

# The Old Testament and Christian Mission

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For many Christians, mission began on the Mount of Ascension when the risen Jesus gave his disciples something with which to fill their time till he returned. It is not often recognized that the mission of Jesus himself, as well as the mission he entrusted to his followers, was shaped and programmed by the Scriptures we call the Old Testament. While a number of works on the theology of mission have paid attention to its OT

roots,<sup>1</sup> the most recent classic of the genre by D Bosch sadly devotes only four pages to the OT.<sup>2</sup> A comprehensive OT theology of mission still remains to be written. The following article merely sketches in a number of themes that such a project will need to include, without developing further the detailed exegetical and theologically constructive work that will need to be done around them.

### *The Foundations of Mission: The Creation Platform*

Paul, speaking by invitation in Athens to a sophisticated but polytheistic audience, skilfully managed to preach a scriptural (= OT) world-view, but without quoting the OT! The Hebrew scriptures would have carried little weight with his hearers (in contrast to his mission practice when speaking to Jewish audiences in synagogues and elsewhere), yet with a few well chosen phrases, and some quotations from their own cultural heritage, Paul lays down a platform of OT creation theology on which the message of Jesus is built. It includes monotheism, God as creator, God as non-material and distinct from creation, God as Lord of human history, God in relation to human life, ignorance and idolatry, God as moral judge (Ac. 17:24–31).

A biblical basis of mission must begin with this creation platform because it provides the basic biblical world-view of reality: God, the earth, and humanity in reciprocal relation to each other. It also sets before us the basic human obligations: love and obedience towards God; care and keeping the earth; and mutual love and care for one another. All of these relationships and obligations can be observed and expounded from the early chapters of Genesis and are essential to an understanding of Christian mission, inasmuch as one cannot understand what makes the gospel to be good news unless one has grasped what the bad news is in relation to the way God meant human life on earth to be. The biblical gospel makes sense only in relation to a biblical worldview, which means an OT creation worldview and all its implications.<sup>3</sup>

#### **A. Humanity—on Earth With a ‘Mission’**

Humanity has been given a purpose, a mission, under God. Our mission begins with being human, not just being Christian. We were put on the earth with a task and a goal, which our Christian identity does not replace or rescind.

*Ecological dimension.* There is a paradoxical balance between the command in Gen. 1:27 to ‘. . . have dominion’ over the rest of creation and the instruction in Gen. 2:15 ‘. . . to serve the earth and keep it’. Dominion through servanthood is humanity’s role, which in itself is an interesting reflection of Christ’s. Earthkeeping, stewardship of creation,—all this is a vital human duty, and a legitimate part of Christian mission, since being a Christian should enhance, not deny, our human obedience to the Creator. God will hold us accountable as much for our humanity as for our Christianity.

*Economic dimension.* The right and responsibility of work is part of the image of God in human life. Human life on God’s earth requires economic structures and relationships. Christian concern for economic justice

can also be included as a legitimate dimension of mission. It is a major biblical concern.<sup>4</sup>

#### **B. Humanity—Created in God’s Image**

Among the most relevant aspects of this basic truth for mission are the twin points that *all human beings are addressable by God* and that *all human beings are accountable to God*. There is a universal human awareness of God, relative to which religious labels are secondary. Mission is not primarily to Hindus and Muslims, but to people in God’s image to whom God can speak and who stand before God in his judgement and mercy. Recognizing the dignity and status of all human beings helps to preserve mission from that unwelcome superiority complex that easily pollutes it.

#### **C. Humanity—Made in, and for, Relationship**

‘Male and female he made them’ . . . ‘It is not good that man should be alone’ (1:27, 2:18). God’s creative intention for human life includes social relationship. So, active concern for just and loving relationships between people and communities is a vital part of Christian mission, just as it was an essential element in the power of the gospel, according to Paul (Eph. 2:11–3:6).

#### **D. Humanity—in Rebellion**

Christian mission must work with a holistic view of sin and evil.

*Sin affects every dimension of the human person.* The profound simplicity of the story of the fall in Gen. 3 describes the entry of sin into human life in its spiritual dimension (distrust of God), physical mental dimension (Eve’s use of rational and aesthetic faculties in a disobedient direction), physical dimension (she took and ate), and social dimension (she shared it with her husband ‘who was with her’).

*Sin affects human society and history.* The early Genesis narratives describe the spread of sin from family to society, and through generations of nations. There is also the ‘prophetic’ perspective on human evil, in both the Former Prophets (the historical books) and the Latter Prophets. Sin is more than individual, but also affects the conditions and structures of human life, and the historical context into which each generation is born. Our missiological analysis of any context or culture, therefore, must look more deeply at these aspects of its sinfulness than merely the ‘presenting symptoms’ of particular individual evils.

*Sin affects the whole physical environment.* Awareness that we live in an earth under **curse** (Gen. 3), will save our mission strategies from unrealistic idealism. But a balancing awareness that we live in an earth also under **covenant** (Gen. 8:20–9:17) will save us from equally unbiblical despair. The earth is still the Lord’s and everything in it, and its future lies in God’s hands.

***The Manifesto of Mission:  
The Covenant with Abraham***

The success of Paul's mission among the gentiles/nations raised the urgent question: 'How can gentile nations be part of the people of God, if membership of that people is defined by circumcision, the Mosaic covenant, and keeping the law?' Paul was forced to justify his mission strategy from the Scriptures (i.e. the OT), and his answer fundamentally was, '**CONSIDER ABRAHAM!**' (Gal. 3:6–8, 14, 26–29, cf. Rom. 4:16–17). From the beginning, it had been God's purpose to bring the nations into the sphere of blessing as part of his people. That was 'the gospel' announced to Abraham. Therefore, the gentile mission was a *fulfilment*, not a contradiction, of the Scriptures. The Abrahamic covenant is the fount and origin of biblical mission in its redemptive sense.

Its canonical context is the engagement of God with the world of nations in the primal history, especially the post-flood table of nations (Gen. 10), and Babel (Gen. 11). So the call of Abram in Gen. 12 is God's response to the problem of the nations of humanity. Here begins the story of redemption that occupies the rest of the Bible until, in the final picture, we see God and the nations reconciled in the new creation (Rev. 21:1–3, 24–26; 22:2). And while the historical content of the promise, as it related to Israel, particularly includes posterity, covenant blessing and land, the bottom line expresses its universal goal: 'in you/through you, all nations of the earth will receive blessing' (Gen. 12:3, cf. 18:18; 22:18; 26:4–5; 28:14; 35:11). At least three missiological implications may be mentioned.

**A. A Universal Purpose**

There was a universal purpose in God's election of Abraham and of the people of Israel. They were called and brought into existence *only* because of God's missionary purpose for the blessing of the nations. Indeed, God's commitment to Israel is predicated on his commitment to humanity as a whole. The universality of the Bible's mission to the nations is not a NT 'extra', but integral from the very beginning of God's historical action. Echoes of this theme can be found, e.g., in Ps. 22:27; 72:17; Jer. 4:1–2 (and see below).

**B. A Unique Particularity**

The universal goal (blessing for all nations) would be achieved by a particular historical means: 'through you . . .' The uniqueness of Israel (which is connected to the uniqueness of Yahweh and the uniqueness of Christ) is a key OT affirmation. Echoes of this are to be found, e.g., in Deut. 4:32ff.; Amos 3:2; Ps. 147:19–20. It is very important to hold together in balance both biblical (OT and NT) truths: the inclusive, universal goal (God's commitment to bless the nations) and the

exclusive, particular means by which God chose to do so (Israel, and through Israel, the gospel of Christ).

**C. A Missionary People**

God's commitment is to bless the nations through a particular people. Thus, *the primary agent of mission is the people of God*. God's answer to the human predicament was not to whisk off individuals to heaven, but to create a new community on earth who would be a 'light to the nations'. Jesus' command to his disciples, 'You are my witnesses . . .' (Lk. 24:48; Ac. 1:8) was an echo of Yahweh's word to Israel, similarly entrusted with the task of confirming to the nations the identity of Yahweh as the true God and source of salvation (Isa. 43:10–12). Mission is not merely a task for missionaries, but the *raison d'être* of the whole people of God. Ecclesiology must be founded in missiology, and vice-versa!—as it was for Paul.

***The Agent of Mission:  
Israel as the People of God***

Two features of Israel's standing as the people of God need to be noted in relation to their significance for mission: their covenantal uniqueness and their ethical distinctiveness. We shall illustrate these points from just a few key texts.

**A. Covenantal Uniqueness : Deut. 4:32–40**

This summarizing section at the climax of a very significant chapter emphasizes first *Israel's unique experience* of revelation (at Mt. Sinai), and of redemption (through the exodus) in vs. 32–34, 36–38. The implication of the rhetorical questions is that no other nation in human history had experienced what Yahweh had done for Israel. This is not to say that Yahweh was not interested or involved in the history of other peoples; Deuteronomy has affirmed as much already (Deut. 2:9–12, 18–23). But Israel's experience of historical revelation and redemption was unprecedented and unparalleled.

This leads on to, secondly, *Israel's unique knowledge and witness* (v. 35). The purpose of the unique experience was 'so that you might know . . .' the truth about the identity and nature of God. What other nations do not as yet know, Israel knows because Yahweh has demonstrated it in her history. The same dynamic is found in Isaiah 40–55, where the 'missionary' implications are more forcefully drawn. The knowledge of the living God was something entrusted to Israel as part of what it meant to be a 'light for the nations'.

That knowledge, thirdly, was of *Israel's unique God* (vs. 35–39). OT monotheism was not merely a matter of arithmetic (only one God exists), but of the defining

of the personal and redemptive character of God: 'YAHWEH is God . . . and there is no other'. This has important implications for the distinctiveness of biblical monotheism and of the NT Christology which is integrated into it (e.g. in 1 Cor. 8:4–6).

## B. Ethical Distinctiveness

The ethical challenge of Deut. 4 is already visible in v. 40, and is given a mission flavour in the Deuteronomic theology of, e.g., 1 Kgs. 8:60f., but two other texts illustrate more forcefully the ethical challenge that was part of Israel's mission in the purpose of God for the nations.

### I Genesis 18:19

This little divine soliloquy comes in the middle of a narrative that includes Gen. 18 and 19; the story of God's judgement on Sodom and Gomorrah. It significantly places this reminder of God's universal promise of blessing in the midst of a story of God's historical judgement.

We see, first, *Sodom, as a model of our world*. Sodom represents the way of the fallen world of human wickedness. Its evil is prototypical and proverbial. We hear of the 'outcry' (*se'aqah*) that portrays oppression and cruelty (Gen. 18:20–21); of the perverted and violent immorality of the inhabitants (Gen. 19); of the comparison with the bloodshed, corruption and injustice of Jerusalem (Isa. 1:9ff.); and of the arrogance, affluence, and callousness to the needy that makes it sound very modern (Ezek. 16:49).

Secondly, we meet *Abraham, a model of God's mission*. In the context of impending judgement, God 'recaps' his purpose in v. 18. God's promise of a son in the first part of the chapter is now seen in the light of this expression of his mission goal in the second part, and in contrast to the world to which he is on his way 'down'. God, on the way to act in judgement on a particular evil society, stops to remind himself of his ultimate purpose of blessing to all nations, and has a meal with this old couple, still childless, in whom the whole divine plan of redemption is invested. Not surprisingly they find it wryly amusing.

But thirdly, we hear of '*the way of the LORD*', as a *model for God's people*. The central phrases of v. 19, indicate God's more immediate thinking. In the context of a world going the way of Sodom, God wanted a community characterized by the 'way of the Lord'. This rich OT expression describes not only God's own characteristic behaviour, but also our imitation of him (cf. Deut. 10: 12ff.). It is further defined by that pair of words that virtually summarizes OT ethics, 'doing righteousness and justice'. This, says God to God's self, is the purpose of having chosen Abraham, and the means of fulfilling his promise to him of blessing the nations. Thus the syntax and logic of Gen. 18:19 bind

together election, ethics and mission in a single sentence. The ethical quality of life of the people of God is the vital link between their calling and their mission. There is no mission without ethics.

### II Exodus 19:3–6

After the exodus, we are with Israel at Mount Sinai. Ex. 19:3–6 is a key, a programmatic statement by God, coming, like a hinge in the book of Exodus, in between *the exodus* (Ex. 1–18) and *the covenant and law* (Ex. 20–24). It defines the identity and agenda God has for Israel and sets both in the context of God's own action and intention.

The divine speech points, first, to *God's redemptive initiative* (v. 4). 'You have seen what I have done . . .' God's initiative of saving grace was a matter of historical fact and recent memory. We need to recognize the priority of grace in OT theology of mission and ethics. Obedience to the law was based on, and was a response to, God's salvation. Exodus has 18 chapters of redemption before a single chapter of law.

Secondly, we hear again of *God's universal interest* (v. 5b). 'Out of all nations . . .' 'The whole earth is mine . . .' God's very special place for Israel ('treasured possession'), their identity and task, is here set in the context of his universality as God in relation to the nations of the earth (cf. the similar balance of particularity and universality in the Abraham covenant). Therefore, the ethical and mission agenda for Israel has to be motivated by the same universal concern that characterizes Yahweh as God. Interestingly, Peter's use of this text in relation to the identity and role of Christians likewise emphasizes our living 'among the nations' (unfortunately translated 'pagans', 1 Pet. 2:9–12).

This leads, thirdly, to *Israel's identity and duty* (v. 6).

**a) A priestly kingdom.** To understand what this meant for Israel as a whole in relation to the nations, we have to understand what the priests were in Israel in relation to the rest of the people. They had a twofold task: *i) Teaching the law* (Lev. 10:11; Deut. 33:10; Jer. 18:18; Mal. 2:6f.; Hos. 4:1–9). Through the priests, God would be known to the people. *ii) Handling the sacrifices* (Lev. 1–7, etc.). Through the priests' work of atonement, the people could come to God. The priesthood was thus a two-directional representational task between God and the rest of the Israelites.

It is thus richly significant that God confers on Israel as a whole people the role of being his priesthood in the midst of the nations. As the people of Yahweh they would have the historical task of bringing the knowledge of God to the nations, and bringing the nations to the means of atonement with God. This dual move-

ment is reflected in prophetic visions of the law/light/justice etc. of Yahweh going out to the nations from Israel/Zion, and of the nations coming to Yahweh/Israel/Zion. The metaphor easily connects with the centrifugal and centripetal dimensions of OT eschatology. The priesthood of the people of God is thus a missionary function.

In the NT, Peter sees the priestly nature of the church as 'declaring the praises' of our exodus God, and living in such a way among the nations that they come to glorify God. Significantly also, in the only NT text to speak of any individual Christian's ministry in priestly terms, Paul describes his *evangelistic* mission to the gentiles as his 'priestly duty'. Sadly the church forgot that priesthood is what happens *outside* the walls of the church in mission to the world and imported it back into the internal ministry of the church, where the NT never refers to it.

**b) A holy nation.** For Israel to fulfil their mission of being Yahweh's priesthood in the midst of the nations, she must be 'holy'. This word was not exclusively, or even primarily 'religious' (in our sense, at least), but fundamentally meant, 'different, distinctive'. Israel was to be a nation among the nations, but to be recognizably, visibly and substantively different, as the people belonging uniquely to Yahweh and therefore representing his character and ways to the nations who did not yet know him as God. Holiness is both a **fact** (it is something God does, cf. Lev. 20:8, 26; 21:8, 15, 23; 22:32), and a **command** (it is something we work out in life, cf. Lev. 18:3; 19:1; 20:7, 23, 26). For Israel, the command, 'You must be holy because the Lord your God is holy', basically meant: 'You must be a different kind of nation, because Yahweh is a different kind of God.'

Leviticus 19, prefaced by that command (v. 2), is a key text, giving practical down-to-earth content to holiness. The list of ethical distinctives for God's people includes: family and community respect (vs. 3, 32); religious loyalty (vs. 3b, 4–8, 12, 26–31); economic relationships (vs. 9–10); workers' rights (v. 13); social compassion (v. 14); judicial integrity (v. 15); neighbourly attitudes and conduct (vs. 11, 16–18); distinctiveness (v. 19); sexual integrity (vs. 20–22, 29); exclusion of idolatrous and occult (vs. 4, 26–31); racial equality (vs. 33–34); commercial honesty (vs. 35–36).

If Israel was to be God's priesthood in the midst of the nations, then the nation had to be **different**. This reinforces again the integral relationship between mission and ethics in biblical thinking. The chief agent of God's mission to the nations is the people of God. The chief requirement on the people of God is that they should **be what they are; live out their identity**.

## *The Scope of Mission: Exodus and Jubilee*

Mission obviously involves declaring the gospel of God's redemption. But how big is our gospel, and our concept of redemption? The Bible provides various models of God's idea of redemption, salvation, restoration, etc., both through historical events, and specific institutions or persons. We look at just two.

### **A. The Exodus: a Model of Redemption**

In Exod. 15:13 the exodus is described under the metaphor of redemption which must be understood in its OT social and economic context. It speaks of kinship commitment, cost and effort, and liberation, in relation to the suffering or debt of a family member. Yahweh is portrayed as Israel's 'redeemer', and the exodus is the key OT historical example of God in action as redeemer. The early chapters of Exodus show at least the following dimensions of the bondage from which Yahweh liberated Israel: *political* (Ex. 1:8–10 shows Israel's vulnerability as an immigrant, ethnic minority people to unjust oppression instigated by fear); *economic* (Ex. 1:11–14, the Israelites were exploited as slave labour, a common fate of ethnic minorities); *social* (the rest of Ex. 1 shows the intolerable violation of human rights that Israel's families suffered, culminating in state sponsored genocide, v. 22); *spiritual* (Ex. 4:22, Israel was Yahweh's firstborn son, therefore it was absurd that they should be enslaved to Pharaoh. They must be released, so that they can 'serve/worship' Yahweh. Liberation led to covenant at Sinai; cf. 3:12; 19:4).

The exodus, then, demonstrates the holistic nature of God's redemption in that God delivered Israel in *all* these dimensions of their need. We should neither *spiritualize* the exodus (treating it as only symbolic of spiritual salvation), nor *politicize* it (treating it as only liberation from socio-economic bondage and ignoring its spiritual essence also).

### **B. The Jubilee: a Model of Restoration<sup>5</sup>**

The jubilee (Lev. 25) was an economic institution designed to assist poorer families by providing periodic release from the burden of debt. It was to take place every 50 years (i.e. approximately every second generation), and enabled both land and family members that had become mortgaged or bonded for debt to be released and restored to the family. It was thus a restorative mechanism, best understood by seeing the centrality of the family in the 'triangle' of fundamental OT relationships. *Socially*, since the family was the basic unit of Israelite society, the jubilee acted to restore not only social freedom but also the dignity of full participation in social and economic life in the community. *Economically*, the jubilee was predicated on the original widespread distribution of

land (Josh. 13–19). It was intended to reverse economic forces of debt and poverty and to bring the restoration of productive resources to families who had lost them. It limited the effects of economic collapse to two generations at most. *Theologically*, the jubilee expresses or implies God's sovereignty over all things (including time); God's providence (ability to provide, cf. vs. 20–22); memory of historical redemption (the exodus, cf. vs. 38, 42, 55); experience of forgiveness (it began on the Day of Atonement, v. 9); future hope. When these theological truths (which are at the heart of evangelism) are combined with its social and economic effects, it can be seen that, like the exodus, the jubilee shows a comprehensive concern for human needs, and has the same tight combination of social, economic and spiritual dimensions. The jubilee was a strong influence on the ministry of Jesus.<sup>6</sup>

### *The Conflict of Mission: Gods and Idols*

Deut. 6:4–5 expresses the essence of OT Israel's faith: one God, one Lord, one love. Monotheism undergirds the Bible, not as a philosophical abstract, but as a dynamic missionary conviction. Throughout the Bible, but especially in the OT, the one living God conflicts with the gods and idols of humanity. This conflict is close to the heart of mission (cf Paul, Ac. 26:17–18). In the OT we may note three major historical contexts of conflict with gods/idols.

#### A. Egypt

The context here is the state idolatry in which Pharaoh was deified and the result was the politics of arrogance and oppression.<sup>7</sup> The perversion of human authority into idolatry leads to injustice, oppression and abuse. In the face of this **idolatry of power**, the story of exodus reads as a 'power encounter' in which the crucial conflict is one of authority. Ex. 5:2 sets the issue: 'Who is Yahweh? I do not acknowledge Yahweh.' This leads to the sub-plot: 'then you *will* know . . . ' Cf. Ex. 7:5, 16; 8:10, 19, 22; 9:15–16, 29; 10:2; 14:18, 25. The climax comes in Ex. 15 in which liberation leads to celebration of the uniqueness of Yahweh as God (v. 11) and the sovereignty of Yahweh as King (v. 18). 'YAHWEH REIGNS!' (and not Pharaoh!) is the cry of victory and joy when God confronts and destroys idolatrous, usurped, power.

#### B. Canaan

The context here is the Baal cult with its desire for life, success, wealth, etc. through fertility, in crops, herds and women. It included ritual prostitution and child sacrifice. Baalism sacralized sex and sacrificed babies. Canaanite idolatry promised life, but delivered death, not only through child sacrifice, but through the

structural injustice and oppression of Canaanite society. Cf. the fate of Naboth. In the face of this **idolatry of nature, life, fertility**, the OT response included: rejection and warning (Deut. 7, etc.); challenge to renunciation (Elijah, 1 Kgs. 18); and call to repentance (e.g. Hosea's bold use of sexual imagery in calling Israel back to faithfulness in light of God's 'husband-love').

#### C. Babylon

The context here is the great imperial power again, with exalted claims to control the destinies of nations. Mesopotamian religion attributed particular power to the astral deities (star-gods) who controlled the future. In the face of this **idolatry of security and control of events**, Isaiah 40–55 especially sets about **unmasking the gods**, to expose their futility and powerlessness. The stars are created and controlled by Yahweh (not gods, 40:26). Alleged gods are powerless to speak or to act (41:21–24). Idolatry is blindness and delusion (44:6–20). The gods are helpless to save their own idols or their worshippers (46:1–7). Babylon's state idolatry is unmasked and exposed, and its attempts at security and control are shattered (47). Yahweh alone controls history and therefore alone can give security (44:6–8; 45:24). In the light of all this, Israel is summoned to *witness* to Yahweh's supremacy in history (43:9–13; 44:8).

Biblical missiology needs to give more attention to identifying and addressing modern equivalents to these ancient gods and idolatries, for they are undoubtedly alive and active as much in today's world as that of Moses, Elijah or Isaiah.

### *The Goal of Mission: God and the Future of the Nations*

OT eschatology in relation to the nations is a particularly rich theme.<sup>8</sup> We can merely sketch in the contours.

*God deals with all nations with justice and mercy.* Nations as wholes can be under God's judgement (Deut. 9:4–6; Isa. 24), agents of God's judgement (Isa. 10:5–19), or recipients of God's mercy (Jer. 12:15f.; 18:1–10, Jonah). This international and collective dimension to the sovereignty of God needs more attention in its missiological implications.

*The nations are portrayed as 'observers' of what God was doing in Israel.* God's actions in and through his people were on an open stage, intentionally. Like the light on a lampstand or the city set on a hill in Jesus' comparison, there was to be a visibility to the nations,

who would ask questions and draw conclusions (cf. Ex. 15:14–16; 32:11f.; Deut. 4:6–8; 29: 22–28; Ezek. 36: 16–23).

The nations would in some sense 'benefit' from Israel's salvation-history. They can therefore be summoned already to praise Yahweh for that history, even though it paradoxically includes the defeat of some nations by Israel in the conquest. The faith imagination of Israel's worship has many examples of this invitation to the nations to join the praise of Yahweh (e.g. Ps. 47:1–4; 22:27–28, 67; 96:1–3; 98:1–3, etc.). How it could happen was, as Paul put it, a 'mystery'. Even the Deuteronomic history perceives the universal 'missionary' significance of the temple in Jerusalem (1 Kgs. 8:41–43, 60f.).

The nations would ultimately be included, along with Israel, as the extended people of God. They would no longer be applauding observers, but would be absorbed into an extended Israel (cf. Ps. 47:9). Some of the prophetic texts that envisage this are quite breathtaking in their scope and boldness (Isa. 19:19–25; Isa. 56:3–8; Isa. 66:18–21; Amos 9:11–12 [= Acts 15:13–18]; Zech. 2:11).

Salvation will extend 'to the ends of the earth'. This great missionary vision is particularly associated with the mission of the 'Servant of Yahweh' figure (Isa. 42:1–4; 45:22; 49:1–6), which had a profound impact on Jesus' own sense of identity and mission, and also on Paul's. Primarily, Jesus saw himself as sent to restore Israel (cf. John the Baptist), in line with OT (and intertestamental) hopes, and particularly in line with the mission of the Servant (compare Mk. 10:45, etc.). But the vision of the ingathering of the nations is there, though not fulfilled in his earthly ministry, except in some symbolic words and acts (cf. Matt. 8:5–13; 28:18–20; Lk. 24:45–48; Ac. 1:8).

Paul applied the Servant texts [esp. Isa. 49:6] to himself and the mission to the nations (Ac. 13:44–48, cf. Rom. 1:1–5, 16:25–27 and 15:16), and saw the fruit of the gentile mission as the creation of a new, extended Israel in the Messiah, incorporating believing Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:11–3:6; Rom. 9–11). Paul also saw the servanthood of Christ to the Jews as the means of fulfilling the promise to Abraham—ie. blessing to the nations (hence the quotes from the OT referring to the nations rejoicing with Israel, (Rom. 15:8–12)). The scriptures thus come full circle as the

missionary nature of the Christian church fulfils the missionary calling of OT Israel.<sup>9</sup>

### Footnotes

1. E.g. D. Burnett, *God's Mission, Healing the Nations* (Monarch, 1986); R. Hedlund, *The Mission of the Church in the World* (Baker, 1991); K. Gnanakan, *Kingdom Concerns* (IVP, 1993); J. Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church* (McGraw Hill, 1962); R. R. De Ridder, *Discipling the Nations*, (Baker, 1971); D. Senior & C. Stuhlmüller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (SCM, 1983).

2. D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Orbis, 1991), pp. 16–20 (in a chapter entitled 'Reflections on the New Testament!')

3. This is a point which perhaps raises questions over the policy of translating the whole NT into new languages before even beginning the OT. Some young churches have waited nearly a generation before being able to read the OT in their own language. Does this create problems in lack of 'fit' between the gospel and the prevailing worldview which has not been genuinely and deeply transformed to a biblical, creation-monotheistic, understanding?

4. On these issues, see further C. J. H. Wright, *Living as the People of God* (IVP, 1983), chs. 3 and 4, and *idem*, *God's People in God's Land* (Eerdmans, Paternoster, 1990).

5. Space forbids full discussion of this institution, but see C. J. H. Wright, *Walking in the Ways of the Lord*, ch. 8 for details.

6. See Sharon H. Ringe, *Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee: Images for Ethics and Christology*. (Fortress, 1985)

7. Cf. W. Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Fortress, 1978), ch. 1.

8. Cf. C. H. H. Scobie, 'Israel and the Nations: An Essay in Biblical Theology', *Tyndale Bulletin* 43.2 (Nov. 1992), pp. 283–305.

9. On these points, see Chris Wright *Knowing Jesus Through the OT* (Marshall Pickering, 1992), pp. 34–54, and chap. 4, and also, *idem*, 'A Christian Approach to OT Prophecy' in P.W.L. Walker (ed.), *Jerusalem Past and Present in the Purposes of God* (Baker, Paternoster, 1994), pp. 1–19.