

Series Title: 'Into the Nations'

Subtitle: 'Going deeper into God's heart for the nations'

Primary Aim: From the very beginning of the Bible (God's great promises to Abraham) to the very end of the Bible (the multicultural multitude standing the throne of God), we see God's unfolding heart for all peoples and all nations. In this series we will try to grasp the big story of how this heart has been worked out. In order to work out His great purposes, God reveals His vision through a family, through a nation, through His Messiah and finally through generations of disciple-making disciples. Our aim as we grasp God's plan for the nations is to begin to understand how God would have us labour with Him into the nations.

1. Blessing the nations (Vision)

Passage: Genesis 10-12, 15, 17 & Galatians 3:7-9, 14, 28-29

Blurb: Our journey into the nations begins in Genesis with God's desire to see Adam & Eve be a blessing to all creation. Sadly, things did not work out well (because of the Fall) and by Genesis 11 we find God choosing to confuse the language and scatter the people described in the table of nations back in Genesis 10. In this context God restates His vision to Abraham for His people to be blessed and be a blessing. The fulfilment of these promises span whole Bible and Paul describes them as God having "announced the gospel in advance". We see also how we get to play a part of God's unfolding Salvation story to the nations.

2. A chosen Nation (Love)

Passages: Exodus 19:1-7, Deuteronomy 7 & 1 Peter 2:4-10

Blurb: God's promises take an unexpected turn when His people end up relocating to the land of Egypt because of the famine. Jacob's family numbered a mere 70 people when they moved to Egypt, but after 430 years in slavery the Exodus sees a nation arise. In this session we wrestle with the covenant God made with His people because of His great love for them. We see God's covenant expectations that they be a chosen nation, holy and set apart for Him. Peter later reflects on how we as believers have inherited these promises to become a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and God's special possession.

3. The Rise and Fall of nations (Idolatry)

Passages: Deuteronomy 28, Judges 2:8-3:6, 1 Samuel 8:1-9, 2 Samuel 7:1-17, 1 Kings 8-11 & Hosea 1:2-11

Blurb: God's people eventually enter the Promised Land under Joshua's leadership and they begin to take possession of the land and drive out its inhabitants. Under the Judges however, they are accused of violating God's covenant and the nations (esp. their idolatry) became a huge snare to them. After they ask for a King like the other nations, there are glimpses of Israel being a nation to the nations under the reigns of King David and King Solomon. However, after them, there is a gradual process of national decline before exile. But there is still hope as we turn to the prophets, e.g. Hosea, writing during their time of exile.

4. Hope of the nations (Messiah)

Passages: Psalm 2, 46, Matthew 12:15-21, Isaiah 42:1-9, 49:1-7, 22-23, 52:13-53:12, 55 & John 8:12, 9:5

Blurb: In this session we see how God is Sovereign over the nations and the appropriate response of the nations to exalt Him as LORD. Israel was to be a nation for the nations, but we saw in session 3 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. We focus mainly on Isaiah which talks about the Servant of the LORD who would be a light to the Gentiles. It is no coincidence that in the New Testament we see Jesus claiming to be the light of the world.

5. Heart for the world (Disciples)

Passages: Matt 8:5-13, 28:16-20, Acts 1:4-8, 2:1-12, 8:1b-8, 10:9-23 & Isaiah 6:1-9

Blurb: 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 session we will see something of the heart of Jesus for the nations, both in His ministry, and in the commission that He gave to the church. We will work through various events in the book of Acts that see the Gospel go out from Jerusalem to Judea & Samaria, to the Gentiles and to the ends of the earth. At the finish we hear the challenge from Isaiah's commission in which God asks, "who shall I send" and Isaiah responds, "Here am I, send me."

6. All Nations (Eternity)

Passages: Matt 24:1-35, 25, Haggai 2:6-8, 21, Revelation 5:1-14, 7:1-17, 21:1-5, 22-27 & 22:1-5

Blurb: We finish with the glorious vision the Bible presents of eternity. Firstly, we look at some of the things Jesus said about the End Times and how the sheep will be separated from the goats. Then we will think about John's vision of eternity in the book of Revelation. John envisions a multitude from every tribe, language, people and nation. We see aspects of continuity (esp. cultural diversity) as well as discontinuity (esp. the newness of the new creation). Seeing the end goal helps motivate us in reaching the nations here and now. The climax of the series is the question: will we play our part to one day make this a reality?