seem to see the implied need to personally be a part of making the nations to know the Lord.

The same spirit of impacting the nations of the world breathes in the prayer with which Solomon dedicated the temple, when he made request in behalf of “**foreigners**, who do not belong to your people Israel, will come from a **distant land** because of your reputation.”<sup>42</sup> When they hear about your great reputation and your ability to accomplish mighty deeds, they will come and direct their prayers toward this temple.<sup>43</sup> Then listen from your heavenly dwelling place and answer all the prayers of the **foreigners**. Then all the **nations of the earth** will acknowledge your reputation, obey you like your people Israel do, and recognize that this temple I built belongs to you” (1 Kings 8:41-43). And the divine response was: “I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication that thou hast made before me” (1 Kings 9:3).

One has to wonder if the Jews, as they read these passages and understood the heart of God for the Gentile nations, ever spent much time specifically praying for the Gentile nations around them or others that they had heard existed. In the same light, how many contemporary churches ever name specific unreached people groups (“nations”) in their prayer requests or prayer bulletins? Someone said, “Ask and you shall receive.” Did He really mean it? How should we be praying?

### *God's global purpose revealed through the prophets*

But perhaps the richest missionary teachings of the Old Testament are to be found in the prophets, where a worldwide outlook is always clearly recognizable, even when the central message relates to Israel. The following are only a few among many passages which might be cited:

“Tell me! Present the evidence! Let them consult with one another! Who predicted this in the past? Who announced it beforehand? Was it not I, the LORD? I have no peer, there is no God but me, a God who vindicates and delivers; there is none but me.”<sup>22</sup> Turn to me so you can be delivered, all you **who live in the earth's remote regions!** For I am God, and I have no peer.”

<sup>NET</sup> **Isaiah 45:21-22**

“He says, ‘Is it too insignificant a task for you to be my servant, to reestablish the tribes of Jacob, and restore the remnant of Israel? I will make you a **light to the nations**, so you can bring my deliverance to **the remote regions of the earth.**’”<sup>NET</sup> **Isaiah 49:6**

“The LORD reveals his royal power in the sight of all the nations; the entire earth sees our God deliver.”<sup>NET</sup> **Isaiah 52:10**

“..., for my temple will be known as a temple where **all nations may pray.**”<sup>NET</sup> **Isaiah 56:7**

“At that time the city of Jerusalem will be called the LORD's throne. **All nations** will gather there in Jerusalem to honor the LORD's name. They will no longer follow the stubborn inclinations of their own evil hearts.”<sup>NET</sup> **Jeremiah 3:17**

“For recognition of the LORD's sovereign majesty will **fill the earth** just as the waters fill up the sea.”<sup>NET</sup> **Habakkuk 2:14**

“I will remove the chariot from Ephraim and the warhorse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be removed. Then he will announce **peace to the nations.** His dominion will be from sea to sea and from the Euphrates River **to the ends of the earth.**”<sup>NET</sup> **Zechariah 9:10**

“For from the east to the west my name will be great **among the nations.** Incense and pure offerings will be offered in my name everywhere, for my name will be **great among the nations,**” says the LORD who rules over all.”<sup>NET</sup> **Malachi 1:11**

Can there be any doubt about what God desires in the OT? Israel was expected to be the instrument that God would use to **reach the Gentile nations**, but they were generally disinterested. Isaiah wrote, “**You are my witnesses,**” says the LORD, “my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may consider and believe in me, and understand that I am he. No god was formed before me, and none will outlive me”<sup>NET</sup> **Isaiah 43:10.**

Johannes Verkuyl, former Head of the Department of Missiology and Evangelism at the Free University of Amsterdam and author of over 250 books, describes the mission of Israel when he wrote, “The prophets never tire of reminding Israel that her election is not a privilege which she may selfishly keep for herself; election is a call to service. It involves a duty to witness among the nations. Israel must be a sign to the other nations that *Yahweh* is both Creator and Liberator. On Servant song (Isa 49:6) refers to Israel's mandate to become a light to the nations ... But however hot their righteous anger burned against Israel's disobedience, the prophets kept on reminding Israel to the very end of her mandate to be present among the people as distinct people and a royal priesthood (Verkuyl, 2000, p. 29).

John Stott, President of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, described the indifference of Israel due to their presumed salvation since they were elected as a nation to be the Servant of God for a witness to the world. The election of Israel as a people, with however important their mission, had nothing to do with the salvation of individuals within the nation.

John the Baptist announced it from the start. Matthew recognized that it isn't just physical descent from Abraham which qualifies individuals to inherit the promises, but a kind of spiritual descent, namely, individual repentance and faith in the coming Messiah, just as Abraham's faith. “This was John the Baptist's message to crowds who flocked to hear him: ‘Do not presume to say

to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you God is able from these stones to raise up Children to Abraham.' (Matt 3:9; Luke 3:8; cf. John 8:33-40).

The implications of his words would have shocked his hearers since 'it was the current belief that no descendant of Abraham could be lost.' (cited from J. Jeremias, "Jesus' Promise to the Nations," SCM Press, 1958, p. 48) (Stott, 2000, pp. 6-7). Their elevated self-confidence of being a special people to God could not comprehend how despicable Gentiles could ever be acceptable to God without first becoming Jews. If they were not interested in becoming thoroughly Jewish, then the Jews were not interested in the Gentiles. How different they had become from their God!

## Does the Old Testament reveal any Missionary Activity?

The Old Testament Jews did not understand the significance of Abraham's pre-Jewish faith (i.e., before he was circumcised as a Jew), which still granted him perfect righteousness (Gen 15:6). Admittedly this is the clearest verse in the OT that clarifies the fact that believing in God's promise is responded by the granting of perfect righteousness. This certainly should have been a most precious OT verse. If the message is unclear then the mandate to share it with others is less imperative. While Kaiser maintains that the missionary mandate is consistent in the OT, he himself admits that it is "at times only rudimentarily so" (Kaiser, 2000, p. 82).

In the NT it will become repeatedly clear as to the responsibility of the Church to fulfill God's desire for all people groups. In the meantime Israel was expected to deduce from God's revelations what their responsibilities should be to the world. Scott makes it clear and simple how Israel should have been thinking if she had learned anything from the nature of God: "The nations are not gathered in automatically. If God has promised to bless 'all the families of the earth,' he has promised to do so 'through Abraham's seed' (Gen 12:3; 22:18). Now we are Abraham's seed by faith, and the earth's families will be blessed only if we go to them with the gospel. That is God's plain purpose" (Stott, 2000, p. 9).

In spite of the lack of any intentional missionary activity in the OT there was a striking number of individuals who left their heathen origins and by word-and-deed witness were won over to trust and serve the living God who had shown them mercy. "The stories of Melchizedek, Ruth, Job, the people of Nineveh described in the book of Jonah, and many others in the Old Testament are windows, as it were, through which we may look out on the vast expanse of people outside the nation of Israel and hear the faint strains of the missionary call to all people already sounding forth" (Verkuyl, 2000, p. 29).

### *A different Mode of Operation*

The facts are clear: Israel never learned to have the heart of God for the Gentiles. This factor would carry over into the NT beginning of the Church. It would be 20 years after the resurrection before the Church would officially begin to reach out to the Gentiles. Acts 11:19 states they were only witnessing to Jews until the Jerusalem Conference in AD 49. Even after the dramatic conversion of the first Gentile in Acts 10, there are apparently no other Gentiles targeted in evangelism. Cornelius' conversion was approximately 10 years after the resurrection. David Bosch deals with missions in the OT in *Transforming Mission* where he expresses his view that "There is, in the Old Testament, no indication of the believers of the old covenant

being sent by God to cross geographical, religious and social frontiers in order to win others to faith in *Yahweh*" (Bosch, 1991, p. 17). It would take major persecution, a dynamic conversion and special revelations to transform the Pharisaical rabbi, Saul of Tarsus, into the first Jewish global missionary in the history of God's dealings with mankind.

For many years it has been customary to argue that the Old Testament views mission **centripetally** - the nations coming towards Israel - whereas the New Testament understanding of mission is **centrifugal** - from the center, Israel or the Church, missionaries move outward, into the world. It is undoubtedly true that the Old Testament views mission predominantly in centripetal categories. This is however not exclusively so. "The metaphor of light in Isaiah 42:6, 49:6, and elsewhere, is particularly appropriate to give expression to both a centripetal and a centrifugal movement. A light shining in the darkness draws, people towards it, centripetally, yet at the same time it goes outward, crossing frontiers, allowing, in the words of Isaiah 49:6, God's salvation to reach 'to earth's farthest bounds'" (Bosch, 2000, p. 60).

Olson uses the expressions "Come and See" as the general OT methodology, and "Go and Tell" as the NT Church mandate (Olson 2003: 32).

Ralph Winters describes the four-fold techniques that were used through this period. "The four different "mission mechanisms" at work to bless other peoples: 1) going voluntarily, 2) involuntarily going without missionary intent, 3) coming voluntarily, and 4) coming involuntarily (as with Gentiles forcibly settled in Israel - 2 Kings 17)" (Winters, 2000, p. 197). Though there are very few examples of the voluntary obedience of His people, most of the spreading of God's message was through involuntary means, such as Joseph in Egypt, Jonah in Assyria and the nation as a whole when they were sent throughout the world in the Captivity of Assyria and Babylon. The Queen of Sheba came voluntarily to seek out the source of Solomon's unusual wisdom.

## *Jonah*

However reluctant the protagonist, the story of Jonah is also important for catching a glimpse into the deep resistance this mandate encountered from Israel whom God has chosen to discharge his worldwide work. There was no question about the revealed will of God for Jonah. He was never a willing servant. For whatever reason(s) Jonah refused to be as compassionate as he knew God would be concerning Assyria. He knew God was a caring and forgiving God who loved all the nations, but Jonah refused to be like God.

The prophecy of Jonah is a foreign missionary book, designed to show that *Yahweh* is the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews. Glover wrote of the purpose of Jonah being written: "As a reproof to Israel in the picture it presents of a great heathen city heeding God's call to repentance in contrast to Israel, favored and blessed of God above other nations, turning a deaf ear and hardening its heart against Him. The story is also a fine illustration of God's tender concern for the heathen and His patience in dealing with them. Incidentally it furnishes an instance of a runaway missionary, whose bad example, it is to be feared, has been followed by all too many in modern times. And yet it is to be noted that Jonah finally came in line and became an obedient and successful missionary" (Glover, 1936, p. 108).

Jonah's crafty evasion efforts, represent a lazy and unfaithful Israel (as well as the Church) which does not heed its Lord's command. God even worked through a reluctant, half-hearted, indifferent, and partially obedient servant. Enough of God's Word was proclaimed to produce faith and repentance in Assyria. Johannes Verkuyl wrote concerning Jonah's representation of Israel how "God has to wrestle against Israel's narrow ethnocentrism which tries to restrict his

activity to the boundaries of Israel alone and now against the Church's ecclesiocentric refusal to go out into the world to proclaim God's message and do his work." The writer is bent on convincing his readers that the radius of God's liberating activity is wide enough to cover both Israel and all the Gentiles.

"If a person draws his lifeblood from the one greater than Jonah and yet declines to spread the Good News among others, he in effect is sabotaging the aims of God himself. Jonah is father to all those Christians who desire the benefits and blessings of election but refuse its responsibility" (Verkuyl, 2000, p. 31).

### *Impact of the Exile and Dispersion*

God's plan for Israel was to become His intermediary, His "kingdom of priests" through whom "all the families of the earth" would receive God's blessing of forgiveness and His perfect righteousness by faith. Rather than Israel going willingly, God brought Assyria to take the ten northern tribes into captivity, spreading them throughout their vast empire in 722 BC. Then about 150 years later God raised up Babylonia to take Judah into Captivity in 586 BC in what is modern Iraq and Iran. This is called the "dispersion" or *diaspora* of Israel. During this period Israel would be totally cured of idolatry and Judah would remain in Babylon for 70 years before a remnant would return to Jerusalem to rebuild the nation. The majority, however, remained in the countries to which they had been sent throughout the NT era.

Historians recorded that "Israel's experiences during the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. opened her eyes to God's universal intentions. As Israel passed through her catastrophic experiences of being trounced by the Babylonians and carted off into exile, the prophets came to see how closely the career of Israel was tied in with the history of the nations" (Verkuyl, 2000, p. 28). Gordon Olson summarized this period of the dispersion of the Jews which "had a number of positive effects: 1) It cured them of idolatry. 2) It forced them to establish synagogues for the study and exposition of God's word. 3) It forced them into situations where the godly remnant did bear powerful witness to the true God" (Olson, 2003, p. 33).

The establishment of hundreds of synagogues all across the empire would continue into the New Testament period and became the launching pad for reaching the Gentiles quickly. Finally a permanent credible foreign ministry was established throughout the known world. Gentiles seeking to know the true God had a place they could go and learn the truth of *Yahweh*, know His promises and follow His laws. James, the spokesman for the church at Jerusalem (AD 49-50) stated: "For Moses has had those who proclaim him in every town from ancient times, because he is read aloud in the synagogues every Sabbath," <sup>NET</sup> Acts 15:21.

Many of these Gentile inquirers or seekers became NT believers when they heard the gospel preached by Paul. Some of these synagogues were more aggressive than others in seeking proselytes from among the Gentiles. When Paul came to town he visited the synagogues, preached on the Sabbath, and disputed with the Jews until asked to leave, often taking with him a number of converts, mostly out of this Greek proselytes group from the synagogues.

### **Conclusion**

Were the Hebrews from Abraham a missionary body with a heart for the Gentile people that God cared about? The answer is: not voluntarily, nor willingly.

John Scott ended his article on Israel in the Old Testament by saying, "I pray that these words, "all the families of the earth," may be written on our hearts. It is this expression more than any other which reveals the living God of the Bible to be a missionary God. It is this expression too which condemns all our petty parochialism and narrow nationalism, our racial pride (whether white or black), our condescending paternalism and arrogant imperialism. How dare we adopt a hostile or scornful or even indifferent attitude to any person of another color or culture if our God is the God of "all the families of the earth?" We need to become global Christians with a global vision, for we have a global God" Stott, 2000, p. 9).

"The early followers of Jesus Christ did not perceive missions as a new concept or function for God's people. They perceived the task of bringing the nations to faith in *Yahweh* as the responsibility of Israel from its beginnings. The evangelist Luke understood that the Old Testament Scriptures had foreshadowed the Christ event and the preaching of forgiveness to all peoples (Luke 24:46-47). The apostle Paul also was aware that the Lord had great concern that the Gentiles follow him, declaring that God, in his concern for all humans (to justify them by faith) shared the gospel with Abraham so he could be used to the glorious end of proclaiming it to all humans (Gal 3:8)" (Terry, Ebbie Smith & Justice Anderson, 1998, p. 51).

Transposing these OT principles into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it was evident that many of these attributes of Israel were repeated in the practical life of the Early Church and throughout Church history. Peters says that any church (or seminary or other Christian institution) that is not focused on the world has not fully entered into the counsel and purpose of God. "If believers today desire to know to what degree they are living in the purpose of God, they should honestly and sincerely ask themselves, 'To what degree are we possessed by the burden to share the gospel with the world? To what degree is world evangelization the focus of our life and ministry?' Here is an infallible measure and proof. Here is a divine criterion. It remains an eternal fact-"God so loved the world. "How deeply have Christians entered into the concern of God for the world of mankind?" (Peters, 1979, p. 9).

## Appendix

### Old Testament and missions

Genesis 12:1-3 (repeated in Gen. 18:18, 22:17-18, 26:24 and 28:12-14)  
 Exodus 9:14-16 -- purpose of the plagues  
 Exodus 19:6 -- Israel was to be a "kingdom of priests"  
 Numbers 14:21 -- glory of Lord fills the whole earth  
 Deuteronomy 4:6-8 -- show your understanding to the nations  
 Deuteronomy 10:19 -- "You are to love those who are aliens"  
 Deuteronomy 28:10 -- "all the peoples on the earth will see that you are called by the name of the Lord"  
 Deuteronomy 32:1 - "Hear, O earth, the words of my mouth."  
 Joshua 4:24 -- "so that all the peoples of the earth might know"  
 1 Samuel 2:10 -- "The LORD will judge the ends of the earth."  
 1 Samuel 17:46 -- "the whole world will know there is a God in Israel"  
 1 Kings 8:41-43, 59-60 (also in 2 Chronicles 6:32-33) -- "so that all peoples of the earth may know your name" (Solomon's prayer at dedication of Temple)  
 2 Kings 19:15 -- "Hezekiah prayed . . . : O LORD, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth."  
 1 Chronicles 16:31 "Let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, The Lord reigns!"  
 1 Chronicles 16:24 -- "Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples"  
 2 Chronicles 6:33 -- "so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you"  
 Psalm 2:7-10 -- "You are my Son . . . I will make the nations your inheritance"  
 Psalm 7:7-8 -- "Let the Lord judge the peoples"  
 Psalm 8:9 -- "How majestic is your name in all the earth!"  
 Psalm 18:49 -- "I will praise you among the nations"  
 Psalm 22:26-28 -- "all the families of the nations will bow down"  
 Psalm 19:1-4 -- "their words to the ends of the world"  
 Psalm 22:27 -- "All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord"  
 Psalm 24 -- "The earth is the Lord's"  
 Psalm 33 -- "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord"  
 Psalm 45:17 -- "The nations will praise you for ever and ever"  
 Psalm 46:10 -- "I will be exalted among the nations"  
 Psalm 47 -- "God reigns over the nations"  
 Psalm 48:10 -- "Like your name, O God, your praise reaches to the ends of the earth"  
 Psalm 49:1 -- "Hear this, all you peoples; listen, all who live in this world"  
 Psalm 50 -- "From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets"  
 Psalm 57 -- "I will sing of you among the peoples"  
 Psalm 59:13 -- "It will be known to the ends of the earth that God rules over Jacob."  
 Psalm 65:5-8 -- "the hope of all the ends of the earth . . . where morning dawns and evening fades you call forth [songs](#) of joy"

- Psalm 66 -- "All the earth bows down to you . . . Praise our God, O peoples"
- Psalm 67 -- "your salvation among all peoples"
- Psalm 68:32 -- "Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth"
- Psalm 72 -- "all nations will serve him"
- Psalm 72:9 -- "the desert tribes will bow before him"
- Psalm 72:17, 19 -- "All nations will be blessed through him . . . May the whole earth be filled with his glory"
- Psalm 77:14 -- "you display your power among the peoples"
- Psalm 82 -- "all the nations are your inheritance"
- Psalm 83:18 -- "You alone are the Most High over all the earth."
- Psalm 86:8-13 -- all nations will come and worship
- Psalm 87 -- the register of the peoples
- Psalm 96 -- "sing to the Lord, all the earth . . . Declare his glory among the nations"
- Psalm 97 -- "The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice"
- Psalm 98:3 -- "All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God."
- Psalm 98:9 -- "He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity."
- Psalm 99:1-3 -- "He is exalted over all the nations. Let them praise your great and awesome name"
- Psalm 102:15 -- "The nations will fear the name of the LORD, all the kings of the earth will revere your glory."
- Psalm 102:22 -- "when the peoples and the kingdoms assemble to worship the Lord"
- Psalm 105:1 -- "make known among the nations what He has done"
- Psalm 106:8 -- reason for dividing the Red Sea
- Psalm 108:3 -- "I will sing of you among the peoples"
- Psalm 108:5 -- "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let your glory be over all the earth."
- Psalm 110:6 -- "He will judge the nations,"
- Psalm 113:3 -- "From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised"
- Psalm 117 -- "Praise the Lord, all you nations"
- Psalm 126 -- "it was said among the nations"
- Psalm 135 -- "our Lord is greater than all gods"
- Psalm 138:4 -- "may all the kings of the earth praise you, O Lord"
- Isaiah 2:3 -- "Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob.
- Isaiah 6:3 -- "They were calling to one another: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."
- Isaiah 11:9 -- "fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord"
- Isaiah 11:10 -- "in that day a Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples, the nations . . ."
- Isaiah 12:4 -- "Make known among the nations what He has done"
- Isaiah 24:16 -- "From the ends of the earth we hear singing: Glory to the Righteous One."
- Isaiah 25:6 -- "the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples"
- Isaiah 42:4 -- "in His law the islands will put their hope"

- Isaiah 42:6 -- "I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles."
- Isaiah 34:1 -- "Come near, you nations, and listen; pay attention, you peoples!"
- Isaiah 37:16 -- "O Lord Almighty . . . , you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth."
- Isaiah 42:4 -- "He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope."
- Isaiah 43:6 -- "I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.'"
- Isaiah 45:6 -- "from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides me."
- Isaiah 45:22 -- "Turn to me . . . all you ends of the earth"
- Isaiah 49:1-6 -- "I will make you a light for the Gentiles"
- Isaiah 49:22 -- "The Sovereign Lord says: "See, I will beckon to the Gentiles, I will lift up my banner to the peoples."
- Isaiah 52:10 -- "The Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God."
- Isaiah 56:7 -- "my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations"
- Isaiah 59:19 -- "From the west, men will fear the name of the Lord, and from the rising of the sun, they will revere His glory."
- Isaiah 60:3 -- "Nations will come to your light"
- Isaiah 62:11 -- "The Lord has made proclamation to the ends of the earth"
- Isaiah 66:19 -- "They will proclaim my glory among the nations"
- Jeremiah 3:17 -- "All nations will gather in Jerusalem to honor the name of the Lord"
- Jeremiah 16:19 To you the nations will come from the ends of the earth and say, "Our fathers possessed nothing but false gods, worthless idols that did them no good."
- Ezekiel 36:22-23 -- "The nations will know I am the Lord"
- Daniel 2:47; 4:1-2; 6:25 -- "Surely your God is the God of gods"
- Daniel 7:13, 14 -- "all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him"
- Jonah's story -- the missionary book of the Old Testament [ e-book on Jonah ]
- Micah 1:2 -- "Hear, O peoples, all of you, listen, O earth and all who are in it."
- Micah 4:2 -- "Many nations will come"
- Micah 5:4 -- "His greatness will reach to the ends of the earth."
- Habbakuk 2:14 -- "The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the water cover the sea"
- Zephaniah 2:11 -- "Nations on every shore will worship him"
- Zephaniah 3:9 -- "Then will I purify the lips of the peoples, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord."
- Haggai 2:7 -- "Desire of all nations"
- Zechariah 2:11 -- "Many nations will be joined with the Lord in that day and will become my people"
- Zechariah 8:20-23 -- "Many peoples and inhabitants of many cities will come"
- Zechariah 9:10 -- "He will proclaim peace to the nations"
- Zechariah 14:9 -- "The Lord will be king over the whole earth."

Malachi 1:10-11 -- "My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun"

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