



# INTO THE NATIONS

GOD'S HEART FOR THE WORLD  
(6 BIBLE STUDIES)

**EXAMINATION**  
**BIBLE STUDIES**

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## THE SMALL PRINT

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### **Your Commitment**

I would encourage you to make a commitment to attending your group regularly. I realise that sometimes there are things that get in the way, but do prioritise studying the Bible with other. This will involve sacrifice, and effective use of your time, but I really believe that in doing so you will get the most out of studying the Bible and praying together in your small group.

### **Your Contribution**

What you put into the group is going to determine what you get out of the group. I encourage you to contribute honestly to the discussion and workings of the group. I understand people come from different backgrounds with unique personalities & life experiences. But we all have a big part to play, so I encourage you to be fully present and take ownership of your group.

### **Your Preparation – Topical Studies**

These materials are primarily for use in preparing and/or leading the group discussions but they will also be useful in keeping your thoughts together in one place. The materials firstly provide you with a series of passages so that you can identify and highlight recurring themes and note down your own thoughts and questions. Secondly, the materials include questions designed to provoke thought and help you think through what the passages meant both at the time it was written and also what it means for us now. Because these studies are topical there is a much stronger progression of thought (than there would be in a passage-based study). The dangers of such studies are that discussion can move quite far from the Bible. Yet this it is still the best way of covering broad subjects like this.

I would really encourage you to make use of these materials, as doing so will help you contribute and get the most out of the group discussions. The materials are however only “tools”, they are there to help you and not to restrict you or force you to think in a certain manner. I want to see God speaking to you through these passages and if the questions or notes do not help you, then don't use them!

I have included within these materials an introduction to the book. Make of this what you will, but I hope that it is helpful in getting you started with these studies!

### **Your Leadership**

Here are some useful pointers in how to lead your Bible study group. Be aware that included in this study guide are more questions than you can possibly ask and/or answer in one session. They are not designed to be used rigidly, and there will rarely be a need to ask every question! Make sure that you spend some time praying at the start and ensure you read & re-read the passages as much as possible. In relation to the passages, then consider the suggested questions with an open mind. There is rarely “a single right answer” and I would encourage you to share your thoughts with your group.

I have also included a number of quotations from relevant Christian literature, most of which are readily available online if you want to do further thinking or study. My prayer is that as you study together you would grow to love Jesus and experience Him more deeply.

I would appreciate your feedback and suggestions on how to make these materials even better!

*Steve McClure, Spring 2019*

Having withdrawn with His disciples Jesus quotes Isaiah 42:1-4 about Himself saying;

*“This was to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet. “Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory. In his name the nations will put their hope.” **Matthew 12:17-21***

Through the prophet Isaiah God proclaimed that in His servant Jesus, the nations would put their hope. My focus in today’s post is “Hope” within the context of what the Bible repeatedly refers to as “the nations”. The Bible uses this word “nations” (in Greek ‘ethnos’ and in Hebrews ‘gowy’) over 500 times. From the first to the last pages of the Bible the nations have always been central to God’s purposes. Through these studies I want to take us on a brief journey seeing this emphasis on the nations and helping us begin to get excited for what God is doing across our world.

### **God’s promises and the nations: Abraham**

When God created mankind, He blessed us (Genesis 1:28). Our journey begins with God’s promises of blessing to Abram/Abraham. Specifically, God promised him that He would make him into “a *great nation*” (Genesis 12:2). Moreover, God said He would make him the “*Father of many nations*” (Genesis 17:5). Equally central is the concept of ‘blessing’ and in these verses God promises that He would bless Abraham and make him a blessing. God said that ALL peoples [or nations] on earth would be blessed through Abraham (Genesis 12:3). The line of the seed of Abraham is traced through Genesis in the tribe of Judah, “*until He comes to whom the sceptre belongs, and the obedience of the nations is his*” (Genesis 49:10). Even here the obedience of the nations is in clear focus.

### **The nation of Israel: God’s chosen people**

God keeps his promise to Abraham’s descendants, and they become the ‘nation of Israel’, God’s chosen people. God says that He did not choose them because they were more numerous but because they were the fewest – because He loved them (Deut 7:1-8). Yet God also made clear that there were some conditions attached to His promises; God would bless them as a people if they obeyed Him and kept His covenant with them (Deut 28-30). They did not however keep His covenant and in Judges 2:20-23, God says that they had violated His covenant. After King David and King Solomon the Kingdom was divided. As punishment for their idolatry and wickedness Israel was taken into captivity by the Assyrians (and did not return), while Judah was taken into captivity by the Babylonians (but did return). God was faithful and kept a remnant of His people who when the exiles returned from Babylon, went onto restore the walls of Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

### **Jesus hope for the nations**

There was still great hope for God’s people! After all God’s plan cannot be thwarted (Isaiah 14:26-27). This great hope is Jesus Christ, and He is the key to God’s plan for the whole world. God says “*the nations will rally to Him*” (Isaiah 11:10). He will bring justice (Isaiah 42:1), righteousness & salvation to the nations, a light to the gentiles that he may bring salvation to the ends of the earth (Isaiah 49:6, 51:4-5). God speaks of restoration and renewal (Isaiah 61:4-5) and God’s people will be ministers and priests of the LORD (Isaiah 61:6). Through Jesus, God is drawing to Himself a “chosen people, a royal

priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession." Why? So that we might *"declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light."* (1 Peter 2:9-10).

### **God's heart for the nations: Heirs of the promise**

In some of Jesus' final words to His disciples, it is also clear that the nations are still in view. In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus tells the disciples to *"go and make disciples of all nations"*. In Matthew 24:14 and Luke 24:45-48, Jesus is clear that the gospel will be *"preached in the whole world"* and *"preached in His name to all nations"*. We see this beginning to be worked out in Acts 2:1-12 when we see people from many nations turning to Jesus. There are people present from the continents of Asia, Europe, Africa and from islands, sea, coasts, and inland countries. Each of these people are then uniquely equipped to take the gospel back to their own nations and their own people groups. God's promises to His people are now being worked out through the heirs of the promise, Abraham's spiritual descendants. *Galatians 3:29 says "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."* If we know Jesus, we are heirs of the promises of God.

### **A great multitude will praise God. Forever!**

In Revelation, the nations are again in focus and we see a great multitude of people coming together from *"every tribe and language and people and nation"* (Rev 5:9, 7:9, and 14:6).

*"And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." Revelation 5:9-10*

This great multitude John describes will be too many to count and represents the huge diversity of God's creation and God's heart for the nations. God is bringing His people together to be a Kingdom, of priests to serve Him and reign on the earth. This multitude is not alone because God is with them and His dwelling is amongst them. He will live with them and they will be His people. If we know Jesus our future is with God as part of this multitude from every nation and people.

### **To the nations and beyond**

The nations have always been and always will be a huge part of how God is working out His purposes. We can look back at how God promised Abraham to make him into a great nation, a nation that would be blessed to be a blessing. We can see how God was faithful to His promises and grew His people into the 'nation of Israel'. Ultimately however we can see how from that bloodline came one who would be the hope of the nations, namely Jesus. Now we live in a time when the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is being taken to every nation and people-group but there are still those who have not heard. We also live in a time of expectant waiting for that moment when Jesus will return, and God the Father will bring together a multitude from *"every tribe and language and people and nation."* What a blessing it is to be involved in God's purposes for the nations!

*"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." 1 Peter 2:9-10*

**To God be the glory;  
Steve McClure, February 2021**

**STUDY 1 – BLESSING THE NATIONS: VISION**

**INTRODUCTION:** Our first study focuses on the promises of blessing that God gave to Abram/Abraham in Genesis 12, 15 & 17 regarding how he would be blessed and be a blessing to all nations. This introduces us to the idea that we are blessed to be a blessing to others.

**SETTING THE SCENE:** Defining our terms is often a great starting point: what would you understand to be difference between a *people-group*, a *country/nation* and the *nations* more generally (Additional Quotes 1)? What has been your experience of the nation's either here or overseas?

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**GOD'S BLESSING & PURPOSE (GENESIS 1:22, 28 & 9:1):** How would you understand the mandate that God gives to Adam & Eve in His creation? In what ways do we see God's blessing through the mandate God gives to them? Why is God's blessing so important in these verses?

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**BIRTH OF THE NATIONS (GENESIS 10:1-11:9):** Genesis 11:1 speaks of a unity of language and speech: in what ways did the Tower of Babel change all of that? How did this serve to birth *the nations*? Why did God seem so concerned about what humanity could achieve if they worked together (v6)? To what extent would you describe the outcome of all this as either positive or negative? Why?

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**PROMISE TO BE A GREAT NATION (GENESIS 12:1-9):** What do you notice about the instructions and promises that God gives makes to Abram? What are the tenses used? Are the promises to be filled spiritually and/or materially? How and when do you imagine that the promises might be fulfilled? Who are the beneficiaries (i.e., who are the '*all peoples*') of these promises (see Additional Quotes 2)?

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**BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING (v2-3):** What does God mean and/or not mean here through the use of the word 'blessing' (consider the ideas of fruitfulness, multiplication, filling and abundance)? How does blessing work both horizontally, and vertically, in our relationships with others?

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**BLESSING THE NATIONS (GENESIS 15:1-6, 17:1-8, 15-16):** How does God develop His promises of blessing in these verses and specifically in relation to 'the nations' (see footnote on v5 regarding the name change)? Why is it so important that these promises are reiterated to Isaac (22:16-18) and Jacob (28:14)? What role do you think that these promises have for us today?

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**EXPERIENCING THE BLESSING (GAL 3:7-9, 14, 28-29):** Paul declares that those who have faith are children of Abraham (v7): in what sense did God *announce the gospel in advance* (v8)? How does the blessing God promised to Abraham come through Christ and now through us? Why is it so significant that there is now unity in Christ (v28) and that in Christ we are *heirs according to the promise* (v29)?

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**DRAWING IT TOGETHER:** In *The Lion the Witch & the Wardrobe* Lucy finds herself stepping into a bigger story as she goes through the wardrobe into Narnia: in what ways is this reminiscent of what it might mean for us to step into God's plan to be a blessing to the nations?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Thank God for the promises of blessing that He made thousands of years ago to Abraham and for how He continues to work them out through His people. Ask God to bless you and enable you to subsequently be a blessing or others. Ask God to use you to bless the nations.

**MEMORY VERSES: GENESIS 12:2-3**

## STUDY 2 – A CHOSEN NATION: LOVE

**INTRODUCTION:** God's promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob take an unexpected turn as God's people end up relocating to the land of Egypt because of the famine. Jacob's family numbered a mere seventy when they moved to Egypt but after 430 years in slavery the Exodus sees a nation arise.

**SETTING THE SCENE:** What is your experience of being *chosen* or *not chosen*? What are the emotions associated with both outcomes? Up until now, how had God worked in the lives of those He had created: who had He chosen, called and used in His purposes? Why had He done so?

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**GOD'S COVENANT (EXODUS 19:1-7):** Two months after the Exodus, God speaks to His people at Mt Sinai. In what sense is God's covenant (*agreement*) both conditional and unconditional? How does a covenant change a relationship? What do you think God means by calling Israel His *treasured possession*, a *kingdom of priests* and a *holy nation*? Why are these promises so significant?

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**JUDGING THE NATIONS (DEUTERONOMY 7:1-6, 16, 25-26):** After 40 years walking in the wilderness, Israel is ready to try again to enter the land. God instructs His people to act ruthlessly with the nations that inhabited the land of Israel: what is your response to this?

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Why was it so important that they did not make treaties (v2), intermarry (v3-4) or worship their gods (v16, 25-26)? How do you reconcile God's covenant of love for His people with this clear instruction to destroy (Genesis 15:16, Deut 12:31 & 18:10-13)?

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**GOD'S CHOSEN NATION (v7-10):** What do these verses say about why God did and didn't choose to set His affection upon them? What can we learn from this about God's love for His people? Again, how do these verses demonstrate a conditional and unconditional aspect to God's love?

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**SET APART (LEV 20:22-26, DEUT 26:18-19):** Why did God want to have a nation that was set apart (holy) from the others? What are the characteristics of something that is set apart or made holy (Additional Quotes 3)? How might God set them in *praise, fame and honour high above all the nations* (Deut 26:19)? What motivations do these verses give for why Israel to live this way (esp. Lev 20:26)?

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**CHOSEN & PREVIOUS STONES (1 PETER 2:4-5):** Peter describes Jesus as the *living stone* and believers as being built into a spiritual house as priests: what do you think Peter is trying to teach us with this metaphor (Additional Quotes 4)? How does it tie in with the promises to Israel?

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**MADE TO BE A HOLY NATION (1 PETER 2:9-10):** For what purpose does Peter say that we have been made a *royal priesthood* and a *holy nation* (Additional quotes 5)? What do these promises imply about our relationship with God and others? What does it look like practically to declare God's praises?

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**DRAWING IT TOGETHER:** In what ways have the metaphors used here by God (both for the nation of Israel and for us as believers) challenged, encouraged, and inspired you to live for Him? What applications can we draw from this in terms of our own walk with God?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Thank God that these incredible promises are true of all those who believe in Christ. Ask God to help you respond with obedience towards the love and faithfulness that God has showered on you. Ask God to give you opportunity to share His praises with others.

**MEMORY VERSE: DEUTERONOMY 7:6**

**STUDY 3 – THE RISE AND FALL OF NATIONS: IDOLATRY**

**INTRODUCTION:** God's people enter the Promised Land under Joshua's leadership and they begin to take possession of the land and drive out its inhabitants. Soon however they are accused of violating God's covenant and the nations (and particularly their idolatry), become a huge snare to God's people.

**SETTING THE SCENE:** Think of a time when you have experienced relational breakdown: what were the expectations of both sides and why did things go wrong? In study 2 we saw that God expected His people to worship Him and not the idols of the surrounding nations: how would you define an idol?

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**COVENANT DYNAMICS (DEUT 28):** What do these chapters (see esp. 28:1-14, 15, 25, 32, 64) outline as the causes for the rising and falling of the nations? To what extent do you think that God's covenant expectations upon Israel were reasonable and clear?

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**VIOLATING THE COVENANT (JUDGES 2:8-3:6):** After Joshua's death (Judges v8-9) what was it that arouses God's anger towards His people (v10-19)? What were the consequences of Israel violating God's covenant? In what sense would the presence of these nations be a test for Israel?

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**AS THE OTHER NATIONS (1 SAMUEL 8:1-9):** Why did Israel want Samuel to appoint a King to rule over them (v3-5)? Samuel is displeased, but why does God see their rejection as being towards Him (v7-9)? God anticipate this (Deut 17:14-20): what instructions does God give for such Kings?

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**EVERLASTING KINGDOM (2 SAMUEL 7:1-17):** King David offers to build a house for God, but God says David is not the one to build this house: what promises does God make to David in these verses?

What similarities/differences do you notice between these promises and those made to Abraham? How does David see the role of the nation of Israel in God's purposes (see v22-26)?

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**A NATION FOR THE NATIONS (1 KINGS 8-11):** What do 8:59-61 reveal about God's intent for them to be a *nation for the nations*? How do we see this worked out in the visit by the Queen of Sheba (10:4-9)? Solomon's reign as King is a high point for Israel and God blesses him richly: to what extent is he faithful to God's instructions set out for Kings (10:14-11:13)?

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**NATIONAL DECLINE (1 KINGS 12-2 KING 25):** Solomon builds God's house but after him the Kingdom is split (1 Kings 12:16-17) into the Northern (Israel) and Southern (Judah) Kingdoms. Both peoples are eventually exiled from the Promised Land: how do these verses show the nations gradual decline (for example: 1 Kings 14:22-24, 16:29-33, 2 Kings 16:3, 17:8-15, 21:1-9)?

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**DRAWING IT TOGETHER (HOSEA 1:2-11):** God tells Hosea to take a promiscuous wife as a lived-out parable about Israel's unfaithfulness: how do these verses show God response to their idolatry (e.g. children's names)? How do v9-11 show that there was still hope for God's people (Additional Quotes 6)? In what ways have we seen God's love for His people through His dealings with them?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Thank God for that He is Sovereign over all nations and that none of our idols amount to anything compared to Him. Ask God to help you to respond in obedience and worship Him alone. Thank God that idolatrous people like us can be called 'children of the living God'.

**MEMORY VERSES: PSALM 96:4-5**

## STUDY 4 – HOPE OF THE NATIONS: MESSIAH

**INTRODUCTION:** Israel was to be a nation for the nations, but we saw last time how they ultimately failed and were taken into captivity by opposing nations. God was still true to His promises and the prophets bring words of encouragement regarding the one who would be the hope of the nations.

**SETTING THE SCENE:** When have you searched for a *saviour* to rescue you from some challenge or other? What were your expectations of such a person and the role they would play? What was the outcome and to what extent were your expectations met? Why are expectations so powerful?

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**SOVEREIGN OVER THE NATIONS (PSALM 2):** How do verses 1-6 contrast the intent of the nations with God's Sovereignty over them (v1-2 quoted in Acts 4:25-26)? Verse 7 is quoted in Hebrews 1:5 & 5:5 as being addressed to Jesus: how does the Psalmist foresee this *son's* impact upon the nations (v7-9)? What is the response called for from the nations in v10-12 (see also Daniel 4:17)?

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**EXALTED AMONG THE NATIONS (PSALM 46):** There are approx. 80 references to the nations in the Psalms: how does Psalm 46 anticipate God's ultimate plans for the nations (esp. v6 & 10)? What will the response of the nations be towards God (see Psalms 47:8-9, 86:9, 67:1-7, 72:17-19, 102:15)?

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**MY SERVANT: HOPE & JUSTICE (ISAIAH 42:1-9):** Isaiah 40-55 includes the *Servant songs*: what do these verses in chapter 42 tell us about this Servant? How do they show that God's heart was never limited to Israel? What is revealed here about how He would draw people from all nations to Himself?

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Verses 1-4 are quoted in Matthew 12:15-21: how does Matthew see the fulfilment of these verses in the life and ministry of Jesus? Specifically, how did Jesus bring hope and justice to the nations?

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**MY SERVANT: LIGHT TO THE GENTILES (ISAIAH 49:1-7, 22-23):** Why was it *too small a thing* (v6) for this servant to restore only Israel? What do you think it means to be a light to the gentiles (v6, 42:6, 51:4-5)? How had Israel got on with fulfilling this role up to this point (give examples)? In Acts 13:46-47 Paul & Barnabas quote v6: how did they see it being fulfilled through their ministry?

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**LIGHT OF THE WORLD (JOHN 8:12, 9:5):** Jesus describes Himself as the *Light of the world*: in what ways do you see this as a fulfilment of what was written here in Isaiah 42 & 49? In a similar way in Acts 1:8, how do we begin to see God's vision for His Salvation to reach the ends of the earth?

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**MY SERVANT: SUFFERING & GLORY (ISAIAH 52:13-53:12):** Given what we have learned about the Servant already, what level of shock would this chapter have brought to its original readers? What do you conclude about the identity of this Servant: Israel and/or Jesus (see Additional Quotes 7)?

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These verses are often quoted in the New Testament (Matt 8:14-17, Luke 22:35-38, 1 Peter 2:19-25, Acts 8:26-35): to what extent did Jesus meet and/or fail to meet expectations for the Messiah?

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**DRAWING IT TOGETHER (ISAIAH 55):** This chapter is an elaborate invitation both to the thirsty (v1-2) and to get involved in the working out of God's purposes (v3-13): what is this everlasting covenant (v3-4) and who are these nations we are going to summon (v5-7)? What promises does God make to help us in this task (v8-11), and why then will we be glad in seeing what God will do (v12-13)?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Thank God that Jesus really is the Hope for the nations and that because of His suffering on our behalf, all nations will one day bring Him glory. Ask God to help you appreciate your own role in summoning nations and taking the good news of Jesus to the ends of the earth.

**MEMORY VERSE: ISAIAH 49:6**

## STUDY 5 – HEART FOR THE WORLD: DISCIPLES

**INTRODUCTION:** Isaiah prophesied about how the Messiah would be the hope of the nations and when Jesus Christ entered our world He did not disappoint! In this study we will see something of Jesus' heart for the nations both in His ministry, and in the commission that He gave to the church.

**SETTING THE SCENE:** What kind of things would characterise a person, group, company or even nation, who exemplified a truly global vision? As Christians what do you think it might look like for us to have a heart for the world? How do you (and/or your Christian community) measure up in this regard?

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**GREAT FAITH (MATT 8:5-13):** What do you think motivates the Centurion to come to Jesus (v6)? Why does he seem reluctant to take Jesus back with him (8a)? In saying that Jesus could just say *the word*, what do we learn about his faith (8b)? Jesus is amazed (v10) and says many (from both east & west) will feast with Abraham (v11): what does Jesus mean by this and what He then says in v12-13?

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**CALLED TO GO (MATTHEW 28:16-20):** A commission is defined as “a warrant conferring authority to those being commissioned”: how does this shape your understanding of what Jesus was asking His disciples (and by implication us) to do? What are the similarities/differences between God's instruction to Abram to 'go' (Genesis 12:1,4-7) and Jesus' commission here (see also Additional Quotes 8)?

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What does the commission reveal of God's heart for the nations (Additional Quotes 9)? Increasingly the nations are living all around us: how might we work this out by being a blessing to the nations in our midst? In what ways does Jesus' commission help us understand what He means by *disciples*?

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**RECEIVING POWER (ACTS 1:4-8):** Jesus appeared to the disciples again and told them to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit: what does Jesus say would be the impact of the Spirit's ministry through them? In what ways is v8 a summary of both the book of Acts and the history of the church?

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**TO JERUSALEM (ACTS 2:1-12):** These verses describe the outpouring of the Holy Spirit over the church at Pentecost: what nations and continents are represented here and why is that important? What does this say of God's commitment to reach the uttermost parts of the earth?

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**TO JUDEA & SAMARIA (ACTS 8:1b-8):** Why was the persecution after Stephen's death (7:59-60) so significant in the spread of the gospel? To what extent do you believe that nothing (not even COVID19) can prevent the gospel going to all nations (one of the signs of the end times - Mark 13:10)?

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**TO THE GENTILES (ACTS 10:9-23):** How do you respond to the way God deals with Peter through the vision about the sheet from Heaven (v11-16)? Why was this needed to prepare Peter to meet Cornelius? Peter explains his experience to Cornelius' household in v34-35: in what ways did this mark a watershed moment for the early church?

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**HERE AM I (ISAIAH 6:1-9):** What do you imagine it was like for Isaiah to experience this vision (v1-4, John 12:41)? To what extent can you identify with Isaiah's declaration of unworthiness (v5) and willingness to be sent (v9)? Experience God can be lifechanging: in what ways was this true for Isaiah?

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**DRAWING IT TOGETHER:** Through His ministry and that of the Spirit, how does Jesus shift the mindset of the early church to develop a truly global vision (Additional Quotes 10)? What has most stood out to you about how God wants you to play your part in making disciples of *all nations*?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Praise God for His heart for the nations and that He wants us to play our part in that. Pray together about God's challenging question to Isaiah "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8a) and ask God to help you be willing to respond: "Here am I. send me" (Isaiah 6:9b).

**MEMORY VERSES: MATTHEW 28:18-20**

**STUDY 6 – ALL NATIONS: ETERNITY**

**INTRODUCTION:** We finish with the glorious vision of eternity described by John in the book of Revelation. In it he envisions a multitude from every tribe, language, people and nation. Seeing the end goal also helps motivate us in reaching the nations here and now.

**SETTING THE SCENE:** Often life is not easy, and we struggle to see too far into the future: how does the example of the American swimmer motivate you to keep on going even when life gets tough (Additional Quotes 11)? To what extent do you find the idea of eternity encouraging?

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**THE END TIMES (MATT 24:1-35):** After the disciples ask for *signs of the end times*, Jesus paints a picture of the things that must first happen. What impact will the end times have upon the nations (see v7,9,14 & 30)? How do you understand Jesus' contrast between Heaven & Earth and His words (v35)?

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**THE SHEEP & THE GOATS (MATT 25):** In what ways are the nations in focus in this short parable about the Son of Man separating people like a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats? What does Jesus say will be the criteria used to make this distinction? What is your response to that? How does this glorious vision of all nations standing before the throne motivate you?

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**ALL NATIONS WILL BE SHAKEN (HAGGAI 2:6-8, 21):** What does this picture communicate about what God is intending to do amidst the nations? What does Hebrews 12:26-29 (which quotes v6) add to this? What does v7 mean when it says the *shaking* will lead to all nations coming into God's house?

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**FROM ALL NATIONS (REV 5:1-8):** Revelation 4-5 describes a scene before the throne of God but there is a problem opening the scroll: what is this scroll and why couldn't anyone open it? What qualified the lamb to open this scroll and why are the titles given to him (v5) significant?

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**FROM ALL NATIONS (REV 5:9-14):** How is the worship experience deepened by the diversity of the gathering (v9, Additional Quotes 12 & 13)? What echo's do you see here from Genesis 10? What do you make of the bowls of incense (prayers) and the fact that God's people are described as a Kingdom and priests? How do you respond to the angelic praise recorded in v12-13?

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**THE GREAT MULTITUDE (REV 7:1-17):** 144,000 people (also in 14:1-6) are sealed from the twelve tribes of Israel (v1-8): what's different about the great multitude seen in v9-12? What does the diversity of this crowd tell us about the issue of cultural continuity in the New Heavens & the New Earth? How do you respond to the people in white robes (v13) and the promises made to them (v14-17)?

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**GLORY & HONOUR OF THE NATIONS (REV 21:1-5, 22-27):** What in v1-5 most encourages you about the promise of the New Heavens & the New Earth? Why is God's presence among His people such a big deal in these verses? In v22-27 what role do the nations have to play and what is their glory and honour? In what ways will the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb be both our temple and our light?

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**THE HEALING OF THE NATIONS (REV 22:21-5)** After the description of the Holy City (21:9-21), we now see the river flowing from the throne of God: what does this image communicate to you? What do you think is the healing (or health giving) power of the tree of life towards the nations (v2)?

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**DRAWNG IT TOGETHER:** How does this vision help get you excited about playing your part in God's big story of Salvation? In what ways have these studies on the nations helped grow both your understanding of God's heart and your own passion for the nations?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Thank God that one day all who know, and love Jesus will stand before the throne of God as part of a truly global multitude. Ask God to help you play your part in making this a reality. Identify and pray through some of the action points arising for you from this series.

**MEMORY VERSE: REVELATION 7:9**

## APPENDIX – ADDITIONAL QUOTATIONS

**QUOTE 1:** “The Greek word *Ethnos* (translated Gentiles, nations, people & pagans in the NIV) is used for (1) a multitude (men or beasts) associated or living together, (2) a multitude of individuals of the same nature or genus, (3) a tribe, nation, people group, (4) in the OT, foreign nations not worshipping the true God, pagans, Gentiles and (5) Paul uses the term for Gentile Christians.” *BlueLetterBible.com*

**QUOTE 2:** “The bottom line (literally and metaphorically) of the Abrahamic covenant is that *“all peoples on earth will be blessed through you”* (*Gen 12:3*). There is some dispute over the precise exegesis of the verb, but there can be no doubt about the extent of God’s intention – “all peoples”. The word varies between “all kinship-groups (*mishpachot*) and “all nations” (*goyim*), but the intention is clear and emphatic. In fact, it is so emphatic that this promise is repeated five times in Genesis (12:3, 18:18, 22:18, 26:4, 28:14) ... One nation is chosen, but all nations are to be beneficiaries of that choice.” *Christopher J. H. Wright, The Mission of God’s people, ©2010, Zondervan, pg. 71.*

**QUOTE 3:** “Being holy did not mean that the Israelites were to be a specially religious nation. At heart, the word “holy” (in Hebrew, *qados*) means *different or distinctive*. Something or someone is holy when they get set apart for a distinct purpose in relation to God and then are kept separate for that purpose. For Israel, it meant being different by reflecting the very different God that YHWH revealed Himself to be, compared with other gods. Israel was to be as different from other nations as YHWH was different from other gods.” *Christopher J. H. Wright, The Mission of God’s people, ©2010, Zondervan, pg. 123.*

**QUOTE 4:** “We have no status as sons or daughters, for we are no people, enemies of God, unworthy of His love. Yet, as Peter declares, we who were no people are now the *people of God*, chosen in Christ as an elect race, a *holy nation*.” *Edmund Clowney, BST: The Message of 1 Peter, IVP, pg. 94*

**QUOTE 5:** “Peter is making a double point here. First, he insists that just as Christians inherit the identity and titles of Old Testament Israel (a chosen, priestly, holy people belonging to God), so also they inherit the purpose of Israel’s creation and redemption (to declare the praise of God and bring glory to Him). But second, he insists that the purpose of such declarative praise is not a private affair between God and the worshipers, but it spills out into the public arena as one of the means by which God draws the nations to Himself. It is, in other words, part of what it means to fulfil the Abrahamic commission of being God’s people for the sake of the rest of the nations coming to enjoy God’s blessing.” *Christopher J. H. Wright, The Mission of God’s people, ©2010, Zondervan, pg. 250.*

**QUOTE 6:** “The people of Israel broke God’s covenant and defiled themselves with immorality and idolatry. God delivered his judgement through the prophets: they had become Lo-Ammi, ‘no people’, no longer the holy people of God. Yet God also promised a marvellous restoration. Israel would again be made holy. Instead of shame they would be given glory...Not only will the remnant of Israel be gathered to worship the Lord, the remnant of the nations, even the enemy nations, will be gathered, too.” *Edmund Clowney, BST: The Message of 1 Peter, © 1988, IVP, pg. 89*

**QUOTE 7:** “Israel’s prophets always understood that the Messiah...would not only be great and powerful and honoured; he would also be a *representative* of God’s people and *suffer* in their place. Isaiah...has a wonderfully profound play on words in his description of the Servant, whom we know from several passages turns out to be the promised Messiah. At first glance, it looks as if the Servant might be the nation of Israel. So in Isaiah 49:3, the servant says, “*You are my servant Israel, in whom I will be glorified.*” But then in 49:5, it’s clear that the mission is to the nation of Israel: “*And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that*

*Israel might be gathered to him...*" Is the servant Israel, or is the servant doing something *for* Israel? The answer, it seems, is both. What seems to be happening is that the Servant is at once *representing* Israel and fulfilling a mission *to* Israel. Further, Isaiah goes on in c53 to show how this representation reaches its height when the Servant stands in his people's place even unto death for their sins." *Kevin DeYoung & Greg Gilbert, What is the Mission of the Church?, ©2011 Crossway, pg. 136-37.*

**QUOTE 8:** "Abraham is commanded to get up and leave. God's mission required leaving and going. And of course, it still does. Now at one level, we can see this as an obvious parallel to the opening of the so-called Great Commission, "Go and make disciples" – though it needs to be pointed out that the first word is not a command in itself, but a participle – "As you go..." Nevertheless, it is clear that if the nations were to be disciples, the disciples had to go to them. So we can certainly detect in God's first command to Abraham an anticipating of the dynamic that would eventually explode in centrifugal missional "going" to the ends of the earth. But at another level, such "leaving and going" need not necessarily mean actual travel from one geographical place to another. Christians who commit themselves to the mission of God *in* the world have to start with a certain going out *from* the world." *Christopher J. H. Wright, The Mission of God's people, ©2010, Zondervan, pg. 78*

**QUOTE 9:** "The Great Commission is mind-blowing in its reach, global in its thinking, generational its outlook and it spans the centuries" *Brian Blacklock, Former Representative, The Navigators UK*

**QUOTE 10:** The main verb [in Matt 28:19-20] is the imperative "make disciples." Jesus' followers are to make disciples of the nations (*ta ethne*). As is now widely known, this is the word not for political nation-states but for people groups. Jesus envisions worshippers and followers present among every cultural-linguistic group on the planet." *Kevin DeYoung & Greg Gilbert, What is the Mission of the Church?, ©2011 Crossway, pg. 46.*

**QUOTE 11:** "In 1952, young Florence Chadwick stepped into the waters of the Pacific Ocean off Catalina Island, determined to swim to shore of mainland California. She'd already been the first woman to swim the English Channel both ways. That day it was so foggy that she could hardly see the boats accompanying her. Still, she swam for 15 hours. When she finally begged to be taken out of the water along the way, her mother, in a boat alongside, told her she was close and that she could make it. Finally, physically and emotionally exhausted, she stopped swimming and was pulled out. It wasn't until she was on the boat that she discovered the shore was less than half a mile away. At a news conference the next day she said, 'All I could see was fog...I think if I could have seen the shore I would have made it.'" *Quoted by Randy Alcorn in Heaven*

**QUOTE 12:** "The goal of our mission is that people from all the nations worship the true God. But worship means cherishing the preciousness of God above all else, including life itself." *John Piper, Let the Nations Be Glad!*

**QUOTE 13:** "Worship is the quintessential task of those who belong in heaven. The elders and the four living creatures in Rev 4 are worshipping. Together with the angels they sing praise to God and to the lamb in Rev 5. The nations are gathered before the throne in Rev 7 that they might cry out, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the lamb!" (7:10). In Revelation, when all mission comes to an end 'it becomes clear that mission is in fact a means to an end the end being a total focus on the worship and the glory of God in our Lord Jesus Christ.' Worship is the end of the end of the story, not human flourishing, because a redesigned world is nothing without delight in God. This means that Christian mission must always aim at making, sustaining, and establishing worshippers." *Kevin DeYoung & Greg Gilbert, What is the Mission of the Church?, ©2011 Crossway, pg. 247.*

# MEMORY VERSES

## STUDY 1 – BLESSING THE NATIONS: VISION

<sup>2</sup> ‘I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’

**Genesis 12:2-3**

## STUDY 2 – A CHOSEN NATION: LOVE

“For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.”

**Deuteronomy 7:6**

## STUDY 3 – THE RISE AND FALL OF NATIONS: IDOLATRY

<sup>4</sup> For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. <sup>5</sup> For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

**Psalms 96:4-5**

## STUDY 4 – THE HOPE OF THE NATIONS: MESSIAH

“It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.” **Isaiah 49:6**

## STUDY 5 – HEART FOR THE WORLD: DISCIPLES

<sup>18</sup> Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

**Matthew 28:18-20**

## STUDY 6 – ALL NATIONS: ETERNITY

“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.”

**Revelation 7:9**