

(Jonah 3:10; 4:11). Rahab and Ruth are two foreigners who submit to God and join Israel. Others include Tamar, Uriah, and Naaman. The example of the Syro-phenician woman is an excellent model of how the nations should humbly submit (Matt 16:21-28).

The nations have the hope of future glory when they submit to God. One day Egypt will be a place where Hebrew is spoken and God is worshiped (Isa 19). Nations will be attracted to God's glory in Jerusalem and will bring their extravagant gifts as offerings (Isa 60). The Israelites will proclaim God's glory among the nations and bring their brothers as an offering to the Lord (Isa 66). When God establishes his kingdom on earth, the nations will go up every year to worship the Lord and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech 14:16). People from the whole world will travel to Zion to be taught and judged by God (Isa 2).

The Servant of Israel was to be a "light to the nations" (Isa 42:6) to bring God's "salvation to the ends of the earth" (Isa 49:6). Kings will bow down to the Servant who was despised by Israel (Isa 49:7). The Servant will sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him (Isa 52:15). The Lord will not exclude from his kingdom the foreigner who has bound himself to the Lord (Isa 56:3, 6-7).

The nations' submission to the Jewish Messiah is foreshadowed in the visit of the Magi to the newborn Jesus. Compare Matt 2 with Isa 60. See also Hag 2:7; Zech 14:14; Mal 1:11; Ps 72:10.

### GOING FURTHER

Consider why God worked this way with the nations. You might read Rev 5:9; 7:9; 15:4; 21:24.

### PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT STUDY

Read passages about God's promises to establish his kingdom on earth, including Isa 2:1-5; 11; 25; 65:17-25; Jer 33:14-26; Ezek 36; Dan 2, 7; Amos 9:11-15; Joel 3; Zeph 3; Hag 2; Zech 8; 14; Mal 4. What do these mean? What is the time of their fulfillment?

## THE NATIONS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

### PREPARATION FOR THIS STUDY

Read some of the oracles against foreign nations, such as Isa 13-23, Jer 46-51, Ezek 25-32, Nahum, and Obadiah. Think about whom the audience is and what the purpose is. Why is this so important?

### GENTILES AND THE NATIONS: A WORD OF DEFINITION

In the OT, Gentiles=nations. The word *goy* can be translated as either nation or Gentile. In English, Gentiles are all those outside of ethnic descent from Jacob. The nations are all those outside of the political state of Israel.

### PURPOSES OF THE ORACLES AGAINST THE NATIONS

Oracles against the nations are found in Isa 13-23; Jer 46-51; Ezek 25-32; Amos 1-2; Obad; Nahum; Zeph 2.

1. For Israel, to warn the people against joining with the nations opposed to God. To dissuade Israel from making alliances by revealing the destiny of the nations.
2. For the nations, to inform them of the coming judgment and thereby encourage them to repent and follow the Lord. To rebuke them for cursing Israel and proclaim the destiny of those who do.
3. For all, to demonstrate God's sovereignty over all nations, particularly in a day in which people believed that each nation had its own god and the Lord was only the God of Israel. All nations are accountable to their Creator.

### OT BOOKS ABOUT THE NATIONS

The message of **Obadiah**, an oracle against Edom: The nations that exalt themselves against the Lord and his people will be destroyed, but Israel will be restored and blessed abundantly.

The message of **Nahum**, an oracle against Assyria: The destruction of God's enemies is demanded by his character and results in the deliverance of his people.

The message of **Zephaniah**: The Day of the Lord will bring God's judgment upon all nations and restoration of a purified remnant.

The message of **Daniel** (4 kingdoms of man): The Lord's sovereignty is revealed in his present protection of his people and humbling of the nation's kings, and it will ultimately be displayed in his foreordained destruction of the defiant nations and the establishment of his kingdom on earth.

### HEART, NOT SKIN

Even in the Old Testament, the important issue in one's standing before God was not one's ethnicity. One could be a Canaanite and accepted by God as was Rahab. By contrast, one could be an Israelite and by virtue of allying with the nations, be cursed by God. Achan is such an example, for he preferred the treasures of the world more than submission to God's word. Thus in the battle of Jericho, one Canaanite (and family) was saved and one Israelite (and family) was cursed.

### GOD'S GRACE TO GENTILES

Occasionally in the OT, God provided deliverance to a Gentile but not an Israelite. Elijah provided food for the widow and son in Zarephath (near Sidon) though people in Israel were dying (1 Kgs 17). God healed the Aramean commander Naaman of leprosy but not Israelites (2 Kgs 5). When Jesus pointed out God's grace to the nations in a sermon in Nazareth, the people tried to kill him (Luke 4).

God can be gracious to the nations because he is sovereign; sometimes he is gracious to them because of Israel's unfaithfulness. In Jonah's day, the Lord sent the prophet to preach repentance to Nineveh with the result that the Ninevites came and destroyed wicked Israel. In Jesus' day, the Lord sent his apostles to make disciples among the nations because of Israel's rejection.

### GOD'S PLAN FOR THE NATIONS

God created all mankind to serve and worship him in ruling over his creation on earth. When man rebelled, God planned to restore all peoples to himself through crushing the serpent. Yet man often followed the serpent, beginning with Cain and then those unrighteous destroyed by the flood and then the nations who defied God at Babel. God chose Abraham to bless "all peoples on earth" and those who bless Abraham and his seed will be blessed. Many have chosen to live in enmity with God and his people, including Ishmael who mocked and fathered the Arab peoples, Esau who despised God's promise and fathered the Edomites, the Egyptians who enslaved God's people, and the Canaanites who filled the cup of iniquity to its full measure.

God desires to save the nations and will do so through Abraham and his seed. Those who blessed Abraham's seed and submitted to God were blessed, including Rahab, Ruth, and many of David's men (e.g., Uriah the Hittite). Nations who fight against God's chosen will be destroyed (Ps 2), though God can use them as a tool in his hand to discipline his people before he executes judgment on them (Isa 10; Hab 2). Nations who submit to God will be blessed and will enjoy God's kingdom on earth. God's intention to bless the nations will be accomplished; many oracles of the prophets anticipate this day.

In the New Testament, the Messiah comes to the people of Israel but is rejected. In response, Jesus commands the good news to be taken to the nations in order that God might form a body of believers under Christ's headship. The church will constitute God's people and receive God's blessing in order that the chosen nation of Israel will be provoked to jealousy by God's work among the nations. Ultimately God will establish his kingdom on earth in which Israel receives the promised blessings and the nations marvel at God's faithfulness.

### THE HOPE OF THE NATIONS

The nations are commanded to repent of their sins and to follow the God of Israel. Jonah preaches and the Ninevites respond